

# THE MARKETING MIX - A BASIC TOOL IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE TOURIST DESTINATION

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**Abstract:** *Kotler's 2002 definition of place marketing is as follows: "Place marketing means designing a site to meet the needs of its target markets. The development of places means the development for a place of a systematic long-term marketing strategy, directed towards the identification and development of the natural and potential attributes of an area".*

*The elaboration of a marketing mix for the tourist destination is the main tool for marketing planning and for adopting the most appropriate strategies. Given that each tourist destination has its specificity, the marketing mix must contain its own elements, adapted to the objectives set.*

*In this paper we chose to exemplify a way to apply and combine the components of the following marketing mix: product, price, distribution, promotion, staff, partnerships, packaging, security, process management for the tourist destination Brasov Area.*

**Keywords:** *Place marketing, Marketing mix, Tourism, Destination.*

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## 1. BRASOV AREA- A TOURIST DESTINATION

A tourist destination is defined according to the following variables: the attractions and the environment within the destination, the facilities and services available at the destination, the accessibility of the destination, the image and the brand of the destination.

### 1.1. Defining the Tourist Destination Brasov Area

Brasov Area is located in a special natural setting. In the southern part it is delimited by the Făgăraș, Bucegi, Piatra Mare, Piatra Craiului and Postăvaru Mountains, in the Eastern part there is the Brașov depression, and in the Western part it is bordered by the Olt river valley. Due to the geographical potential, mainly mountainous, tourists coming to the area can practice sports and recreational activities in all seasons.

Being located in the center of the country, in the famous Transylvania region, Brasov Area is one of the most visited tourist destinations in Romania. The multitude of ethnic groups (Saxons, Hungarians) that marked the development of this area and their influence on architecture, local culture is an attraction for tourists.

In Brasov Area, tourists can discover one of the most beautiful cities in Romania - the city of Brasov which is a medieval city with a multitude of attractions: cultural tourist attractions (Dramatic Theater Sica Alexandrescu, Brasov Opera, Gheorghe Dima Philharmonic, Reduta Cultural Center, Library County, French Alliance, First Romanian School, etc.), historical and religious tourist attractions (Catherine Gate, Weavers' Bastion, White Tower and Black Tower,

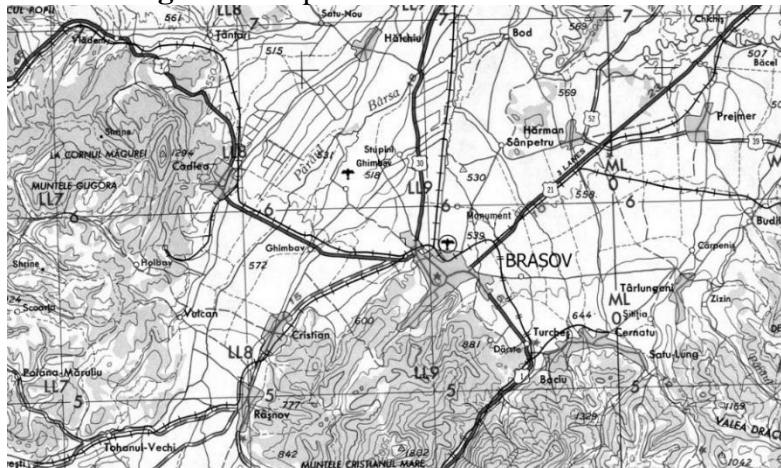
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Graft Bastion, Black Church, St. Bartholomew's Church, St. Nicholas Church, etc.), natural tourist attractions (Tâmpa Nature Reserve), museums (History Museum, Museum of Art and Ethnography, Museum of Urban Civilization, etc.) as well as various events (musical, theatrical, cinematographic, etc.).

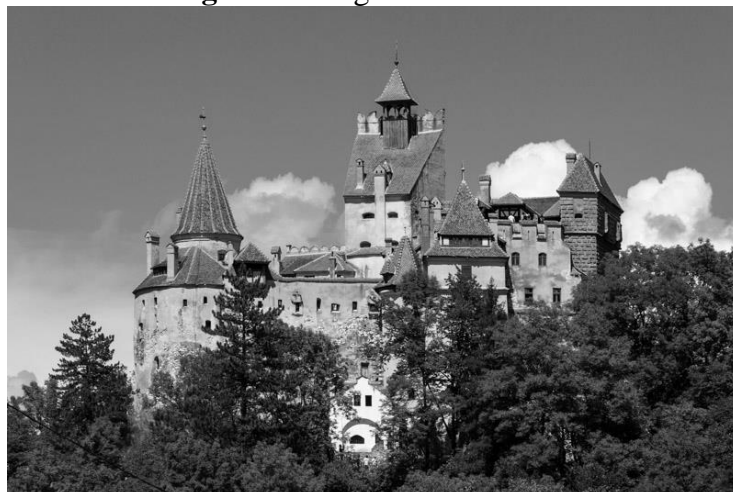
Most of the tourists who come to Brasov Area aim to visit the surroundings of Brasov, very rich in historical, religious, cultural and natural objectives: Poiana Brasov and Predeal resorts are the most famous winter resorts in Romania, during the summer being sought for mountain tourism, cycling, conference tourism; the villages in the Bran-Moeciu area are real Transylvanian mountain villages where tourists can know the local traditions and customs, to mention the presence of the famous Bran castle - Dracula's castle; the town of Râșnov with the peasant fortress; the city of Făgăraș with its fortified fortress; the churches and fortified fortresses in the villages around the city of Brasov; Piatra Craiului National Park Nature Reserve. It should be mentioned that besides the worldwide known Dracula's Castle from Bram Stoker's book which became a brand in itself, we can also say about Bran that it is an important representative of the word "brand" by joining the words Bran-Destination, this as an interpretation modern after its Norwegian origin.

**Figure 1.** Map of Barsa land- Brasov area



Source: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/11/Map\\_of\\_Burzenland%2C\\_1959.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/11/Map_of_Burzenland%2C_1959.jpg)

**Figure 2.** Image of Bran Castle



Source: <https://www.twoscotsabroad.com/bucharest-to-transylvania-bran-castle/>

**Figure 3.** Image of Rasnov Citadel



**Source:**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%A2%C8%99nov\\_Citadel#/media/File:R%C3%A2%C5%9Fnov\\_Citadel\\_\(Rosenauer\\_Burg\)\\_01.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%A2%C8%99nov_Citadel#/media/File:R%C3%A2%C5%9Fnov_Citadel_(Rosenauer_Burg)_01.jpg)

The accommodation possibility is diverse and adapted to all requirements and budgets: from hostels and tourist cabins to hotels and pensions. Tourist services in the Brasov area are developed and diversified as a whole, but there is room for improvement. Meal services are generally diversified and of good quality. There is an untapped opportunity to attract the Western European public interested in organic and home-cooked food with Romanian specifics. This is expected from the accommodation units in the rural area, but most of them opt for the more convenient option, namely the purchase of food from the supermarket.

Even though there is a wide range of local handicrafts, there are not many shops that specialize in selling them. Recently, there have been several shops dealing with the sale and rental of items for outdoor recreation (mountain bikes, tents, etc.).

Travel agencies are an important element for the development of a tourist destination such as Brasov Area. There are about 80 travel agencies in the area but only a few are focused on incoming tourism activity. Along with them, several associations work to promote the area as a tourist destination and to develop a sustainable tourism (Association for the Promotion and Development of Tourism - fulfills the role of destination management organization, County Sustainable Development Agency and Metropolitan Association for Sustainable Development).

Transport services are satisfactory, even good compared to other areas of the country. The railway transport service between Bucharest-Predeal-Brasov is quite good. Lately, most of the roads in the area have been rehabilitated. However, there are still roads that are almost non-functional, mostly in rural areas, they need to be identified and rehabilitated. The inauguration of an airport in the Brasov area would be a future investment that would ensure the development of tourism.

Tourist information services have been improved recently. There is a tourist information network at the level of Brasov Area, comprising 7 centers: Brasov, Predeal, Rasnov, Fagaras, Prejmer, Bran, Zarnesti. The mission of the tourist information offices is to inform the tourists about the attractions in the area and to promote them by offering informative materials.

In Brasov Area, there are several possibilities for schooling in the field of tourism. Transilvania University of Brasov offers those interested the opportunity to study in Economics of Commerce, Tourism and Services. Other schools specializing in tourism are the School of Hotel Management, the Brasov School of Tourism. There are also post-secondary training programs for tourism available in Bran and Brasov.

The access of tourists in the Brasov area is facilitated by the acceptable road and railway infrastructure, compared to other areas of the country, which connects with the country's capital, but also with Western Europe. Transport infrastructure is the biggest problem of Romanian tourism. Investments in a highway that crosses Romania are very necessary and urgent. The construction of an airport would create the possibility of connections between the Braşov Area and the main western cities.

The tourist destination was promoted under the brand "Be.Live It". This brand aims to promote the cultural diversity and dynamics of a modern, new area and was presented at the World's Leading Travel Trade Show in Berlin where it took 2nd place. This brand was designed by the Association for the Promotion and Development of Tourism (APDT) in partnership with the Brasov County Council, the Agency for Sustainable Development of Brasov County (ADDJB) and the advertising agency Firestarter, to represent the tourist destination area. Brasov at the Berlin Tourism Fair and to promote a favorable image of it internationally. The problem was that not enough money was invested to promote it both nationally and internationally. Even if the idea was good, it did not ensure its visibility at all and without promotion it did not have any significant results.

## 1.2. Types of tourism practiced in the Brasov area

The tourist offer of the Braşov area provides conditions for practicing many forms of tourism:

- *Mountain hiking* tourism is favored by the existence of mountain massifs, large areas covered with forests, the existence of marked trails, mountain huts and accommodation bases in neighboring towns.
- *Cultural-historical and religious tourism* is favored by the existence of numerous historical, religious and architectural monuments throughout the area.
- *Sport tourism* such as mountaineering, downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, mountain biking, hang gliding and gliding, hunting and sport fishing in hilly and mountainous areas, "image hunting" safari of some species such as wolf, bear and lynx, in Brasov living 30% of Europe's large carnivorous population.
- *Thematic scientific tourism* by sections of biodiversity, speleology, geology, paleontology. It can be practiced in the nature reserves of the Brasov area.
- *Rural tourism or agrotourism* is practiced especially in the area of Bran villages (Fundata, Moeciu, Bran) and in Poiana Mărului, areas that constitute an area with a special natural, historical and tourist potential, as well as in the Săcele-Tărlungeni area.
- *Ecotourism* is the closest tourism to nature, offered as a tourist product in: Zărneşti area, area in which this type of tourism is developed in the most advanced stage in Romania, favored both by the exceptional natural environment (Piatra Craiului National Park) and by the activity of organizing and promoting this type of tourism by the Administration Piatra Craiului National Park; Vama Buzăului area, gateway to the Ciucaş Massif, where the Ecology and Ecotourism Educational Center currently operates; Buneşti-Viscri area, an incipient area in the practice of ecotourism but with a special potential for a further development in this direction; the Făgăraş area, favored by the natural environment, in



which an incipient ecotourism tourism is practiced, but without a coherent and unitary strategy in this respect.

- *Business and conference tourism*, from the perspective of which the Brasov area enjoys a growing interest.

## 2. THE SYSTEMIC APPROACH OF THE MARKETING MIX OF THE TOURIST DESTINATION BRAȘOV AREA

After having an overview of Brasov area as a tourist destination, let us have a look of the components of the marketing mix from a systemic perspective.

The tourist destination Brasov area is a system because it is a set of elements with certain common features that form an organized whole. The policies and strategies of the marketing mix can be approached from an overall perspective or from that of its component elements.

The tourist destination Brasov area can be divided into component sub-destinations due to the fact that the area is a destination in itself, but also the elements that make it up can be considered independent destinations. In this paper it was considered the division of the area according to the most representative attractions as follows:

- the city of Brasov - is the sub-destination considered the most representative for the area according to the results of quantitative research;
- the fortified churches, the fortresses from Făgăraș, Râșnov, Rupea, Bran castle - were grouped due to the form of tourism they represent, namely the cultural-historical tourism;
- Poiana Brasov and Predeal resorts;
- Piatra Craiului National Park (it is the best known in the category of unique natural attractions).

It is desired to determine the existing connections between the system represented by the Brasov area and its component elements.

**The city of Brasov** - is the sub-destination considered the most representative of the area by both tour operators and tourists. It has been included in various tours of Romania, Transylvania or has been considered an independent destination. As a product policy, it is proposed to design "city-break in Brasov" tourism products, with multiple accommodation possibilities for all budgets, lasting 2 nights / 3 days because it is a sufficient time to discover the city. This product must include the possibility of contracting sports and leisure activities. It is recommended to approach the strategy of stimulating the current market and attracting new tourist markets.

In the case of Brasov, the strategy of low prices should be approached in order to attract as many tourists as possible and to be able to compete with other similar destinations. The city of Brasov is facing the phenomenon of seasonality, so it should be considered the strategy of adjusting tariffs accordingly.

For the distribution and promotion of this type of product, intensive distribution and promotion by all means proposed at the area level is recommended.

We propose a tourist package of the "city-break" type developed over 3 days, the theme "Discover the city of Brasov", with free program and suggested activities: city tour with tourist guide / tourist bus / segway with companion, walk on Tâmpa, circuit of cultural-historical

objectives, various sports activities, entrance to the Aquatic Paradise. As accommodation and dining options, different units will be proposed on classification levels. Tourists will be transported by bus to the destination, only on request.

It is recommended to conclude strategic partnerships between the city of Braşov and cities in other areas of the country (for example Constanţa, Iaşi, Oradea, Arad) and abroad for mutual promotion.

In order to ensure the security of tourists, the strategy of deterring crimes and delinquency can be applied by harshening those who commit crimes against tourists, increasing security (presence of law enforcement in as many locations as possible) and informing about dangerous areas in Brasov Area. It is also recommended to apply the strategy of neutralizing the negative aspects by informing tourists about the security level of the destination Brasov area, by advising tourists to fight against local crime (for example do not leave unsupervised luggage or pay attention to the exchange commission).

### **Churches and fortresses in the Brasov area**

This tourist product is a circuit type and has usually been included in larger circuits (for example, "discovering the areas of Transylvania" or "tour of the fortified cities and churches of Transylvania"). Churches and fortresses in the Brasov area, as well as those in the rest of Transylvania, are attractions of great interest, especially for foreign tourists. These are very well preserved, unique monuments, some of them being in the UNESCO patrimony. It is proposed to keep this tourist product of integrated circuit type but with a clear delimitation of the patrimony of each county because each area included in the circuit is identified with its patrimony. Due to the positioning of these attractions especially in rural areas, this product encompasses two forms of tourism: cultural and rural. As the product will not be changed, it is recommended to adopt the current market stimulus strategy.

Regarding the tariff of this type of tourist product, it must be established in accordance with the other counties that make up the circuit. In this approach, the rates should be the same for both Romanian and foreign tourists. It is proposed to develop an access card to such objectives with a pre-established, preferential, reduced rate for groups. The low price strategy approach is the most appropriate. There are two examples of such churches:

- 1) The **Prejmer fortified church** ( German: *Kirchenburg von Tartlau*) is a Lutheran fortified church in Prejmer (*Tartlau*), Braşov in the Transylvania region of Romania and the ethnographic area of the Burzenland.

The church was founded by the Germanic Teutonic, and then was eventually taken over by the Transylvanian Saxon community. Initially Roman, it became Lutheran following the Reformation. Together with the surrounding village, the church forms part of the villages with fortified churches in Transylvania UNESCO World Site.

- 2) **Harman Fortified Church is one of the 25 UNESCO WorldHeritage Sites in Romania** Located in the heart of Harman (*Honigburg* in German, meaning *Honey Castle*) village, this fortified church dates back to the 13th century when Saxons built the original structure. Strong walls and bulwarks surrounded the church and on its sides, massive towers were added

**Figure 4.** Map of Prejmer fortified church (UNESCO World Heritage Site)



**Source**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prejmer#/media/File:Prejmer\\_200609.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prejmer#/media/File:Prejmer_200609.jpg):

**Figure 5.** Image of Harman Fortified Church (UNESCO World Heritage Site)



**Source:**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H%C4%83rman#/media/File:RO\\_BV\\_Harman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H%C4%83rman#/media/File:RO_BV_Harman)

Even if this type of product could attract a large number of tourists interested in cultural tourism, the discovery of unique monuments, it is not exploited at its real value due to the lack of efficient distribution and promotion. Although this type of product appears in the offer of some Romanian and foreign tour operators, their area should be increased. It is proposed to adopt an intensive distribution strategy, which involves the use of a large number of intermediaries.

The following promotion strategies are recommended for this type of product:

- Documentary information strategy and pedagogical strategy, both meant to provide information that would arouse curiosity;
- Creating events (such as the Medieval Festival Tournament of the Citadels);
- Organizing info-trips for the representatives of the tour operators and travel agencies in order to know directly the tourist product;
- Participation in specialized tourism fairs.

It is proposed to design a tourist package with the theme "Tour of fortified cities and churches in Transylvania" which includes visiting them, visiting Transylvanian villages in their vicinity, providing accommodation and dining in rural areas, entertainment program every evening to discover traditions and local customs. The transport will be done by bus; tourists will be accompanied by specialized guides throughout the tour. The duration will depend on the number of areas included in the circuit.

The design of a tourist package of the type mentioned above involves the consideration of partnerships in the cultural-historical field between the Brasov area and other areas in Transylvania in order to design a unitary product and establish common policies and strategies.

It is recommended that the policies and strategies of security, personnel and process management be the same as those proposed for the city of Brasov.

**Predeal and Poiana Brasov resorts** rank 3rd in the preferences of tourists visiting the Brasov area. These tourist destinations are especially sought after for winter sports (alpine skiing, cross-country skiing, snowboarding, tobogganing, skating, learning sports with the help of specialized instructors). These two tourist resorts are the most famous in Romania and benefit from a highly developed infrastructure, brought to European standards during the organization of the European Youth Olympic Festival in 2013. The tourist product for the winter season should be in the form of "a week in the mountains" which includes, in addition to basic services, a common access card to the ski slopes, daytime entertainment program (e.g. competitions, raffles) and evening (e.g. concerts, traditional evenings). The tourist product Predeal and Poiana Braşov face the phenomenon of seasonality, like any resort dedicated to winter sports. In order to diminish this phenomenon, tourist products destined for the summer season should also be elaborated. The tourist product destined for the summer season should also be in shape for a week in the mountains but with the possibility of practicing summer sports (hiking, cycling, etc.). The strategy that should be considered is to penetrate the internal and external market with the previously proposed products.

A global tariff (all inclusive) should be set for these products. The strategy of low tariffs is recommended for good quality, at least in the short term, in order to face the competition represented by countries such as Austria or Bulgaria. Given that demand is particularly pronounced in winter, the differentiated tariff strategy for the rest of the year should be considered.

It is proposed to adopt the intensive distribution strategy, through a large number of intermediaries: electronic, tour operators and travel agencies, tourist information centers, in tourism fairs, etc.

Regarding the promotion of these products, it is recommended:

- designing a portal intended exclusively for these two resorts, with the possibility of making reservations in real time, with the presentation of all events, possibilities for spending time, etc.;
- production of well-documented, attractive promotional materials to be distributed free of charge to tourists, information centers and travel agencies;
- organizing info-trip excursions for the representatives of the tour operators and travel agencies in order to test these tourist products;
- organizing internationally renowned competitions;
- participation in tourism fairs.

It is proposed to conclude partnerships with other areas of the country (especially the coastal area and Bucharest) as well as abroad in order to promote the offers. Partnerships with major European tour operators are also considered strategic in order to include these products in their offers.

It is proposed to develop a tourist package with the theme "A week in the mountains", lasting 7 days, including accommodation and meals of various categories, access card to the ski slope (winter), rental of sports equipment for winter or for the summer as the case may be, animation program. Tourists will be transported by bus to the destination. Inside the resort, a mini-bus will be made available to tourists who will have regular trips to ensure the transport of tourists from the accommodation to the slopes, during the winter.



For the security of tourists, they will be informed about the security level of certain places in these resorts and by their advice and counseling in order to avoid various frauds (e.g. use of ATMs exclusively in closed spaces, not leaving unattended luggage, use of safes in rooms hotel for storing valuable etc.).

The staff working in tourism in these resorts is helpful and kind, so the quality of the process of providing tourist services is generally considered satisfactory by tourists. Most organizations active in tourism are up to date with technological developments and benefit from state-of-the-art facilities: card readers, online booking systems, etc. Most tourism organizations apply the policy of generating and maintaining customer relations by setting up databases with them and by giving due importance to feedback on the quality of service delivery.

**Piatra Craiului National Park** is unique in the Romanian Carpathians due to the imposing relief of the limestone ridge 25 km long and due to the rare species of flora and fauna. At present there are very few travel agencies or organizations that offer tourist products, stays, or simple trips to protected areas, because they involve a high degree of specialization from the organizers and companions. The tourist offers in the Piatra Craiului National Park area are addressed especially to young people (pupils, students) and include: guided excursions, tourism programs based on cycling and horseback riding, wildlife watching in freedom, climbing. Access to Piatra Craiului National Park offers a unique opportunity to create a combination of themed tourism products (cave exploration, medicinal plants, protection of mountain and ecological areas, observation and study of wildlife, as well as a whole series of recreational excursions, ecotourism or educational excursions), to be sold directly to tour operators and domestic and foreign travel agencies. The most appropriate product strategy is to penetrate the market with such thematic products.

As this nature reserve is a new destination launching on the market, it would be appropriate to adopt the low price strategy primarily because it addresses a category of middle and low income consumers.

The selective distribution strategy is the most appropriate because it involves distributing the product only to tour operators and travel agencies specializing in ecotourism, rural tourism, sports tourism, etc. and in web-sites and tourism fairs with this theme.

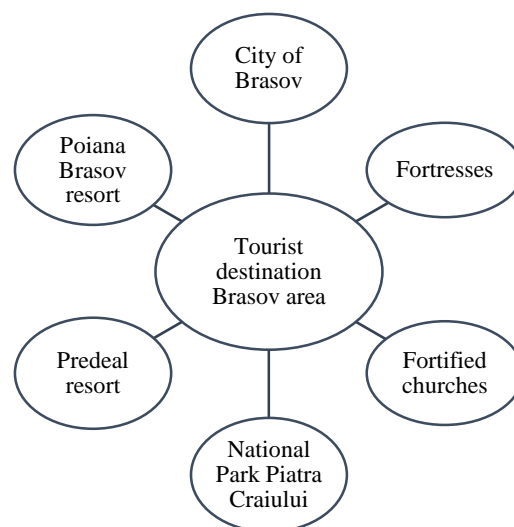
The following promotion strategies are recommended for the types of tourism products listed above:

- Documentary information strategy, meant to inform tourists about this area and to arouse their curiosity;
- Elaboration of promotional materials such as leaflets, tourist guides, CDs, etc. to be distributed to travel agencies, information centers, possibly stores with sports equipment in the country and abroad;
- Distribution of tourist products within web-sites that promote ecotourism, thematic, rural, sports tourism as well as the presentation of products at tourism fairs with the same theme;
- Organizing events for tourists on the occasion of the European Day of National Parks (May 24), within the Piatra Craiului National Park;
- Carrying out exchanges of experience with institutions and organizations from countries with advanced practices in ecotourism, such as Germany and Great Britain, especially because tourists from these areas are interested in Romania in general and Transylvania in particular.

The partnership policy involves concluding them with organizations in the same field at national and European level, on the promotion of tourism products. A series of thematic tourist packages are proposed, targeting market segments such as: cave exploration, wildlife watching in the wild, educational excursions. Such packages require the accompaniment of tourists by specialized guides, depending on the topics considered. Accommodation for tourists will be made at tourist chalets in the Piatra Craiului mountains, a place where meals will be served. The duration of these packages will be 2 days and can be extended upon request. The transport of tourists will be done by bus to the starting point of the mountain route. Regarding the personnel policy, for such tourist products it is necessary the presence of a personnel with a high degree of specialization. That is why it is very important to adopt the right employee recruitment strategy based on experience in the field and a skill test. The staff development strategy must also be adopted in order to be up to date with the requirements of tourists. Regarding the Piatra Craiului National Park, it is recommended to implement the strategy of investments in security equipment and technologies because some activities present a high degree of risk (e.g. exploring caves or observing animals in the wild) and involve the use of special equipment. In terms of process management, as in the case of the other three sub-destinations, it is recommended to conduct market research in order to determine trends in consumer behavior and expectations of tourists.

Area-level policies and strategies as a system are determined by sub-destination policies and strategies as components of the system. Sub-destinations must adopt policies and strategies in line with those at the area level, there must be harmonization between them. For example, in terms of product policy, the products of the components taken in part make up the product offered at the area level. Pricing strategies at the area level as well as at the level of sub-destinations are in line, namely the adoption of low prices. Area-level partnership policies also target component sub-destinations. Sub-destination packages interrelate with the regional package. The distribution and promotion policies and strategies at the destination level in the Brasov area are made up of those proposed within the sub-destinations. So are security, personnel and process management. Considering these aspects, a model of systemic approach of the tourist destination Brasov area is proposed, which consists of sub-destinations. The graphical representation of this model is shown in Fig. nr.6.

**Figure 6.** Relation of policies and strategies at the level of the tourist destination Brasov area and its component elements (sub-destinations)



### 3. The Cluster Strategy Approach

The notion of tourism cluster refers to a geographical concentration of companies and institutions interconnected through tourism activities. It includes providers, services, governments, institutions, universities and competitors. The main objective of a tourism cluster is to bring together companies that usually operate on their own, to build a successful tourism product in a given region.

A cluster structure in tourism should include accommodation, catering services - which is its static element, and transport services, travel agencies and tour operators, car rental services - which are mobile elements.

The tourism cluster includes, in addition to accommodation, meals, entertainment and various attractions, tour operators and travel agencies, guides, car rental and tourist transport services, other services and activities such as organizations and support services, transport infrastructure, education and training, consulting and other business services. It is necessary the participation of all actors active in tourism, not just tourism service providers to design a cluster type structure. The government should encourage and fund programs to attract private investors, invest in infrastructure and promote tourism.

Within tourist destinations these cluster structures appear by themselves but must be supported and developed to reach their maximum potential. Their development should be supported by strategic planning, the support of the authorities, investment in infrastructure and joint marketing efforts. The interdependence that appears at the level of a destination between attractions, services, transport, information, promotion, induces the need for collaboration and it is obvious that if the actors at the destination level work together they have nothing to gain.

The satisfaction of the tourist depends not only on the attractions at the destination but also on the quality and efficiency of the services offered by hotels, restaurants, shops, transport. Therefore, in a global market where competition is very tight between tourist destinations, and in the context where new destinations always appear and the consumer changes his behavior, it is recommended to approach a cluster structure to become and remain competitive in the market. High-level cooperation successfully creates added value for both the tourist destination and the individual entrepreneur.

The first tourism cluster established in Romania "Carpathian Tourism Cluster Romania" is a network of professional and development organizations, with as members decision makers at regional and national level, experts in the tourism industry in Romania and was launched on November 1, 2010. Its mission is to promote sustainable tourism and create added value for the tourism industry in the Carpathian Mountains region. It was established at the initiative of the Association for the Promotion and Development of Tourism in Brasov County together with Monteoru Renaissance - Association for Sustainable Regional Development in Tourism (Buzau County). The marketing action plan for the Carpathian Mountains tourist region will be developed in accordance with the national brand and tourism strategy: "Romania - Explore the Carpathian Garden".

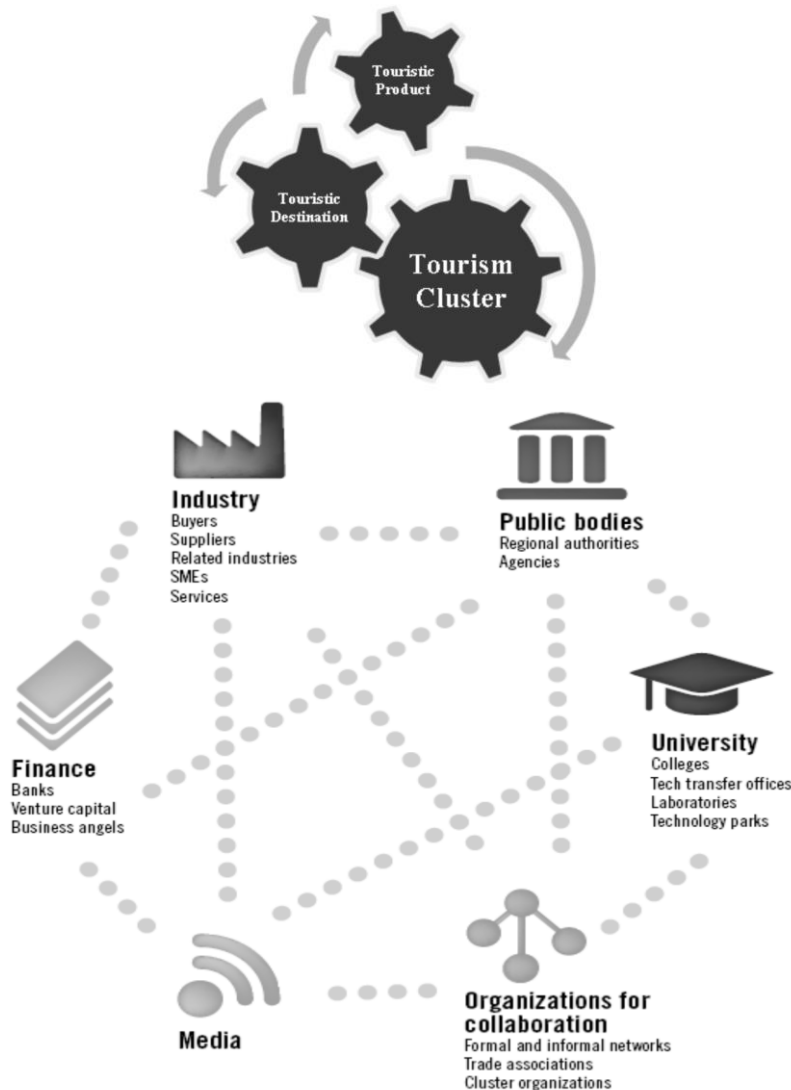
The considered objectives are the innovation and diversification of the tourist products and of the services associated to them, in order to increase the interest of the external and internal markets for the Carpathian Mountains, as a tourist destination. Also, the most important activities are increasing competitiveness by optimizing the value chain in the local tourism

industry and improving the quality of tourism services, in order to reach European standards. The cluster projects have an inter-regional character, focusing for the beginning, on the Carpathian and sub-Carpathian tourist regions in the center of the Carpathian Arc, including the counties of Brasov, Buzau, Sibiu, Covasna, Arges and Prahova. They will contribute to the development of local and regional partnerships, to the development of resources and capabilities of organizations in order to meet the general objectives of the cluster.

However, not all tourist destinations form cluster systems; only when they reach a high level of development can they form such integrated systems. Even if there are many partnerships in the Braşov area, there is no common integrated approach to target all tourism actors and to develop in the sense of harmonizing personal benefits with those in the area and to identify common beneficial development directions.

The following model presented in Figure 7, illustrates a cluster approach at the level of a tourist destination that is proposed for adoption by the Brasov area.

**Figure 7.** The model of a tourism cluster at regional level



**Source:** Adapted from Sölvell Ö., Clusters - Balancing Evolutionary and Constructive Forces, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., DanagardsGrafiska, Ödeshög, January 2009, pp. 16.



The competitiveness of the cluster approach proposed above depends on:

- human resources, natural and anthropic resources, development of tourist infrastructure, accessibility and security;
- current conditions of demand: level of education, preferences and motivations;
- the structure of the private environment and competition.

The competitive strategies that should be adopted inside and outside the cluster are based on the cooperation of all actors at the destination level in the Brasov area in order to innovate and differentiate the tourist experience offered.

Local authorities play a very important role in improving the competitiveness of the cluster by creating and maintaining tourism infrastructure, providing financial support to tourism investment projects, ensuring destination security, preserving the natural, historical and cultural heritage within the cluster.

The role of the University and tourism training schools within the cluster is to encourage the design of innovative and differentiation strategies for the cluster destination and to educate and prepare human resources.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

The marketing mix proposed as an example for Brasov Area is an aspect that can be discussed for further analysis regarding the variables proposed and also the strategies. The marketing mix specific strategies proposed in this article for Brasov Area, together with the systemic and the cluster approach can be proposed as a good practice example for other similar tourist destinations within a marketing plan. The conclusions resulted can be used in the comparison.

## **CONCLUSION**

Tourism is a dynamic phenomenon, which is constantly changing. The tourist market is constantly changing due to the existing and constantly growing competition. Tourist destinations, the basic pillars of tourism, face many challenges in order to enter and stay in this market. Therefore, the marketing activity within the tourist destinations is of major importance in order for them to be maintained at a competitive level. Marketing approaches in tourist destinations have become indisputable tools for their success.

In recent years, the tourism market has been severely affected by major economic changes which have also led to changes in consumer behavior. In this context, the orientation of tourists towards certain destinations to the detriment of others underlined the need for the current approach of policies and marketing strategies applicable to tourist destinations at a conceptual level.

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