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DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL CULTURAL AND EXPERIENTIAL TOURISM SERVICES BY PROMOTING TRADITIONAL BANAT CRAFTS AND GASTRONOMY TOURS

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Abstract *Thematic tours are tourism products organized around a central theme, with the aim of offering visitors authentic and educational experiences. In the case of the Banat region, these may include routes dedicated to traditional crafts, local gastronomy, multicultural heritage, traditional villages or ethnographic festivals. Experiential tourism emphasizes the active participation of the tourist and his/her involvement in destination-specific activities, thematic tours allowing visitors to observe and directly experience traditional production processes, participate in craft workshops or discover local culinary dishes through tastings and gastronomic demonstrations. Thematic tours generate important economic effects on local communities, stimulating the consumption of local products and services and contributing to the development of complementary economic activities, such as: guesthouses and accommodation units; local restaurants and gastronomic points; agri-food producers; craft workshops; cultural event organizers.*

Introduction

Experiential tourism is a form of tourism based on the active participation of the tourist in activities that generate emotions, learning and personal involvement. This concept has become increasingly popular with the development of the "experience economy", according to which consumers seek memorable experiences that provide them with emotional satisfaction and opportunities for personal development.
In experiential tourism, the tourist is no longer a simple observer, but becomes a direct participant in the activities carried out in the destination. Thus, the tourist experience is built through interaction, authenticity and active involvement.



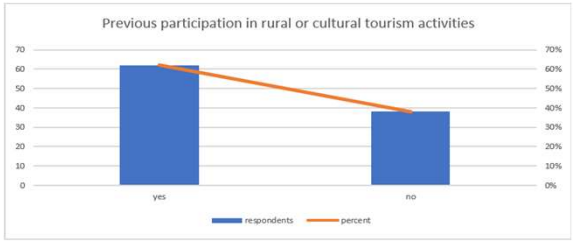
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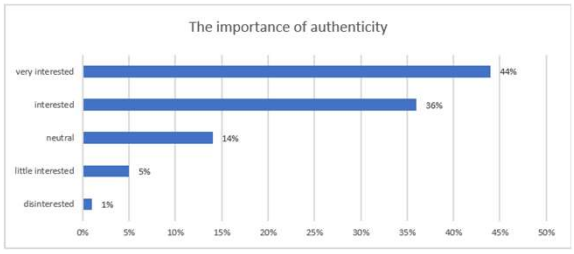
Experential tourism activities

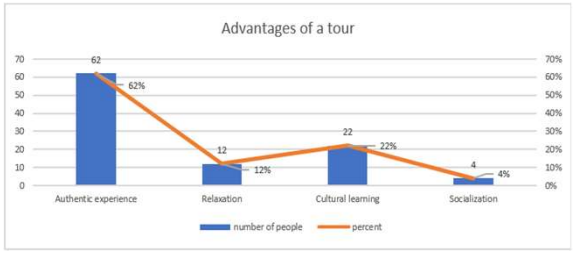
Material and method

In order to identify the interest of potential tourists in developing a tour of Banat's traditional crafts and gastronomy, a quantitative research was conducted, based on the application of a questionnaire.
The research instrument used was the structured questionnaire, consisting of closed questions and questions with predetermined answer options. It aimed to investigate relevant aspects for the configuration of the proposed tourist product.
The research is exploratory in nature, and the results provide an indicative picture of the interest shown by respondents for cultural and gastronomic tourism in Banat. The information obtained was subsequently used to substantiate the proposal for a tour "Living Traditions in Banat", structured over a period of three days and two nights.

Results and discussions







Conclusions

The Banat traditional crafts and gastronomy tour is shaping up as a complex and competitive tourist product, which combines the valorization of intangible cultural heritage with the current demands of tourists. It contributes not only to the diversification of the tourist offer, but also to the preservation of traditions, the revitalization of the rural environment and the support of the local economy. The Banat traditional crafts and gastronomy tour represents a relevant example of valorizing cultural heritage within experiential tourism. By adapting to market demands and integrating sustainability principles, this type of tourism can become an important factor in regional development, contributing to preserving local identity and creating authentic and memorable tourist experiences.