

ASSESSMENT OF THE TOURISTIC ATTRACTIVENESS OF PETROSANI-PARANG MOUNTAIN RESORT

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ABSTRACT: *The present paper aims at determining the touristic attractiveness of one of the most beautiful mountain areas in our country, assessed in terms of its natural potential, namely the Petroșani-Parâng mountain resort. The basis of this approach was the TECDEV method, considered the most complete and complex method for determining the degree of touristic attractiveness in academic literature. The calculation of the touristic attractiveness index in both cases, the standard resort and the real resort, the deviations and their causes, have finally allowed to identify a package of measures and activities that need to be considered in order to overlap the perception of tourists with regard to the standards that a resort of national interest should meet and the legal standards underlying such a title.*

KEY WORDS: *touristic attractiveness, mountain resort, territorial planning, development strategy.*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: Z32, Z38.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Petroșani-Parâng Mountain Resort was recognized as a resort of national interest in 2009 by issuing H.G. no. 125 / 7.10.2009 [7], the attribution of the new status being justified by fulfilling the mandatory criteria for attestation of the tourist resorts of national interest, meeting 210 points regarding the additional criteria, compared to a minimum of 135 necessary points. [6].

A year later, in 2010, local authorities together with the Resort Ministry took on a highly ambitious plan to create the largest ski area in the South-Eastern Europe through an investment which was valued at 337,598,000 million RON (including V.A.T.), meaning 81,983,000 euros [4].

The project entitled 'The future development of Parang ski resort', financed by the Resort Minister, included equipping the ski slopes with the necessary installations (cable

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cars, floodlights for night skiing, artificial snow cannons, snow maintenance equipment), with water and sanitation facilities in the resort, building services centres and accommodation facilities, etc.

Unfortunately, six years after the project has got underway, the investments cover 15-20% of the total amount, and the prospects are not encouraging [5].

2. THE TOURISTIC POTENTIAL OF PETROȘANI- PARANG RESORT AND THE IMPORTANCE OF TURNING RESOURCES TO PROFIT

Petroșani-Parâng ski resort falls within the administration of Petroșani municipality as it is not a distinct economic-social entity. The resort stands on a very wide mountain plateau (100 km from East to West, 70-80 km from North to South) [8] and has all the qualities of a successful mountain resort. 'It is located at an altitude of +1,500 to +1,900 m.a.s.l., at the foot of Parângul Mic Peak (2,074 m) and Badea Peak (1,850 m), running up on a three tier plateau, thus being the highest mountain resort in Romania.' [9].

Access to the resort and, implicitly, to the Parang Mountains, from Petroșani is via DJ709F road to the old chairlift, or you can drive up to the Rusu Hotel, where the new chair lift, inaugurated in 2014, is located; both lifts provide transport to the Parângul Mic tourist area.

Although the road continues from the Rusu Hotel through the mountain to the first landing point of the chairlifts, it is generally not recommended for tourists either because it is not upgraded (there is no tarmac and no drainage) or because during the winter season there is limited access for cars.

Parâng Ski Resort and its surroundings provide landscapes with high touristic potential of great scientific and practical value, encouraging the development and promotion of various forms of tourism. The touristic potential of landforms represents one of the most important elements, landforms being both a support for all the other touristic elements and attractions themselves.

They can be analysed from the perspective of mountain hikers for whom the beauty of landscapes and the diversity of natural tourist attractions (lakes, gorges, mountain peaks) are the main reasons to set off, as well as from the perspective of sports enthusiasts, mainly winter sports persons, but also climbers, hunters and fishermen, for whom the landforms combined with other elements such as climate, vegetation and fauna are of great importance.

Thus, looking at the Parang Mountains from the ski resort, one can notice clearings which offer spectacular views over the Jiu Valley and the surrounding mountains, as well as uneven forms such as ridges, peaks, cliffs, deposits of gravel, lakes, waterfalls and gorges, which attract hikers and climbers.

For skiers, the northern and western slopes of Parângul Mic, as well as the terraced landforms, spanning over three altitudes from 1,300 m to 1,800 m, are suitable for practicing winter sports as they hold snow for longer periods of time during the year.

Parâng Ski Resort has a mild climate with rich solar radiation. In the resort, the cold season extends over a period of 6 months, from November till April, and the hot season, from May through to October, alternates wet periods with dry periods. [10].

Against the background of populating the geographical area, the forest (represented mainly by softwoods such as spruce and fir, mixed with beech, birch, yew, linden, etc.) becomes an important factor of recreation and tourist pleasure, which the Parang Mountains enjoy abundantly.

Flora is represented in this area by the edelweiss, which is a species protected by law and the snow rose that blooms in June. Also in the summer, along the mountain paths tourists can pick blueberries, raspberries and blackberries.

In Parangul Mic tourist area one can also notice the wild sword lily, the wood sorrel, the fern, the moss, the cranberry, the gentian, the stone pine and the rare *Potentilla Haynaldiana* [10], which can be tourist attractions for both mountaineers and for scientific tourism enthusiasts (botanists, entomologists), provided that the measures for the protection of natural resources by the human factor are met.

It has an aesthetic, scientific or cynegetic value. The fauna characteristic to the mountainous area near the Parang Ski resort is represented by species that are worth hunting, such as the Carpathian bear, the Carpathian deer, deer, the chamois, the lynx, vipers, wild cats, mountain eagles, wild boars, wolves, capercaillies, pheasants and so on. The presence of game due to numerous species, together with ichthyology is the main reasons for tourism for hunting (starting from small game with feathers to big game with hair and feather) and fishing.

The Maleia and Jieț brooks with their tributaries, complemented by the existence of numerous glacial lakes, contribute to the creation of a fish stock rich in trout, grayling, etc.

All the geographic and geological characteristics, the climate, the vegetation, flora and fauna comprised by Parang resort are able to provide rich natural resources, encouraging at the same time the practice of multiple forms of tourism (hiking, ecotourism, sports tourism, adventure tourism, scientific tourism, therapeutic tourism, etc.).

In their turn, these forms of tourism can be combined with other forms that can be developed in the urban or rural settlements of the Jiu Valley (agricultural tourism, industrial tourism, ethnographic and folkloric tourism) [3].

Although, from the previous enumeration one can concluded that Petroșani-Parâng mountain resort has special tourist resources (both natural and anthropic), the general opinion shared by both the resident population in the Jiu Valley and the tourists is that they are not properly capitalized from quantitative and qualitative point of view. This highlights the intensity of the forms of tourism in the area, the inequality between seasons in terms of tourist demand and supply, and in the options of those who come to the resort.

2. DETERMINING THE TOURISTIC ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE MOUNTAIN RESORT

Valorificarea resurselor primare enumerate anterior (care motivează deplasarea în zona The use of the above-mentioned primary resources (which motivate visits to the tourist area and trigger tourist practices), alongside secondary resources (places, characteristic activities which are not for the benefit of the residents) and complementary resources (represented by commercial activities, green spaces, streets, etc.), through the tourism development phenomenon, is able to ensure the formation of the tourist product and the integrated development of the tourist offer – hallmarks in exploiting attractive resources.

The assessment of the touristic attractiveness must to take into account both objective elements (accommodation, food and recreation areas) and partial elements (from the consumer's point of view and based on their tourist itinerary, cultural background, purpose of the visit, level of education and previous experiences) [1].

Academic literature sets forth the most complete and complex method of determining the attractiveness of a tourist resort - the TECDEV method.

'TECDEV' is a heavy industry technique that involves an analogy between the complex and heterogeneous elements specific to a tourist objective (accommodation units, recreational facilities, etc.) with the same type of elements specific to an industrial unit (machinery, equipment, installations, etc.). The method involves two stages:

1. creating a standard resort
2. creating a real resort

in each of the two stages an index of tourist attractiveness is calculated; the comparison of the two coefficients is then accompanied by a presentation which highlights the arguments that support the scores given on chapters, comments on the resulting deviations, as well as the proposals to improve the current score.

The setting up of a standard resort starts from its destination and the type of user of this environment, dividing the objective (i.e. the resort) into its component parts up to the last possible option.

Each component part resulting from the partitioning is given a certain value (established by weight) and a score (a so-called 'qualitative level'). Finally, from the multiplication of the score by the weight of the component results a partial attractiveness coefficient. Their sum of these coefficients will yield the total attractiveness of tourism resources.

The basis for this formula is the attractiveness coefficient (index) (I):

$$I = \sum_{i=1}^n q_i \times c_i \quad (1)$$

where: q_i - the weight of the element (resource) "i" in total, $\sum q_i = 100$;

c_i – the quality of the element "i"; marked by a score between 1 and 10 with the variables falling into the following categories:

- [0–2) – the resource is not attractive enough;
- [2 – 5) - the resource is attractive enough;
- [5 – 8) - attractive resource;
- [8 – 10) – very attractive resource

n – the number of elements (resources).

In the case of the real resort, one can encounter the same partition of the elements of the offer with the same shares as in the case of the standard resort (this is because we need a basis for the comparison between the two resorts - standard and real). The quality level (score) will, however, be different depending on the actual situation in the resort.

Next, the partial and total attractiveness index is calculated. Finally, one can determine the positive and negative deviations (as the difference between the attractiveness index of the real resort and that of the standard resort) for each component.

We are going to be presented with two cases:

- the attractiveness index of the real resort > the attractiveness index of the standard resort, hence the fact that the real resort is attractive from a touristic point of view, justifying the choice that has been made;
- the attractiveness index of the real resort < the attractiveness index of the standard resort, meaning that the real resort is not attractive from the tourist point of view, but the choice made is not a wrong one since there are numerous proposals for development and promotion.

In conclusion, the notes should include, among other things:

- arguments supporting the scores, by chapters;
- comments on the resulting deviations;
- proposals to improve the score obtained by the resort.

The setting up of the standard resort implied filling out questionnaires (by 50 tourists who visited the resort between January and July 2016) and the use of brainstorming (among 15 businessmen who invested in Petroșani-Parâng Ski resort in accommodation, food and leisure units and representatives of local authorities, as well as a number of 15 students from the University of Petroșani, specializing in Economics of Trade, Tourism and Services).

Table 1. Touristic attractiveness index calculation

Elements of the touristic offer	Importance of elements of the touristic offer (%) (q _i)	The standard resort		The real resort	
		Quality of the standard resort (C _{ie})	Attractiveness index of the standard resort (I _e)	Quality of the real resort (C _{ir})	Attractiveness index of the real resort (I _r)
I. Environment	40.0		327.0		327.0
- landforms	10.0		92.0		92.0
- diversity	3.0	10	30.0	10	30.0
- accessibility	3.0	10	30.0	10	30.0
- originality	4.0	8	32.0	8	32.0
- climate	8.0		55.0		49.0
- average temperature	3.0	7	21.0	7	21.0
- rainfall	2.0	7	14.0	5	10.0
- air flow	1.0	6	6.0	6	6.0
- no of sunny days	2.0	7	14.0	6	12.0

- hydrography	5.0		36.0		20.0
- rivers	2.0	6	12.0	2	4.0
- lakes	2.0	8	16.0	6	12.0
- waterfalls	1.0	8	8.0	4	4.0
- flora	6.0		54.0		48.0
- diversity	3.0	8	24.0	8	24.0
- aesthetic	3.0	10	30.0	8	24.0
- fauna	6.0		40.0		38.0
- diversity	4.0	8	32.0	8	32.0
- danger	2.0	4	8.0	3	6.0
- freshness	5.0		50.0		46.0
- air	2.0	10	20.0	10	20.0
- water	2.0	10	20.0	10	20.0
- soil	1.0	10	10.0	6	6.0
II. Facilities	25.0		216.5		130.5
- accommodation	10.0		100.0		70.5
- quantity	7.0		70.0		46.5
- diversity	1.5	10	15.0	8	12.0
- capacity	2.0	10	20.0	6	12.0
- location	2.0	10	20.0	6	12.0
- aesthetic	1.5	10	15.0	7	10.5
- quality	3.0	10	30.0	8	24.0
- food	4.0		68.5		24.0
- quantity	3.0		38.5		16.0
- diversity	1.0	10	10.0	5	5.0
- capacity	1.0	10	10.0	5	5.0
- location	0.5	10	5.0	6	3.0
- traditional	0.5	7	3.5	6	3.0
- quality	1.0	10	30.0	8	8.0
- Transportation	3.0		26.0		10.0
- on cable	2.0	8	16.0	4	8.0
- on the road	1.0	10	10.0	2	2.0
- leisure facilities	8.0		60.0		26.0
- by day	5.0		48.0		26.0
- sports	3.0	8	24.0	6	18.0
- entertainment	2.0	8	24.0	4	8.0
- by night	3.0	4	12.0	0	0.0
III. Infrastructure	15.0		126.0		72.0
- access	7.0		64.0		36.0
- railways	3.0	10	30.0	6	18.0
- roads	3.0	10	30.0	6	18.0
- air transport	1.0	4	4.0	0	0
- water transport (by sea)	0	0	0	0	0
- utilities	8.0		62.0		36.0
- water	3.0	10	30.0	7	21.0
- electricity	3.0	10	30.0	5	15.0
- fuel	2.0	1	2.0	0	0
IV. Superstructure	10.0		74.0		25.0

- general	4.0		32.0		16.0
- organization	2.0	8	16.0	4	8.0
- security	2.0	8	16.0	4	8.0
- tourism	6.0		42.0		9.0
- organization	3.0	8	24.0	2	6.0
- security	3.0	6	18.0	1	3.0
V. Economic environment	5.0		14.0		8.0
- primary sector	1.0	1	1.0	1	1.0
- secondary sector	1.0	1	1.0	1	1.0
- tertiary sector	3.0		12.0		6.0
- consumption	2.0	4	8.0	2	4.0
- production	1.0	4	4.0	2	2.0
VI. Culture	5.0		28.0		18.0
- cultural events (exhibitions, festivals etc.)	2.0	6	12.0	4	8.0
- built patrimony (monuments, museums, etc.)	1.0	4	4.0	2	2.0
- un-built patrimony (folklore)	2.0	6	12.0	4	8.0
TOTAL	100.0		785.5		546.5

Comparing the two values of the attractiveness index one can notice a decrease in the index of the real resort in relation to that of the standard resort, which leads to the next step, namely the analysis of each component in order to highlight the gaps and to identify the measures required for the reduction / elimination of differences.

An analysis of the main elements that make up the tourist offer at the level of Petrosani-Parang resort reveals the following dimensions of rating:

- a very good score given to the environment, to landforms for diversity, accessibility and originality, the qualitative level of the standard resort being, in this case, the same as that of the real resort;
- the other elements of the environment, namely hydrography, flora, fauna and the purity of water, air and of soil are considered very attractive resources, the differences between the quality of the standard resort and that of the real resort registering higher hydrographic values since rivers and waterfalls can be found at the foot of the mountains (except for Lolaia waterfall), in Jieț or Bănița Gorge, but not in the heart of the mountain where one can find the glacial lakes Câlcescu (Gâlcescu), Mija or Cîrja;
- climate is considered in both cases, for the standard resort and for the real resort, an attractive resource, the only difference being in terms of precipitation, where the qualitative level is slightly lower in the case of the real resort;
- in terms of accommodation the differences may refer to diversity (only one hotel, the rest are chalets) to capacity, as well as to location (the distance to cable transport networks or road infrastructure) and to aesthetics;
- food units are also graded with marks which rank them in the category of attractive resources, but it should be noted there are great differences in quality between the standard resort and the real resort;

- cable and road transport register unsatisfactory scores in the case of the real resort because of major deficiencies of the road leading to the resort and for which there are many traffic restrictions during the cold season, while for the rest of the year the state of the road is considered extremely precarious; with regard to cableway infrastructure, the score is considered unsatisfactory because of the quality (wear, speed, capacity, etc.) in the case of the 'old chairlift' and because of the scenic route in the case of the 'new chairlift'
- The biggest negative difference in quality between the standard and the real resort is recorded in terms of recreational structure, the lack of sports equipment rental centres, après skis, places where you can relax at night; all these are highlighted by the low scores obtained by the tourist offer in this case;
- railway infrastructure is not very favourable either, because of the state of Petrosani railway station and scarce road traffic, as well as because of the relatively long distance that tourists have to walk from the railway station to the road transport that connects the municipality with the mountain resort;
- Differences also occur when considering the economic environment represented by the tertiary sector (services) and the cultural environment represented by cultural events, shows and festivals, which are relatively scarce in relation to the needs; even though the area has a rich cultural heritage with specific customs on traditional holidays (e.g. Pițarăii on Christmas Eve), specific folklore (with 'nedei' - pastoral festivals- , popular costumes, dances such as 'învârțita', 'jieneasca', 'momarlaneasca' or 'batuta' accompanied by whistles and shouts can be seen up in the mountains only on 15th August along with the celebration of the birth of Virgin Mary; the patrimony represented by museums, historical monuments, churches or fortresses is present in or near Petroșani, but the access to them is somewhat hampered by the state of the transport infrastructure.

Based on the evaluation, it can be estimated that Petroșani-Parâng Ski Resort has an attractiveness coefficient of 546.5 points with 239 points below the standard resort, for the comparison of the scores yields only negative differences.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Gaining the status of a tourist resort of national interest is not enough to ensure success in the field and the economic recovery of the entire Jiu Valley, amid the restructuring of mining activities which still dominate the region's global economy.

It is obvious that the area has a special natural potential that facilitates several types of tourism (mountain hiking, sports - especially skiing, and adventure - climbing, paragliding, mountain biking, enduro etc.), but this potential is far from being capitalized at an optimum level, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Such an analysis of the attractiveness of the mountain resort allows not only the calculation of a simple index of tourist attractiveness, but it also highlights the main elements of the offer which are insufficiently capitalized, but it is considered necessary for the identification of measures and recovery actions leading to the increase of the

economic and social efficiency of tourism within the local economy, in the context of protecting and preserving the environment and tourism resources.

This is possible if the development of this resort consists in a vast process of resort development. Resort development ensures, through the development of the infrastructure, the formation of the tourism product, i.e. the full development of the tourist offer, meaning the key element in the exploitation of attractive resources. Thus, the proposals to improve the score obtained by Petroșani-Parâng resort include activities such as:

- developing and modernizing the tourism equipment by increasing the diversity of accommodation structures, which will appeal to a clientele with different holiday budgets, creating a recreational structure that does not neglect the possibilities of spending some spare time throughout the year and even at nights, not only in winter;
- improving the access infrastructure (road, rail and cableway) in the resort through the co-operation of the local authorities with the central ones
- Creating viable partnerships between all stakeholders with an interest in the development of the resort (business environment, authorities, local community) on all three levels: economic, cultural and social, because a coherent and lasting development involves substantial individual and collective financial efforts, but at the same time generates major and lasting local benefits;
- the efficient promotion of the Jiu Valley tourist area because despite the existence of a tourist information centre, the presence of some sections dedicated to tourism on the websites of the local administrations, etc., many of the tourists who should pick the Jiu Valley from the point of the view of travel motivation, distance and services rates, choose more distant destinations because of the lack of information on the tourist potential of the area.

Exploiting the existing tourism resources, adding the necessary infrastructure (accommodation, food, transport, leisure) as well as their inclusion in a sustainable real and coherent tourism development strategy are essential elements that can transform Petrosani- Parâng resort into a tourist attraction not only during the cold season but all the year round.

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