

Environmental and Economic Gap-Win analysis of the ski area development in the Romanian Carpathians. Case study: Cocoş Ski Slope, Bistriţa County

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Abstract: Ski slopes are tourism infrastructure with both leisure and socio-economic functions. Ski slope planning should take into account several factors: relief, land use, biodiversity, access, water resources, weather conditions, the ownership legal status of the land, facilities and community services, and number of potential skiers. Thus, the study aims to analyse the environmental and economic gains and weaknesses of one recent launched Romanian Carpathians ski slope, named Cocoş. The results reveal that in recent years, in Romania a lot of settlements developed ski slopes in order to expand the leisure opportunities for their population and to increase the number of tourists. In some cases, the development of ski areas doesn't take into account the required natural preconditions, such as altitude and climate, thus effecting their dysfunctional operation. This is the case of the ski slope outside Bistriţa municipality, which has been constructed, with money from a bank loan, in a low altitude area with reduced snowfall. Thus, during the 2017-2018 winter season, the ski slope has been opened for just 10 days, getting an income of almost €20, 000, while maintenance costs rise to nine times more than the revenue. Our findings demonstrate that ignoring the environmental conditions and with superficial feasibility study send this project as an example of bad practices in the field of leisure and tourism. In order to recover the investment costs and to utilize the cable transport facility, the municipality intends to use the chairlift during summer; building an alpine coaster and outfitting the lift with bicycle trailers also without a scientific and/or a marketing approach could compromise further the investments.

Key words: ski slope, community ski project, Carpathians, Romania, trails, environmental and economic weaknesses

Introduction

In Romania, the Carpathians cover 27.8% of the country's surface (Velcea, 1987), being the most suitable area for the development of ski area. This favourability, the planning of the ski areas must make the inventory and evaluation of potential sites for the location of the ski slopes, which should take into account the following

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