

### Analysis of tourism potential in Piatra Craiului Mountains: development strategies

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## **ANALYSIS OF TOURISM POTENTIAL IN PIATRA CRAIULUI MOUNTAINS. DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES**

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## **Analysis of tourism potential in Piatra Craiului Mountains. Development strategies**

**Mădălina Teodor**

**Analisi potenziale turistico nei Monti Piatra Craiului. Strategie di sviluppo.** Le Montagne Piatra Craiului sono tra i posti di cui si parla molto, essendo un esempio di complessità e difficoltà alpinistiche, ma di cui in realtà si sa troppo poco perché non si mette l'accento sul loro grandissimo potenziale turistico. La loro posizione quasi nel centro della Romania rappresenta un grande vantaggio dal punto di vista dell'accessibilità. Lo sviluppo di questa cresta calcarea, la più lunga (25 km) e la più alta (oltre 2000 m) della Romania [1], offre numerose sfide ai turisti. Questo articolo ha come obiettivo di identificare e di sottolineare il potenziale turistico della zona e di proporre alcune strategie di sviluppo. Il turismo nelle Montagne Piatra Craiului si rivolgerebbe a persone di varie età e con varie preferenze e gusti e potrebbe essere diversificato e migliorato, realizzando infrastrutture idonee e fissando strategie di sviluppo, in accordo con la protezione dell'ambiente.

**Parole chiave:** Piatra Craiului montagne, potenziale turistico, pianificazione, sviluppo.

**Analizele potențialului turistic în Munții Piatra Craiului. Strategii de dezvoltare.** Munții Piatra Craiului se înscriu printre locurile despre care se vorbește foarte mult, fiind dați ca exemplu de complexitate și dificultate alpină, dar despre care se știe practic prea puțin și nu se pune accent pe potențialul turistic cu adevărat impresionant pe care îl au. Poziționarea lor aproximativ în centrul României reprezintă un mare avantaj din punct de vedere al accesibilității. Individualizarea crestei calcarose, cea mai lungă (25 km) și mai înaltă (peste 2000 m) din România [1], oferă numeroase provocări turiștilor. Articolul are ca obiectiv identificarea și evidențierea potențialului turistic și propunerea unor strategii de dezvoltare. Turismul în Munții Piatra Craiului s-ar putea adresa persoanelor de toate vârstele și pentru toate gusturile, acesta putând fi diversificat și îmbunătățit prin realizarea unei infrastructuri adecvate și punerea la punct a strategiilor de dezvoltare în concordanță cu protecția mediului.

**Cuvinte cheie:** Munții Piatra Craiului, potențial turistic, amenajare, dezvoltare

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Being located approximately in the center of Romania, Piatra Craiului is formed by limestone and conglomeratic rocks [1]. Piatra Craiului is the longest and highest mountain ridge in Romania. The landscapes provided in this particular area are very popular among tourists. A special attraction is given by the numerous exo-karst landforms. These mountains are highly accessible from surroundings (Dâmbovicioarei Gorges, Zarnesti Steep, Dâmboviței Gorges).

The limestone and conglomeratic ridge, with a length of 25 km and altitudes above 2000 m [1] challenges even experienced climbers. During winter is an important massif for climbers keen on training performance (in Romania or abroad) because here they can apply both climbing techniques (summer and winter techniques), but can also test their physical and mental strength.

The goal of this article is to highlight and assess tourism potential of Piatra Craiului Mountains and to implement tourism development and recovery strategies.

## 2. STUDIED AREA

From a geological point of view, Piatra Craiului Mountains belong to the Southern group of the Eastern Carpathians. From the landscape point of view they belong to the Bucegi upland from the Meridionali Carpathians. They are border in the North-West with Fagaras Mountains and in the West-Southwest with Iezer Mountains. In the Eastern part are bounded by Rucar-Bran and in Southwest they extend to Dâmbovița and Dâmbovicioarei Gorges. These mountains are located within Brasov and Argeș counties (Figure 1) in Romania.

The massif was formed in Alpine orogenesis during by Laurentian tectonic movements.

From a geological point o view [4] the massif is a suspended synclinal flank [1]. Thus, the orientation of the layers is similar to that of a ridge (with a structural surface and a structural steep) and, in particular, with a hogback (structural surface of a ridge which have approximately the same declivity) [4]. The ridge is characterized by two morphometric features representing national geographic superlatives: the length and the altitude.

Piatra Craiului Massif consists of a 25 kilometres ridge, and is the longest limestone ridge in Romania. First, there is a distance of 8 km, with heights of 2000 m and above, and about 15 km with peaks higher than 1800 m [1]. Maximum altitude (2238 m peak) is reached in La Om Peak (Baciului Peak), this way being assigned the highest superlative limestone ridge in Romania.

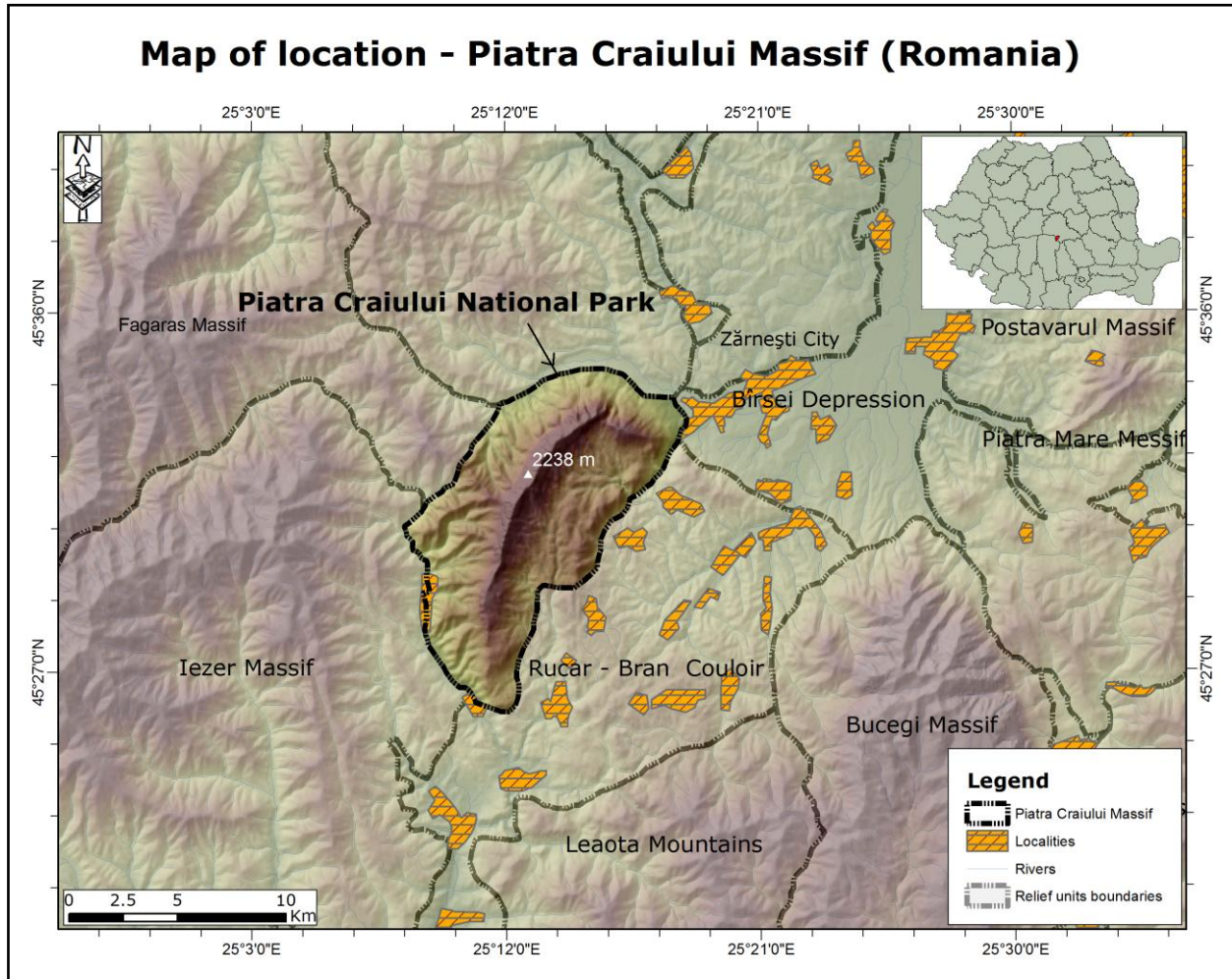


Figure 1. Piatra Craiului Massif – localization

(Data sources: <http://earth.unibuc.ro/download/romania-seturi-vectoriale> [2], Shuttle Radar Topographic Mission [3])

Kars and conglomeratic relief was individualized on the structural relief [1, 7]. The development in altitude and the presence of periglacial relief gave this ridge an important landscape.

### 3. DATA AND METHODS

In order to write this article we used quantitative and qualitative data, analyzed by various and different methods and methodologies so as we can highlight and analyze the tourism potential of this massif. Used quantitative data were taken from material provided by the National Park Administration and the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism. Graphical material analyzed is the 1:25.000 topographic maps, orthophotoplans

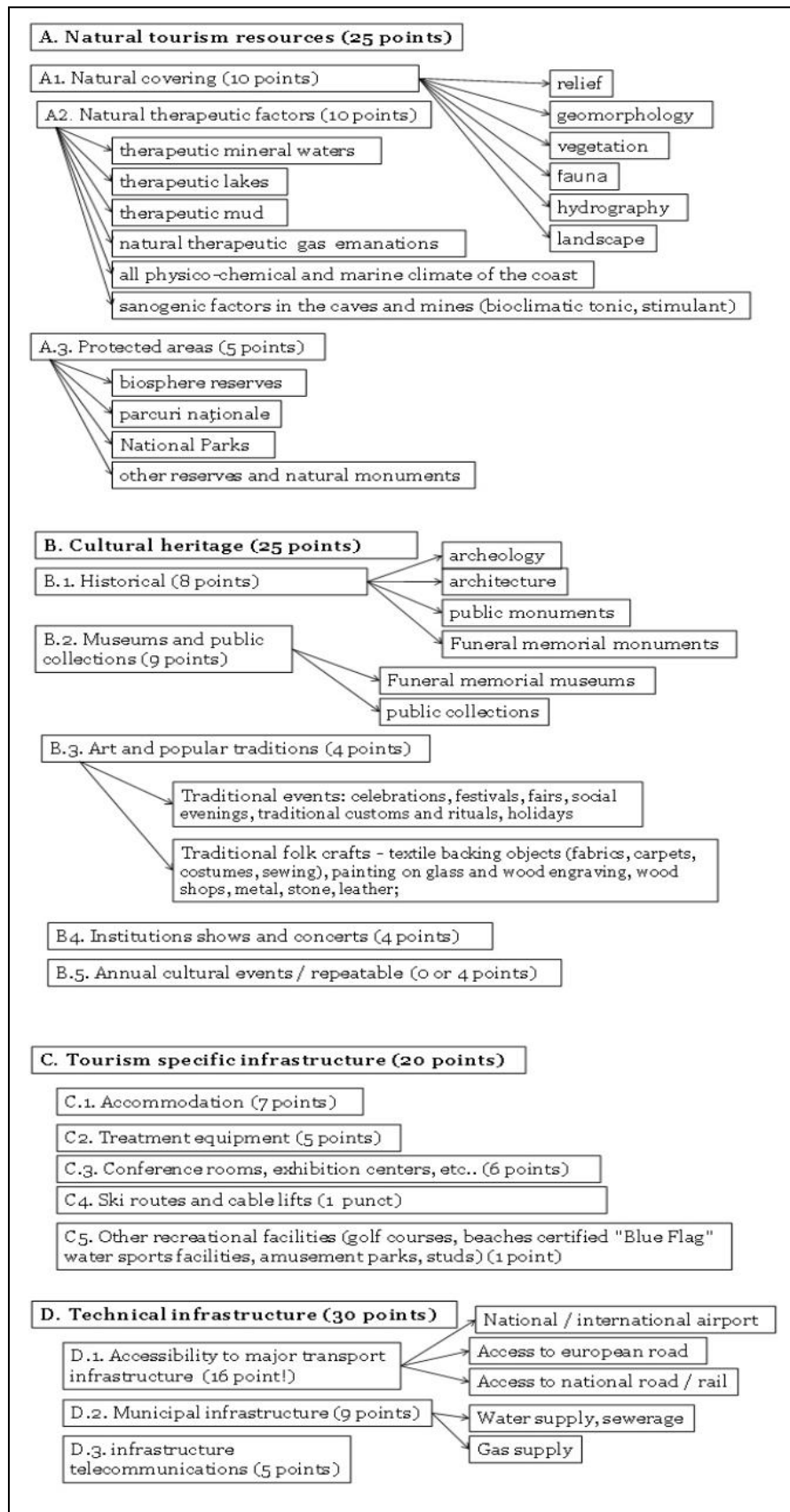


Figure 2. Criteria for administrative units' analysis

and satellite images from different periods of time, radar images (SRTM), personal photos taken in different times of the year since 2003. These were based on the analysis in GIS software through vectorization, overlapping layers and geoprocessing.

Using "Methodology for assessing tourism potential in basic administrative territorial units" [5] we have given scores for the four administrative territories in which the Massif is placed, to get an overview of the tourism potential that should be targeted for development. This method considers in scoring of maximum 100 points for each territorial unit. The points are awarded for the presence and quality of natural tourism resources, cultural heritage, tourism and technical infrastructure, by weighting all marks awarded (Figure 2).

Analysis of the "Strategy of National Piatra Craiului Park Visitor" [6] and "Park Management Plan" [8, 9] helped us obtain graphics and drawing conclusions about the tourism potential.

#### 4. RESULTS

The rating methodology that assesses tourism potential of administrative territorial units, was applied to each administrative territorial unit where is placed Piatra Craiului Mountains: Zărnești, Rucăr, Moeciu and Dâmbovicioara.



Figure 3. Administrative - territorial units on the area which is Piatra Craiului Mountains

(Data source: <http://earth.unibuc.ro/download/romania-seturi-vectoriale> [6])

The highest score was registered in Moeciu territorial administrative unit: 75,5 points, followed by Rucăr: 74 points and Dâmbovicioara: 73 points. Cumulative score is 74.04 out of a total of 100 points (Figure 4). Score was diminished since there is a great lack of therapeutic resorts and no specific infrastructure and technology.

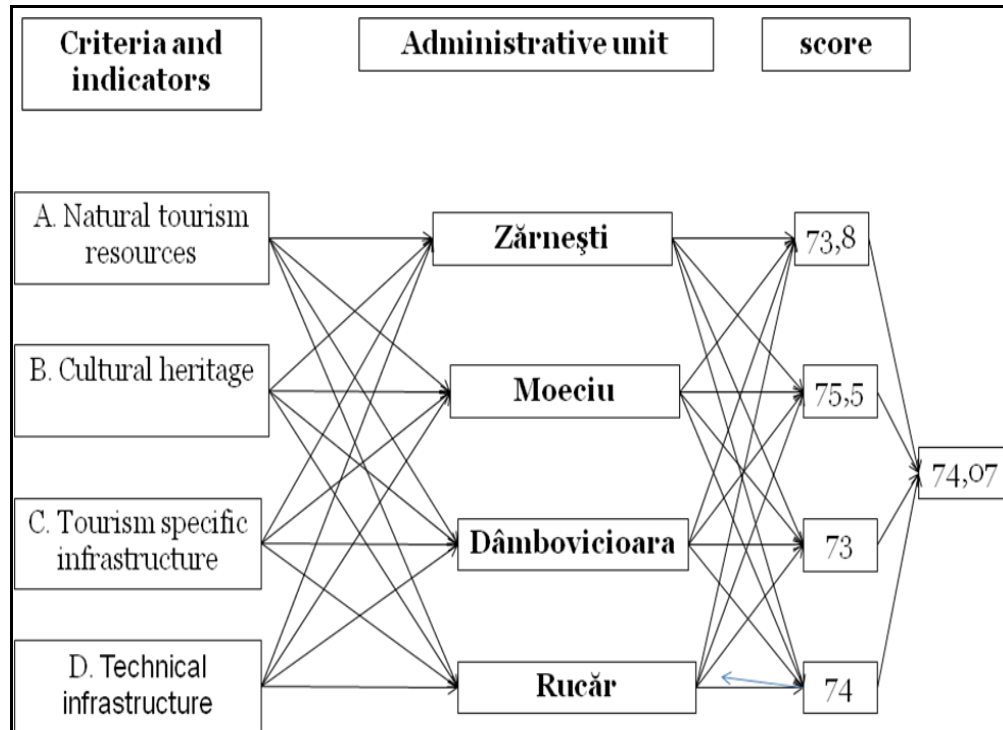


Figure 4. Scores given to administrative units analyzed (Data source: Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism [5])

Piatra Craiului Massif has a great tourism potential that could increase through the development of cultural tourism, preservation of traditions, tourism relaxation, remedial, educational, social, scientific, business, etc. and by using the elements contained in the four administrative units (Figure 5).

Mountain location (in the center of the country) allows easy access on all its sides. It is noticed that the massive's main access points are the routes from the South (Dâmbovicioara - 48%, Rucăr - 13%) that were preferred by 61% of tourists who visited this massif [8, 10](Figure 6).



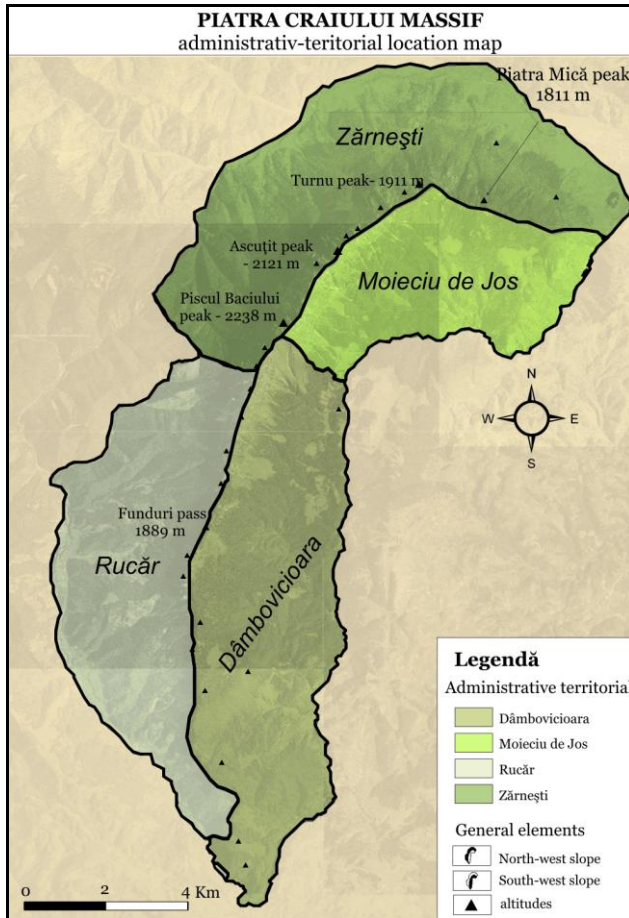


Figure 5. Piatra Craiului Massif

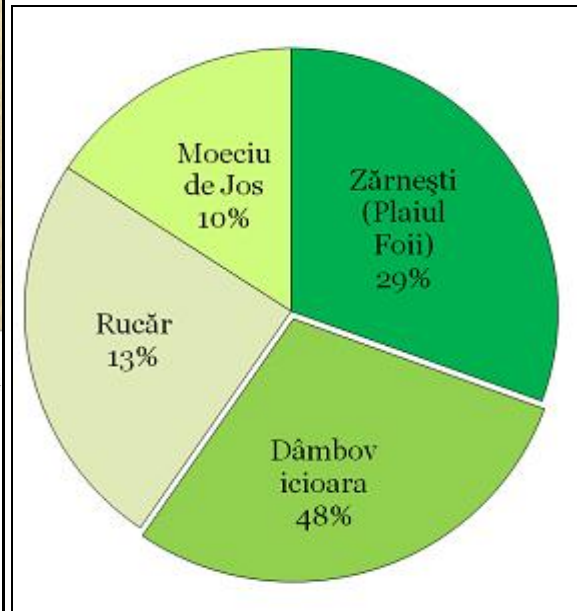
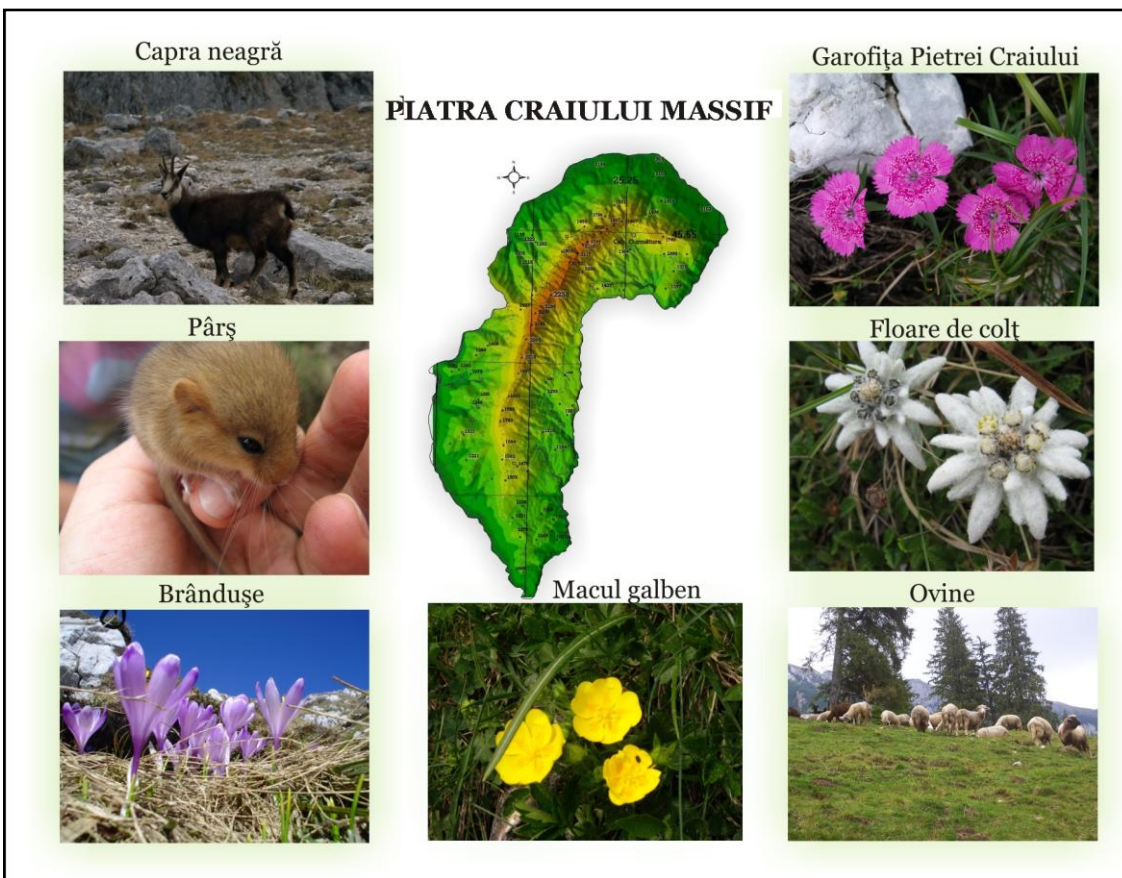
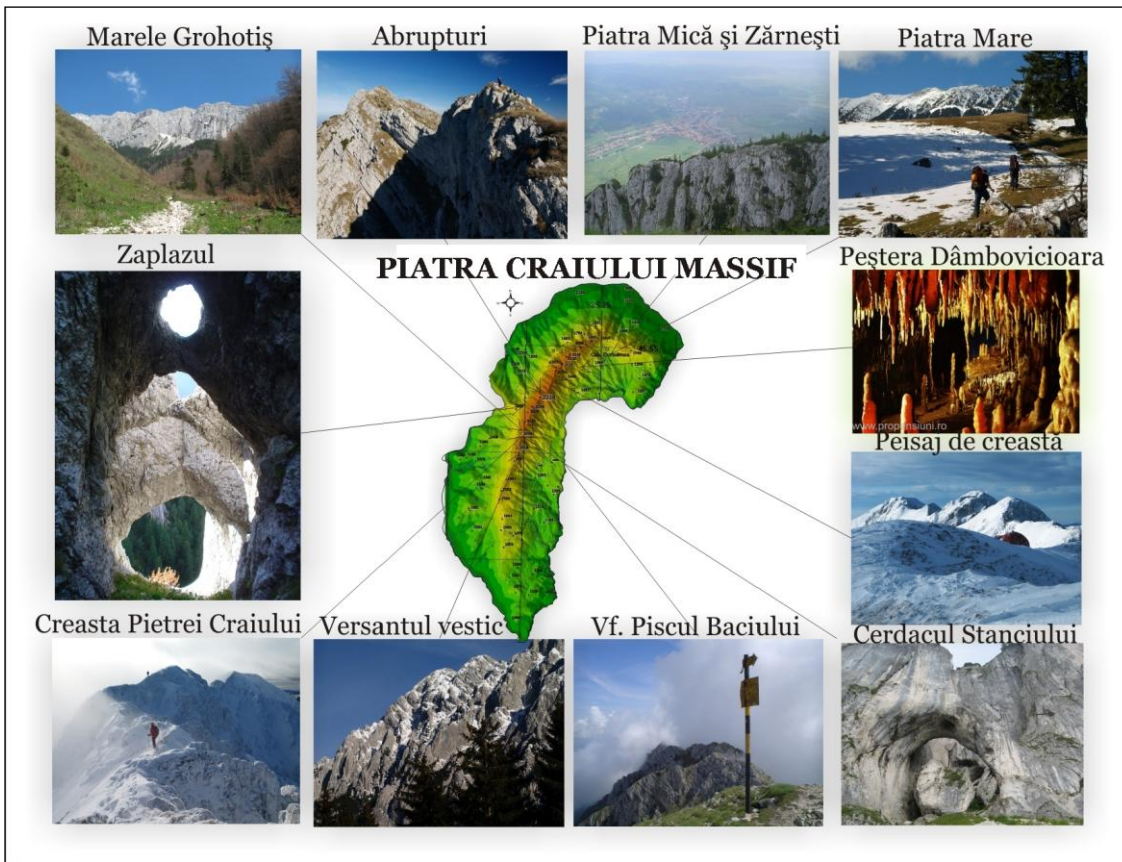


Figure 6. Access preferences

This is attributed to the presence of Dâmbovița Gorges and Dâmbovicioarei Gorges and Cave, representing important attraction points for tourist (Figure 7). Through the research conducted in this area we have seen a lack of organization for development of the area. The Northern part is preferred by 39% of tourists (usually those who opt for hiking on the mountain ridge).

Attractions offered by these mountains are multiple. We notice many geomorphological and speleological objectives (Cerdacul Stanciului, Grand Debris, Dâmbovicioara Cave, more than 200 avens, many spectacular cliffs, etc.), landscape, scientific interest (Garofita Pietrei (*Dianthus callizonus*) Craiului, Edelweiss (*Leontopodium alpinum*), chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*), etc.), cultural (traditional specifics), etc. (Figure 7).



↑Figure 7. Attractions points (landscapes and geomorphological, speleological, scientific objectives) of Piatra Craiului Massif

Carried out research shows that young tourists are those visiting Piatra Craiului Mountains. The observed prevalence shows that tourists with ages 18-49 years old represent 93% of all visitors, 18-29 years old tourist represent 48% of all visitors and 30-49 years old tourist represent 45% [8](Figure 8). The problem arises because the massive might be the point of interest to older people by promoting cultural tourism, scientific relaxation. Organizing cultural camps and events would attract very young students and tourists (under 18 years old).

The main activities practiced by tourists are the leisure tourism and landscape tourism followed by camping, picnicking, hiking, cycling and visiting caves (Figure 9). A more diversified offer of some complete packages would attract tourists in other directions such as: equestrian tourism, adventure, thematic, culture, photography tourism, etc.. Analyzing tourists' options [3,6], there is a preference for tent camping (64%), accommodation in chalets and shelters (27%) and to hostels and hotels (9%) (Figure 9, 10, 11).

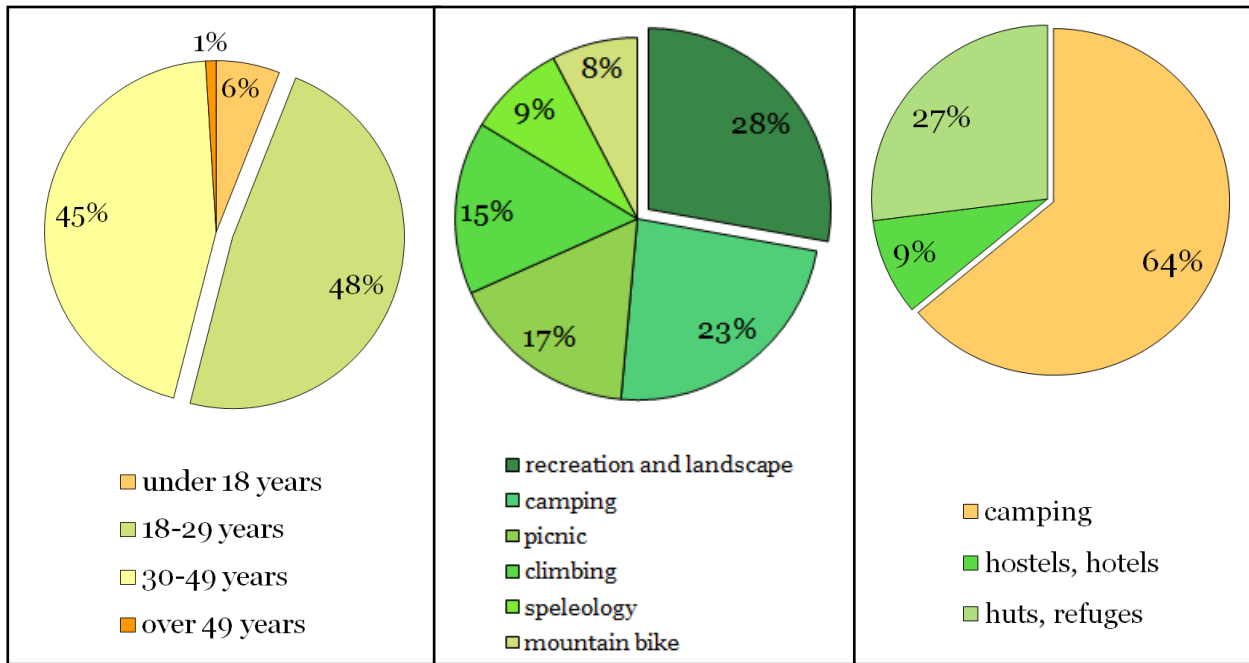


Figure 8. Tourists' Age

Figure 9. Main activities Practiced

Figure 10 .Accommodation preferences

(Data source: Plan to Visit Piatra Craiului National Park [8])

Thus appears the lack of arranged space for camping since the massif is organized within these three campsites: Plaiul Foi area, Curmatura Chalet and Brusturet Chalet, insufficient practical locations for the flow of tourists (Figure 11). In this case tourism is practiced chaotic, with visible negative consequences to the environment. This could be changed by applying sanctions and by creating several areas designated for that purpose or by making offers for accommodation at hotels or pensions.

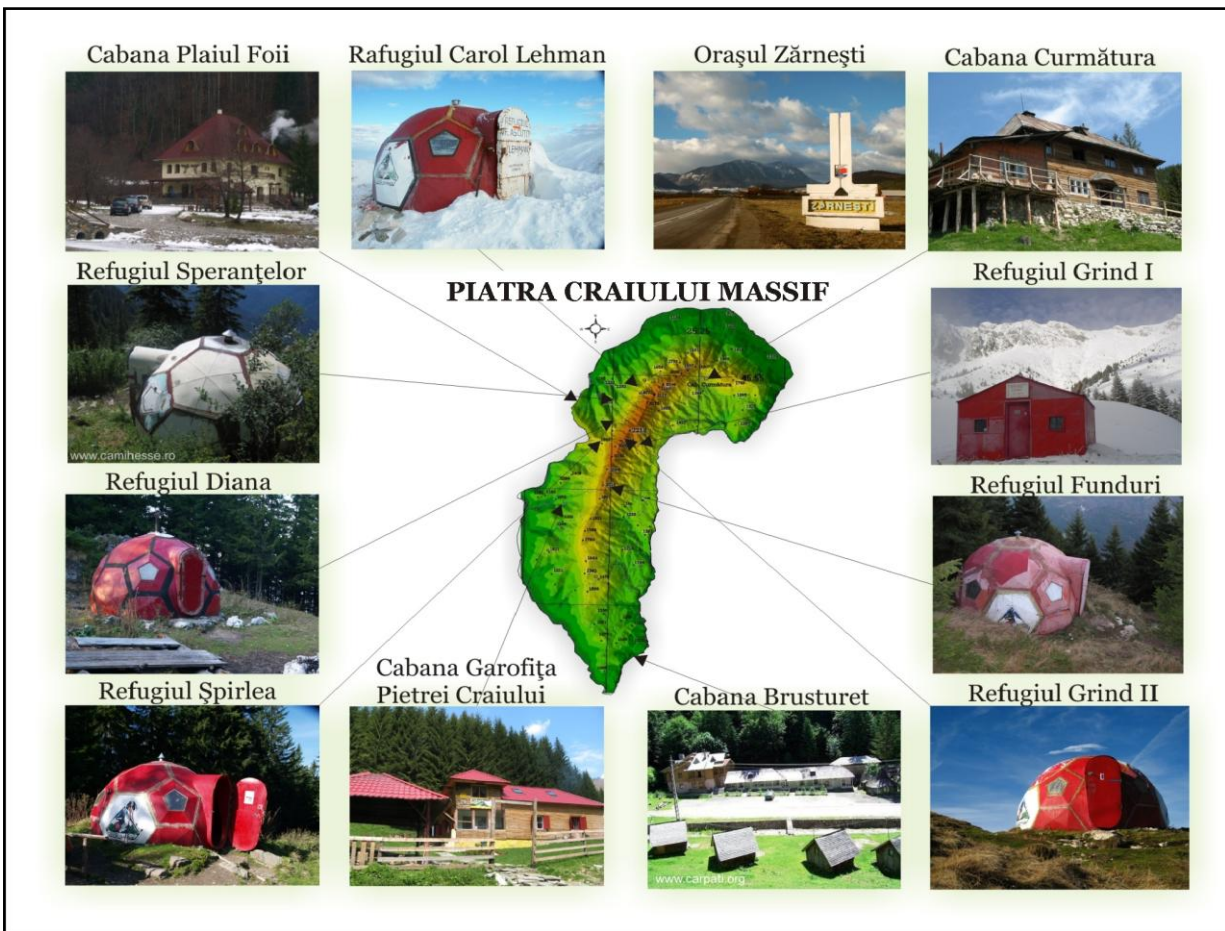


Figure 11. Accommodations possibilities in Piatra Craiului Mountains (Photo sources: Madalina Teodor)

The main mean of transport that tourists prefer in order to reach the massif and to move from one point to another is private car (89.7%). Those who prefer walking represent only 10.3% of total number of visitors [8] (Figure 12.). We believe that a system of free public transportation during special events, such as launching special projects (non-motorized displacement) could be an attractive development strategy of a type of tourism

sought. Traveling with traditionally decorated caravans could be an attraction for tourists willing to relax and recreate. Cycling would represent great interest to those who enjoy working out. So, we believe that it would encourage sports, would comply with the laws on access to vehicles monitored within the national park and environmental protection laws.

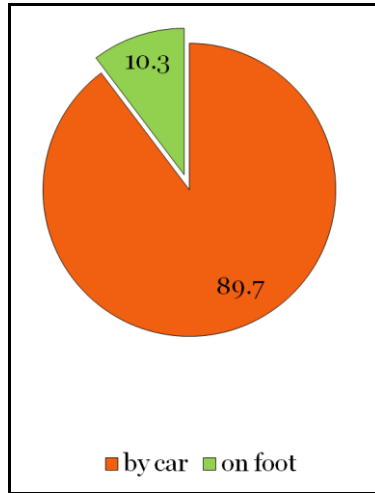


Figure 12. Tourists' preferences of the way of travel  
(Data source: Plan to Visit National Park [8])

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

Piatra Craiului Mountains have a great tourism potential, targeting people of all ages. With a score of 74.07 points, they outline the huge potential that these mountains have. Awareness of tourism potential would be the first step that should be done to develop the tourism, by improving information and promotion. By organizing thematic mountains events, ecological, cultural, scientific events, can exploit more of the tourist potential. Diversification and improvement of tourism by creating suitable infrastructure, by launching attractive packages for all ages, by arranging camping areas at European level and the development of strategies for development in accordance with environmental protection would be a great addition for the entire area. High potential could attract European funds to develop ecotourism, sports tourism (mountain bike, trekking, climbing), cultural tourism, scientific, equestrian, relaxation and recreation, etc., actions that would improve the image of Romania and the Romanian tourism.

## **6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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