

Media Image Analysis of the Western Region of Sălaj County

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Abstract: *The current study aims to identify the most important natural and cultural heritages of the Western Region of Sălaj County from Romania that could serve as a suitable foundation, as so-called “brand pillars”, for the future touristic promotion and branding of municipalities, and the region as a whole. The first chapter briefly presents the region and the most important municipalities. In the second chapter we present the conclusions drawn from the region’s media analysis. In the third chapter we present the analysis of the region’s online presence. In the fourth chapter we delve into an in-depth discussion attempting to answer the question: Which are the region’s most important heritages which possess touristic potential? In the fifth chapter we discuss the biggest challenges faced by the region as well as the factors which inhibit the exploitation of the region’s touristic potential. Finally, the sixth chapter will summarize the contents of the study and present our conclusions and final remarks regarding the region’s heritages and potential brand pillars.*

Keywords: *place branding, touristic promotion plan, media analysis, online media analysis, regional branding.*

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Introduction

The current study aims to identify the most important natural and cultural heritages of the Romanian Sălaj County that could serve as a suitable foundation, as so-called “brand pillars”, for the future branding of municipalities, and the region as a whole. The first goal was to identify the local and regional “brand elements” that could later serve as a basis on which to promote the entire region as a touristic destination. The first part of the study was comprised of a monograph and data analysis, during which we evaluated the results of the different work groups taking part in the project. The work groups surveyed the region in different scientific frameworks: biology, anthropology, cultural history and archeology. Furthermore, we have conducted several primary and secondary researches in order to help us gain a more comprehensive image of the entire region. During the primary researches we have conducted interviews with twelve opinion leaders of the region. On the other hand, the secondary researches focused on analysing the available development plans, the online presence of the region and its image in the media.

The structure of the study is the following: in the first chapter we briefly present the region and the most important municipalities. In the second chapter we present the conclusions drawn from the region’s media analysis. In the third chapter we present the analysis of the region’s online presence. In the fourth chapter we delve into an in-depth discussion attempting to answer the question: Which are the region’s most important heritages which possess touristic potential? We separate the discussion into natural and cultural heritages. We further separate the discussion of cultural heritages into important local architectural heritage, famous individuals associated with the area, regional folk traditions and customs, as well as the representative cultural events. In the fifth chapter we discuss the biggest challenges faced by the region as well as the factors which inhibit the exploitation of the region’s touristic potential. Finally, the sixth chapter will summarize the contents of the study and present our conclusions and final remarks regarding the region’s heritages and potential brand pillars.

1. An overlook of the region

The subject of our study is an area located in Romania, in the historical region known as Transylvania. It is part of Romania’s north-western development

region, and a part of Sălaj County administrative region. The area is located in the western side of Sălaj County, bordering Bihor (Bihar) County. The area has a territory of over 45000 hectares - 12% of Sălaj County's territory - and encompasses a total of eight townships and thirty-two villages. The eight townships are the following: Marca, Halmășd, Plopiș, Valcău de jos, Crasna, Boghiș, Nușfalău and Ip.

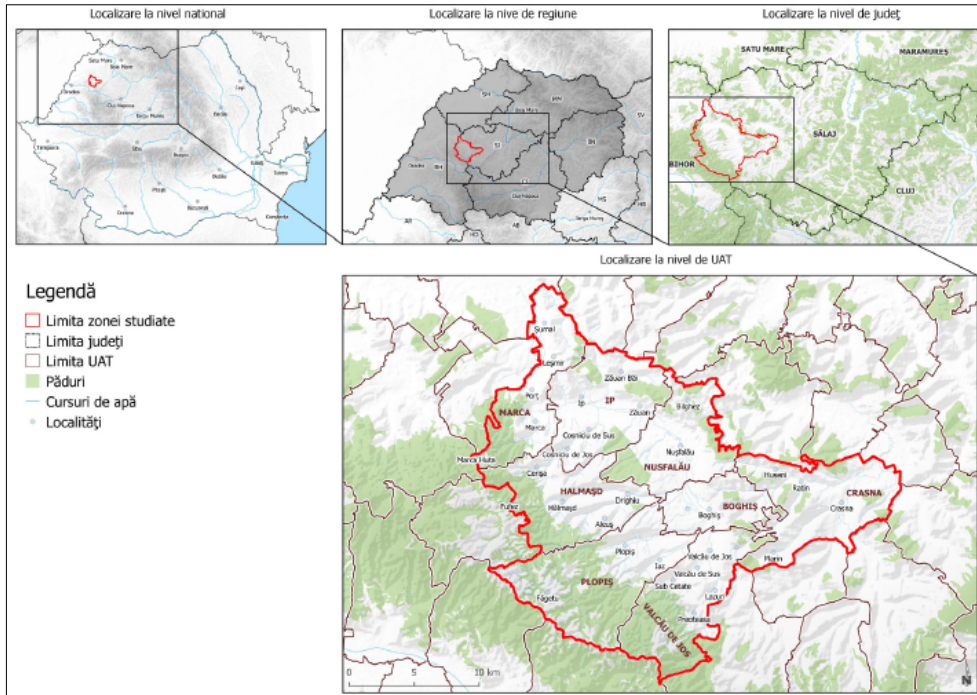


Image 1. The location of the studied area at national, regional and county levels

The township of Marca is located at the northwestern side of the region, and is comprised of five municipalities: the centre of the township - Marca, Șumal, Leșmir, Porț and Marca Huta. According to the 2011 census the population of the township is 2542, most of whom live in the centre of the township. Three quarters (75%) of the township's inhabitants declared their mother-tongue as Romanian and more than half (51%) are of Orthodox religion. Halmășd is located on the western side of the region, to the south of Marca and Ip. The township of Halmășd is also comprised of five municipalities: Halmășd, Cerișa, Detrehem, Aleuș and Fufez. The most recent census shows that the township has 2393 inhabitants, most of whom have declared their mother-tongue as Romanian (80%) and their religion as Orthodox (90%). Plopiș, with its over 8000 hectare large territory, is the largest of the studied townships. Despite its size, however, it is comprised of only three municipalities: Plopiș, Iaz and Făgetu. The total population of the township

is 2405, and is comprised of the following major ethnic groups: 59% Romanian and 32% Slovak. The religious groups are proportional: 52% Orthodox and 32% Roman Catholic. Valcău de Jos is located at the region's southern part, and is comprised of six municipalities: Ratovei, Valcău de Jos, Valcău de Sus, Sub Cetate, Lazuri and Preoteasa. The township has 2851 inhabitants. The township of Crasna is located at the most Eastern part of the region, and is comprised of four municipalities: Crasna, Ratin, Huseni and Marin. According to the 2011 census the total population of the township exceeds 6480 (6485), thus being the largest township from the studied region in terms of population. Most of the inhabitants (64%) declared Hungarian to be their mother-tongue and are Calvinists (53%). Boghiş is located to the west of Crasna. Boghiş used to be a part of Nuşfalău before becoming an independent local government in 2005. Apart from Boghiş, Bozieş, located to the southwest of Boghiş, is also a part of the township. Similarly to Crasna, the township of Boghiş is also mostly populated by Hungarians (69%) and proportionally with this ethnic majority, its religious majority is also comprised of Calvinists (58%). Nuşfalău is made up of only two municipalities: Nuşfalău, the centre of the township, and Bilghez, a village to the north of Nuşfalău. According to the 2011 census, the township is inhabited by 3600 people of whom approximately 90% live in the centre of the township. Ethnically the majority of the population is Hungarian (70%) and 60% of the inhabitants are Calvinists. To the northwest of Nuşfalău lies the township of Ip, which is made up of five municipalities. They are the following: Zăuan Băi, Zăuan, Ip, Cosniciu de Sus and Cosniciu de Jos. The township is inhabited by almost 4000 people (3946), 40% of whom live in the centre. According to the 2011 census, the township is not clearly dominated by any of the ethnic groups, although the Hungarian ethnic group (47%) slightly outweighs the Romanian one (37%). Two large groups can also be differentiated in terms of religious groups: 46% Calvinists and 39% Orthodox. Within the studied region we have highlighted the township centres with the largest populations such as Crasna, Nuşfalău, Ip or Boghiş. Crasna is located at the southwestern part of Sălaj County, 11 km southeast of Şimleu Silvaniei and 19 km northwest of Zalău, along the Crasna riverbank. It is the region's most populous municipality, with over 4500 inhabitants. It was first mentioned in writing in 1213, under the name of Karasna. The settlement was established at the crossroads between Zalău, Ciucea, Şimleu Silvaniei and Nuşfalău. This explains why the shape of its layout is radial. The favorable geographic location contributed to the fact that Crasna was one of the most dynamically evolving municipalities from the region. Nuşfalău is located on the western side of Sălaj County, on the Barcău riverbank, at the junction of several important roads. Before 1876 it held the rank of borough, and is currently a township centre, with the second largest population after Crasna within the studied region. Its population exceeds 3200 inhabitants. The township centre

Ip is located along the road connecting Zalău and Oradea. Its population exceeds 1600 inhabitants. Its industrial development was spurred on first by a nearby coal mine, later by the petroleum extraction and processing plant from Benesat. Ip holds less potential for tourism than the other studied municipalities. Its name became known in Romania due to a famous massacre during the Second World War. It also has the shortest name of all the Romanian municipalities. Boghiș is situated at the western side of the county, 5 km south of Nușfalău and 15 km southwest of Șimleu Silvaniei. It is currently accessible only by the county road connecting Șimleu Silvaniei and Ciucea. Its population exceeds 1500 inhabitants (1578), most of whom are Hungarians (72%). Of the municipalities from the studied region, it is the only one regarded as a touristic centre, primarily due to its therapeutic thermal baths.

2. Analysis of the region's image in the media

Taking into consideration the entire region's ethnic distribution, we have analyzed both Romanian and Hungarian press products. During our analysis, we've relied on materials that were accessible online. In order to increase the spectrum of our analysis, we've analyzed not only the online platforms of press products, but the online platforms of audiovisual media institutions as well. For the analysis of Romanian media presence, we've exclusively analyzed the press products of online news platforms.

In the case of Romanian press products we've analyzed news agencies (Agerpres, Mediafax), online platforms of press products covering nation-wide news (HotNews, Adevărul, Gândul, Evenimentul Zilei, Jurnalul Național, România Liberă, Cotidianul) and online platforms of press products covering county-wide news (Graiul Sălajului, Magazin Sălăjean, Sălăjeanul). We've conducted searches on these selected platforms using the following names of locations: *Șumal, Leșmir, Porț, Marca, Marca Huta, Cerișa, Halmașd, Drighiu, Aleuș, Fufez, Plopiș, Iaz, Făgetu, Ratovei, Valcău de Jos, Valcău de Sus, Sub Cetate, Lazuri, Preoteasa, Crasna, Ratin, Huseni, Marin, Boghiș, Bozieș, Nușfalău, Blighez, Zăuan Băi, Zăuan, Ip, Cosniciu de Sus* and *Cosniciu de Jos*.

Due to the fact that online platforms covering nation-wide news contained few mentions of these locations, we've extended the analyzed time period, stretching back until 2005, so as to include all relevant articles. Online platforms covering county-wide news, on the other hand, mentioned these locations much more often; we have therefore restricted the time period of the search to include only the year 2015 in this latter case. 108 search results were included in the analysis of media presence; these were then grouped into categories, differentiating between economic, cultural, tourism-related, political and social news. The most popular category was social news: 48% of the results fit into this category. The second most

popular category was tourism-related news with a 19% share, while the third most popular category was political news, with a 15% share. The distribution of news articles by categories can be seen in the chart from **image 2**.

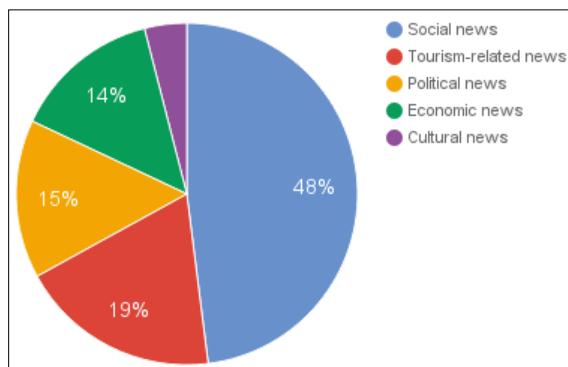


Image 2. Distribution of search results from Romanian online platforms by category

Our analysis shows that most of the online press products take their content from the two news agencies (Agerpres and Mediafax). In terms of overall tone, 40% of the search results were negative, 37% neutral and only 23% had a positive tone. Several of the subjects covered by the platforms covering nation-wide news can be argued to have had a negative effect on region’s public perception. The most important of these were the following: poorly developed infrastructure, bad condition of roads and numerous car accidents; frequent floods, constant danger of flooding; suspicion of corruption among local mayors and ministers, the most notable of which being the recent handover of the baths from Boghiș, financed by Elena Udrea.

The 108 articles were distributed among the press products in the following way: Graiul Sălajului (31 results), Adevărul (26 results), Magazinul Sălăjean (16 results), Sălăjeanul (8 results), România Liberă (7 results), HotNews (6 results), Agerpres (4 results), Gândul (3 results), Mediafax (3 results), Evenimentul Zilei (2 results) és Jurnalul Național (2 results). Of the press products covering nation-wide news, the Adevărul news platform yielded the most results. 49% percent of the results from nation-wide news platforms were found on the Adevărul website. România Liberă and Hotnews were the other two websites covering nation-wide news which provided more than 5 results.

Of the online platforms covering county-wide news, Graiul Sălajului yielded the most results (56%), followed by Magazinul Sălăjean (29%) and Sălăjeanul (15%). **Image 3** shows the distribution by category among the different online platforms.

News platform	Cultural	Economic	Tourism	Social	Political
Mediafax	0	0	0	1	2
Agerpres	0	1	2	1	0
HotNews	1	3	0	2	0
Adevărul	0	4	10	10	2
Gândul	0	1	0	1	1
Evenimentul Zilei	0	0	0	1	1
Jurnalul Național	0	0	0	1	1
România Liberă	2	2	0	2	1
Cotidianul	0	0	0	0	0
Graiul Sălajului	1	0	8	17	5
Sălăjeanul	0	1	0	7	0
Magazin Sălăjean	0	3	1	9	3

Image 3. Distribution of search results from Romanian online platforms by category

Of the analyzed online platforms, Cotidianul was the only one that produced 0 results with our keywords (names of locations). In the case of platforms covering county-wide news, like Graiul Sălăjean, Sălăjeanul or Magazinul Sălăjean, social news tends to dominate. In the case of platforms covering nation-wide news, however, there is no apparent dominating category of news.

Of the Hungarian online platforms, we have analyzed the following: Krónika, Transindex, Maszol.ro, Erdély.ma, Erdély TV, Erdély FM, MTVA, Szabadság, Párika Rádió, Fótér, Kolozsvári Rádió, Agnus Rádió, Mária Rádió, Reggeli Újság, Bihari Napló, Nyugati Jelen, Bányavidéki Új Szó, Aradi Hírek, Ér Hangja, Szatmár.ro, Friss Újság, Nagyvárad.ro, Új Kelet, Székelyhon.ro, Udvarhelyi Híradó, Székely Hírmondó, Háromszék, Fun FM, Más Rádió, Prima Rádió, Seps Rádió and Marosvásárhelyi Rádió.

We have used the following keywords when searching in the above-mentioned online platforms: *Szilágyság, Szilágy megye, Márkaszék, Somály, Leclsmér, Porc, Bulyovszkytelep, Halmosd, Szilágycseres, Detrehem, Elyüs, Tufertelep, Gyümölcsénes, Krasznajáz, Magyarpaták, Alsóvalkó, Rátonbükk, Felsővalkó, Valvóvárnya, Újvágás, Füzespaptelek, Kraszna, Ráton, Krasznahosszúaszó, Máron, Szilágybagos, Szilágyborzás, Szilágynagyfalva, Búrgezd, Zoványfürdő, Szilágyzovány, Ipp, Felsőkaznacs and Alsókaznacs.*

During our analysis, only three of the above-mentioned platforms yielded results for our keywords: Szabadság, Krónika and Transindex. We have found 47 results on Szabadság, 14 results on Krónika and 4 results on Transindex. Most of the results were found related to the township centers, as well as several municipalities from Sălaj County, but these were mostly outside of the studied region, such as Zalău (the county seat), Jibou or Șimleu Silvaniei. The search results of the Hungarian online news platforms from Transylvania can be seen in the table from **image 4**. The results have been once more distributed into five categories: cultural, economic, tourism-related, political and social news.

News platform	Cultural	Economic	Tourism	Political	Social
Szabadság	27	14	1	3	2
Krónika	4	5	3	1	1
Transindex	4	0	0	0	0

Image 4. Search results of Hungarian online news platforms from Transylvania by category

It can be clearly seen that over half of the media coverage of the region fits into the “cultural news” category (54%), while the second most popular category is the economic news, with a 29% share. Tourism-related and political news yielded 4 results each (6%), while social news had the smallest share of these categories: 5%. The earliest news piece was from 2002, and the latest from January 2015. The analyzed time period was further extended until 2002 due to the small number of articles related to the region. We have included all available articles into our analysis.

3. Analysis of the region’s online presence

The region’s online presence will be most relevant to outside target groups with no direct ties to the region; as such, their impression of the region is most often based on online sources. Search engines have a key role in browsing the internet. Because Google is by far the most popular search engine, being used for approximately 70% of all searches, we have decided to concentrate our analysis of the region’s online presence on the search results displayed by Google. We looked at web page results and image results separately.

3.1 Analysis of Google web page results

In our first analysis we searched for the following keywords in the google.ro search engine: *regiunea Sălaj*, *Nuşfalău*, *Marca Sălaj*, *Halmaşd Sălaj*, *Plopiş Sălaj*, *Valcău de Jos*, *Crasna Sălaj*, *Boghiş Sălaj* and *Ip Sălaj*. We then searched for the following key words on the google.hu search engine: *Szilágyság*, *Szilágynagyfalu*, *Márkaszék*, *Halmosd*, *Gyümölcsénes*, *Alsóvalkó*, *Kraszna*, *Szilágybagos* and *Ipp*. During our analysis we have taken into consideration the first 10 results for each of the keywords.

The results from the Romanian keywords show that there is only one online platform which appears on the frontpage in the case of every keyword, and it is none other than the Wikipedia page of the respective municipality or township. Other than the Wikipedia pages, the other most popular platforms were the news platforms. Six searches produced results which included news articles about the region or municipalities within the region, with a total of nine (9) such results. The keywords *Sălaj* and *Boghiş* each produced three such results, thus having the largest shares. The former keyword led us to news about the entire county (eg. *the citizens from Sălaj County are the poorest from the north-western Development Region*),

while the latter led us to several articles about the renovation of the public baths last year (eg. *1 million euros were spent on renovating the Boghiş baths*). The web pages of the respective municipalities' town halls had the third largest shares of results. There were only two cases, those of Marca and Boghiş, where we noticed that the town hall's website is not among the first ten results. Among the social media websites, Youtube was the most popular one, as there were four keywords which led us to audiovisual material such as small films presenting the region (Boghiş), longer documentaries (Marca Sălaj), or short interviews with the townships' mayors on the Youtube channel of Graiul TV (Halmaşd Sălaj, Marca Sălaj). In terms of Facebook page results, we noticed a lower share. Only three municipalities (Marca, Boghiş, Crasna) appeared on Facebook in some form that was present among the first ten results. In some cases the Facebook pages were not dedicated to the municipalities themselves, but to some specific tourist attractions (eg. *the Facebook page of the Boghiş baths*). Crasna was the only municipality for which we've found a website of a tourist information centre among the first ten results. The only other keyword that led to tourism-related informative websites was *Boghiş Sălaj*.

Wikipedia pages were also prevalent among the results for Hungarian keywords (11 results). Apart from Wikipedia, a website run by ÉLő Erdély Egyesület (www.szilagysag.eloerdely.ro), presenting the region of Sălaj also proved to be popular (8 results). This website appeared among the first ten results for all keywords except *Márkaszék*, *Halmosd* and *Gyümölcsénes*. The third most popular website was the cybo.com yellow pages service (5 results), which did not appear among the first ten results in the case of the following keywords: *Szilágyság*, *Kraszna*, *Szilágybagos* and *Ipp*. Among the results were also five Google image results, as well as five instances of the Hungarian Electronic Library (Magyar Elektronikus Könyvtár - www.mek.oszk.hu), more specifically chapters from *Petri Mór: Szilágy vármegye monográphiája* (Monograph of Szilágy County) that were relevant to the keywords in question. The only case of a website belonging to a local town hall appearing among the first ten results was for the keyword *Szilágynagyfalu*. There was also only one case of a local association's website appearing among the first ten results, namely the Bánffy Cultural Association (Bánffy Kulturális Egyesület) from Boghiş. A local tourist information centre's website appeared in the cases of Gyümölcsénes and Kraszna. It is important to note, however, that in the case of Gyümölcsénes, the displayed result was actually the website of a tourist information centre from Camăr, from Bihar County, which merely referred to the tourist attractions of Gyümölcsénes. There were three instances of Facebook pages appearing among the first ten results, namely in the cases of *Gyümölcsénes*, *Kraszna* and *Szilágybagos*. It is also important to note, however, that the Facebook page of Gyümölcsénes is inactive, while Kraszna and Szilágybagos have updated pages, which have managed to accrue a more serious following.

During our analysis we've observed significant differences between the Romanian and Hungarian results. In the case of Romanian keywords, the most popular results were Wikipedia pages (24%), general presentation pages (17%) and articles appearing on news platforms (10%), while in the case of Hungarian keywords general presentation pages (17%), tourist information pages (15%) and pages containing specific information (12%) were the most popular. The distribution by category of all search results can be seen in the table from **image 5**.

Web page type	Number of results	Percentage of total number of results
Wikipedia pages	33	18.33
General presentation pages	30	16.67
Specific pages	18	10.00
Tourist pages	16	8.89
Social media pages	15	8.33
News platforms	13	7.22
Online monograph, encyclopaedia, thesaurus, library	12	6.67
Google image results	11	6.11
Web pages of institutions	8	4.44
Other	6	3.33
Yellow pages	6	3.33
Economic pages	4	2.22
Ecclesiastic pages	4	2.22
Pages with irrelevant content	4	2.22
Total	180	%

Image 5. Distribution of Google search results by category (frequency and percentage share from total number of results)

3.2 Analysis of Google image results

Visual materials appearing online play a vital role in constructing the identity of a region or a municipality. We have therefore analyzed Google image results separately, taking into consideration the first 15 results for each keyword. We have used the following keywords: *Nuşfalău, Marca Sălaj, Halmăşd Sălaj, Plopiş Sălaj, Valcău de Jos, Crasna, Boghiş* and *Ip Sălaj*, as well as their Hungarian counterparts *Szilágynagyfalu, Márkaszék, Halmosd, Gyümölcsénes, Alsóvalkó, Kraszna, Szilágybagos* and *Ipp Szilágy*.

Based on the results of the searches with Romanian keywords, we've noticed that the most popular visual materials can be separated into three categories: photographs of the municipality and its surroundings (20%), photographs depicting architectural heritages (19%), as well as photographs capturing local events and scenes from everyday life (13%). The distribution of visual materials by category can be seen in the chart from **image 6**.

Of the most frequently displayed relevant visual materials, the following are worth highlighting: the Boghiş baths, the Protestant church from Crasna, Bánffy

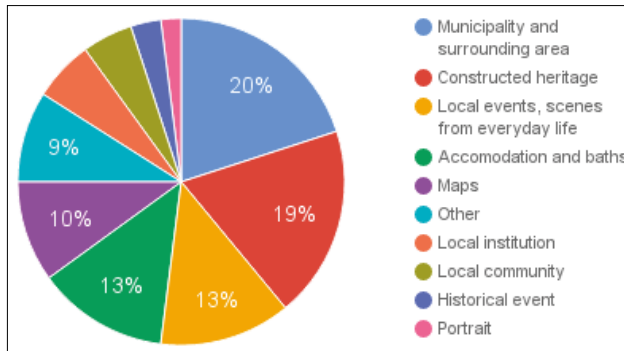


Image 6. Google image results for Romanian keywords by category

Castle from Nuşfalău, the wooden church from the township of Marca, as well as the Protestant church from Vălcău de Jos. Most of the local sights that appear among the image results are architectural heritages.

Based on the results of the searches with Hungarian keywords, we've noticed that the most popular visual materials can be split into three categories: architectural heritages (32%), maps (17%), as well as photographs of the municipalities and the surrounding areas. The distribution of visual material by category can be seen in the chart from **image 7**.

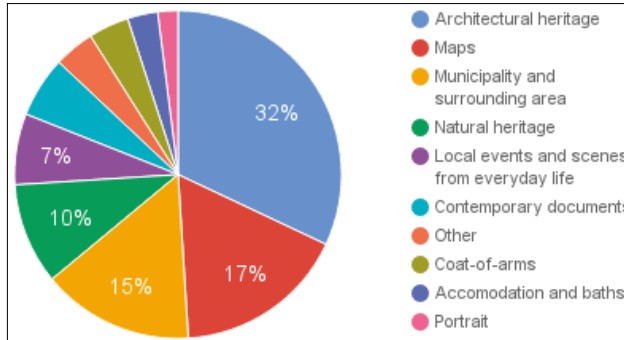


Image 7. Google image results for Hungarian keywords by category

Of the most frequently displayed relevant visual materials, the following are worth highlighting: the Bánffy Castle from Nuşfalău, the Sipot Valley Waterfalls located in the township of Halmăşd, the Protestant church from Vălcău de Jos, the ruins of the Fortress of Vălcău, located on the territory of the township of Vălcău de Jos, the Protestant church from Crasna, as well as the Bánffy Castle from Boghiş. Just as with the Romanian keywords, most of the local sights that appear among the image results are architectural heritages. The keywords *Márkaszék*, *Gyümölcsénes* and *Ipp* yielded mostly irrelevant image results.

4. Local values

For identifying the local values we took into account the results of our primary and secondary evaluations and posed an emphasis on the interviews made during our primary research. The conducted interviews were mixed type, partially structured ones and we established a list of themes for guidance although during the interviews we discussed these topics in detail and tried to understand the problem in its depth. The aim of the primary research was to get a very detailed and real overall picture about the studied region. During the research we focused on those settlements which seem to stand out because of their size, economic situation or touristic attractions. We conducted a total of 12 interviews in three different settlements (Crasna, Nuşfalău and Boghiş) with personalities whose opinion is important for the local community, who take an active part in the life of their communities and thus have a wider perspective of the current situation. For a detailed list of the interviewed persons see Annex 1. In our attempt to identify the local values we studied the architectural heritage, the important personalities born in the region as well as folk traditions, events and natural values.

From the point of view of the architectural heritage the outstanding buildings are usually churches but the region has a few interesting castles, manors and ruined fortresses too. In Marca we may find an Orthodox, Baptist and Greek Catholic church as well as the remains of a Dacian fortress. An important touristic site of the area is the wooden church from Porţ with its spectacular, colourful painted interior. Halmăşd has Orthodox, Greek Catholic and Baptist churches too. The buildings characteristic for the region are the wooden churches from Cehu Silvaniei, Cerişa and Drighiu. From the point of view of the architectural heritage the current development plan of the north-west of Romania (2014-2020) emphasises the wooden churches from the Maramureş and Sălaj region as important touristic sites. In Plopiş there is a Catholic stone church built in 1882, in Iaz we may find a Greek Catholic church from 1733, in Făgetu there is a Roman Catholic church built in 1894. The online analysis confirmed that the Reformed church and the ruins of the Valcău fortress are important sites in Valcău de Jos. Before 1896 on the place of the actual Reformed church stood a meeting house which was restored on the centennial of the church. The remains of the Valcău fortress stand on the hill covered by woods, overlooking the village of Subcetate. We may also find characteristic wooden churches in villages like Lazuri, Preoteasa and Valcău de Sus. The Reformed church situated in the centre of Crasna was originally built by Catholics between 1380 and 1400 in a late Gothic style. In 1909 it was reshaped and provided with a four storey tower and coffered wooden ceiling. Beside the Reformed church Crasna has a Roman Catholic and a Baptist church, and an ethnographic museum as well. Boghiş had a medieval church which was rebuilt between 1792 and 1794. Another characteristic building of the village is the Bánffy

castle which currently functions as a nursing home. Bozieş has a Greek Catholic wooden church dating from 1781. The Reformed church from Nuşfalău is a historical monument which, despite the renovations, preserved its late Gothic style. In the place of the current church once stood a Paulist convent built in 1325. Since the 15th century the Bánffy family owned several manors in the region. The current one, situated in the centre of Nuşfalău was built in the 18th century, partly in the baroque and partly in the Greek Revival style. In the centre of Ip there is a Reformed and a Greek Catholic church as well as a monument remembering the crimes committed during the Second World War. Other similar buildings are the wooden Greek Catholic church in Cosniciu de Sus, the stone church in Cosniciu de Jos and the Reformed church in Zăuan dating from 1680 and fitted with peculiar painted furniture.

Based on the interviews and other available sources we determined those well known personalities who were born in the region and are regarded highly by local communities. In Crasna we shall mention Farkas Cserey's name, who was a prominent botanist in Transylvania. One of his major achievements was the botanical garden established in Crasna which unfortunately does not exist anymore. Since 2003 his name is remembered by a memorial tablet. Nuşfalău is closely linked to the Hungarian poet János Arany whose parents were born in this village. The village community erected a bust in his honour, they yearly organise a series of events called Arany János Days and the local library and park bears his name as well. Another famous personality born in Nuşfalău is the writer and naturalist Árpád Szabó, founder of the Transylvanian Carpathian Society, and the writer and teacher Miklós Major whose work on traditional wine storage was awarded by the Ethnographic Museum from Budapest in 1990. A prominent personality born in Boghiş is the composer and music teacher József Birtalan awarded with many prizes for his work and the poet Miklós Szabó, author of several hundreds of poems and the writer of the first monography of the settlement.

Folk dancing groups play an important role in the preservation of the folk traditions. The *Gyöngyösbokréta* from Crasna, the *Vadrózsák* and *Kéknefelejcs* from Nuşfalău, the *Mákvirág* in Ip and the *Ciberke* in Zăuan all perform and teach the dances of the region. These folk dancing groups involve both young and elderly people and perform regularly at different cultural events. Traditional folk costumes are not worn on a daily basis but we may see people wearing them during various cultural events. The costumes from Bilghez and Nuşfalău are more characteristic, in Bilghez women wear colorful cotton dresses while men are dressed in blue felt trousers while in Nuşfalău women wear a light overcoat with a scarf over it and men are dressed in coarse felt. Beside folk dancing groups in Boghiş and Nuşfalău there are local cultural clubs focusing on the preservation of local traditions. The preservation of local tradition is supported by the ethnographic

museums and collections of the region as well. Such museums and collections are available in Crasna, Nuşfalău and Iaz.

One of the most important local events are the Arany János Days from Nuşfalău organized yearly by the Reformed Church, the local government and school. The program includes folk dance performances, reciting as well as contests and competitions for all ages. Another important event of the settlement is the yearly organized Saint George Days. Their program includes different cultural events, folk dance and theatre performances, crafts workshops, a cooking competition as well as a short memorial event at the local Bánffy castle. The Trinity Hill situated in the vicinity of Nuşfalău is a popular pilgrimage site where religious events take place on a regular basis. Beside the already traditional Women's Day the community of Boghiş celebrates Men's Day too. In Crasna the most popular cultural event are the Village Days while Marca is famous for its pancake festival.

Nature reserves are the most important natural values of the region. The Lapiş forest situated in the vicinity of Nuşfalău lies on 980 acres. Ancient documents often mention the Sălaj region as „*terra ultra sylvania*” indicating that the landscape here has been covered mainly by forests. Another 25 acres of wetland reserve lie in the vicinity of Iaz. The Plopiş mountains are a Natura 2000 nature reserve marked as SCI (Site of Community Importance). These mountains lie on the territory of Bihor, Cluj and Sălaj counties, and within the latter one they stretch to Halmăşd, Marca, Plopiş, Valcău de Jos and Sâg. Beside its rich biodiversity there are many interesting architectural sites in these settlements, especially wooden churches. The hilly landscape is favorable for fruit production: plum, apple, apricot, nectarine, sour cherry, walnut and grape. Fruits are primarily turned into beverages. The Sălaj region is a traditional wine producing area but local brandies are popular too. The most important vine-growing areas within the studied region are around Ip, Zăuan, Nuşfalău, Bilghez, Boghiş and Valcău de Jos. According to tradition wine was stored in cellars carved into sandstone. Beside fruit we shall mention mushroom production as well. Its centre is situated in Nuşfalău and the mushrooms produced here are popular all over the country. A very popular product is the honey from Valcău de Jos which in 2012 was presented at the international food fair in Paris. The honey was praised by Prince Charles as well and has been sold all over Europe. Within the natural values of the region we shall mention its healing thermal waters. We may find such springs in Boghiş, Zăuan and Zăuan-Băi. According to the records in 1889 Zăuan Băi had the best healing waters in Hungary and the sulphurous waters of Zăuan, rich in alum and calcium are considered a rarity within Romania.

5. Local challenges

The study of the region included personal visits, interviews with local personalities and decision makers, analysis of development plans, analysis of the online and media image as well as the analysis of the documents provided by our client. We identified a series of problems and deficiencies, also mentioned by those we interviewed, which influence the development of the region. We grouped these issues by subject.

Demographic factors

An outstanding problem is the ageing of the local population. Remaining in the region is not an attractive option for the young generation. Most of the young people who complete their university degree don't wish to return to their place of birth. Another relatively wide spread phenomenon is that many village people work abroad and return to their homes only periodically.

Infrastructure

Poor infrastructure (the state of roads, lack of amenities, public lighting and irrigation works) is the primary factor that influences the economical development of the region. From the point of view of the region it would be important to finish the A3 motorway connecting Oradea and Târgu Mureş, which would decrease the actual heavy commercial traffic and improve the chances of economic development.

Economy

The lack of financial sources is the biggest problem of the region. This has a negative influence especially on the agriculture because it is difficult to work the fields without any modern equipment, so most of the agricultural lands remain unattended. Another problem is the mentality of the locals: they lack the enterprising spirit and only a few take the courage to invest to start their own enterprise.

Culture and education

A major problem of the education is the truancy of Roma children. As young people are less and less interested in the values created by their ancestors, it is increasingly difficult to preserve the cultural values of the region. The cultural events offered within the region are usually the ones organized by churches or schools, and there are very few events which address a larger public than the population of the settlement where they take place.

Tourism

The touristic potential of the area lies mostly unexploited and this is valid for the entire Sălaj region in general. The touristic capacity of the county is in a major default in comparison with the achievements of other counties belonging to the

same region. The first and perhaps most striking problem is that the area does not have a comprehensive strategic plan for the promotion of tourism. Another problem is that potentially touristic architectural sites are in a deplorable condition and need thorough renovation. Touristic infrastructure is not properly developed. The region itself is probably not attractive enough to have a proper tourist traffic, thus it would be important to include this region into the already existing tourist routes.

6. Conclusions

Our study defined those local values which may serve as an eligible basis for the subsequent branding of the region or certain settlements. In order to identify the local values we used the professional studies provided by our clients and we conducted primary and secondary researches within the studied region. During the primary research we made half structured, mixed-type interviews with the important personalities of the studied settlements while during the secondary studies we analyzed the available development documents, the media and online image of the region. The results of the analysis are presented in our last chapter.

By analyzing the media presence we studied separately the press products covering national, regional and local news in Hungarian language as well as the press covering national, regional and local news in Romanian language. Keyword searches in Hungarian language press products gave only 47 results. Most of these news were published in the online version of the *Szabadság* daily newspaper and focused on cultural issues. Searching by keywords we found 108 results in the Romanian language press. About half (48%) of them were community news and most of them (40%) had a negative content. The national press was dealing with topics like the undeveloped infrastructure of the region, bad roads and frequent road accidents, floods and the constant threat of floods and corruption issues involving local mayors and politicians. Most results within the nation-wide press emerged from the online portal called *Adevărul* while from the regional press most of the news were posted by the *Graiul Sălajului* newspaper.

During the analysis of the online image of the region we studied webpage and picture results too. The most popular pages during the keyword search in Romanian language were Wikipedia pages (24%), pages offering a general presentation of the area (17%) and articles published by news platforms (10%). The keyword search in Hungarian language revealed the following popular webpages: pages offering a general presentation of the region (17%), touristic information (15%), pages offering specific information (12%) like real estate issues or weather forecast. Romanian language keyword search produced the following visual results: pictures presenting the settlement and its surroundings (20%), architectural heritage (19%), local events and moments from the everyday life of locals (13%). The

Hungarian language keyword search generated the following visual results: architectural heritage (32%), maps (17%), pictures of the settlements and their surroundings (15%). Based on the google image search the important visual results were: the Bánffy castle in Nuşfalău, the cascade in the Şipot valley, the Reformed church in Valcău de Jos, the ruins of the Valcău fortress, the Reformed church from Casna, the spa from Boghiş and the wooden church from Porţ.

From the point of view of local values we studied the architectural heritage, the important personalities of the region, folk traditions, local events and natural values. From the point of view of the architectural heritage the important sites are the Reformed church of Nuşfalău and Crasna, the Bánffy castle in Nuşfalău and the wooden churches of the regions, especially the one in Porţ which is considered a historical monument. From the important personalities of the region we shall point out the botanist Farkas Cserey born in Crasna. The community of Nuşfalău is particularly proud that the parents of the great Hungarian poet, János Arany were born here. Folk traditions are preserved by folk dancing and singing groups and are presented in a series of ethnographic museums and collections. Local traditions are usually revived during different cultural events. In smaller settlements the village days represent the only local event but in Nuşfalău they organize the Arany János Days and the Saint George Days and a series of regular religious events take place on the Trinity Hill, a popular pilgrimage site situated close to Nuşfalău. From the natural values we shall mention the Lapiş forest and the wetland near Crasna as well as the Plopiş mountains. The entire region is richly covered by forests (*terra ultra sylvania*) and the landscape is favourable for fruit production. The region used to be a wine producing region but nowadays wine and brandy are produced mainly for private consumption. Beside beverages the mushrooms of Nuşfalău and the honey of Valcău de Jos are those local products which have become popular recently. The healing thermal waters of the area are an important natural value and have a real touristic potential.

The development of the studied region is seriously encumbered by the poorly developed infrastructure, the condition of the roads connecting the settlements, the partial or complete lack of amenities in certain villages and the lack of the irrigation systems in the agriculture. From the demographical point of view an important problem is the ageing of the local population while from the point of view of economy the lack of financial resources and the limited entrepreneurial spirit are also problematic. The young population is less and less willing and interested to preserve the traditional values and culture, while in many places cultural events are organized only by schools or churches. The region has very few events that involve a larger public. From the point of view of tourism the most important problems are the poor state of the architectural heritage, the limited number of accommodation facilities and the lack of a comprehensive plan for touristic promotion.

List of the development plans used

1. Regional Development Plan of Northern Transylvania 2014-2020, the Development Plan of the North-West Region. Retrieved from http://www.nord-vest.ro/Document_Files/Planul-de-dezvoltare-regionala-2014-2020/00001724/7r238_PDR_2014_2020.pdf (08. 11. 2015).
2. The Development plan of Sălaj county 2007-2013.
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