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## The Development of the Mountain Tourism Services in Romania –the Macroeconomic Implications and Strategic Perspectives

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### *Abstract*

*Through this paper we intend to highlight the necessity of the development of the tertiary sector in Romania, and within it the tourism services specific to the mountain areas. The mountain was and represents for the modern man a special attraction throughout the year. Mountain tourism enjoys international recognition because it has been found that there is a great interest of the world's population in visiting mountain regions, plus the world dimensions of mountain areas; 24% of the Earth's surface is occupied by mountainous regions, where a population of 12% of the world's population lives, and an additional 14% of the world's population is at the contact of mountainous regions with neighboring regions [4]. In this context, we have proposed to develop the strategy for the development of mountain tourism services in Romania, starting from the concept of sustainable development that implies the balance between economic growth and preservation of the natural environment. The purpose of developing the development strategy is to capitalize on natural heritage, to identify solutions for the problems faced by our country in the field of tourism services and, at the same time, to develop mountain tourism in Romania. The objective of the strategy is to identify ways to develop mountain tourism services in Romania.*

**Keywords:** *mountain tourism; services; sustainable development; strategy; macroeconomic implications.*

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## 1. Introduction

In Romania, the special natural conditions along with other factors have determined the development of three mountain resorts: Poiana Braşov, Sinaia and Predeal. For winter sports, these resorts offer a satisfactory offer to tourists' needs, but there are numerous allegations in our country where, over time, an adequate material basis has been set up compared to the three resorts mentioned [1]. For example: Păltiniş, Semenic, Borşa, Durău, Buşteni, etc. The facilities in these resorts have prospects of being introduced into international tourism by setting up their valuable natural potential.

In the mountainous area of Romania, the tourist offer presents some specific features, attributed to the Carpathian physic-geographic peculiarities, which differentiate them from other European mountain chains, as well as from the economic and social context in which their touristic capitalization was based. Thus, the main feature of the Romanian mountain offer seems to be the discrepancy between the value and the attractiveness of the tourism potential and the current degree of capitalization, with quantitative and especially qualitative minuses [2]. That is why, we propose a strategy for capitalizing the mountain tourism potential to attract Romanian and foreign tourists to the mountainous areas of Romania.

## 2. Problem Statement

The problem of research is the difficult development of mountain tourism in Romania, and to identify the underlying causes, we have conducted a SWOT analysis, from which we can see both the strengths and the fundamental opportunities for the development of mountain tourism as well as the weaknesses and threats that contribute to the present situation.

### STRENGTHS:

- varied relief that creates scenic landscapes, the presence of the Carpathian Mountains, Subcarpathians, hills and plateaus, as well as the plains, meadows and valleys formed by numerous waters crossing the country offer the numerous natural sights and exceptional mountain landscapes, isolated mountain cliffs, caves, gorges, defiles, waterfalls.
- temperate continental climate, geographic position and complexity of relief forms provide a climate favourable to the development of mountain tourism through the conditions it offers throughout the year.

- the dense hydrographic network, rich in surface water and hydro-mineral resources, important both from the point of view of valorisation and the landscapes it generates. This is a thing of interest from the touristic point of view through the picturesque valleys of the rivers, the variety of lakes and the therapeutic importance of the mineral springs.

- vegetation and fauna characterized by the great wealth of flora and fauna species in all mountain massifs. Rich hunting and fishing potential that influence the development of hunting and fishing tourism.

- the existence of numerous tourist attractions of anthropogenic nature, both in the resorts and in their surroundings. The existence of a huge cultural-historical treasure and an ethno-folk tradition. The anthropic tourist potential is composed of many tourist attractions of great interest [3]: museums, historical monuments, architectural specialties, as well as religious sights: churches, monasteries, etc.

- the variety of folklore and inherited traditions well preserved in the mountain areas. The multitude of ancient traditions and customs, combined with the talents of popular craftsmen in woodworking, pottery, the art of fabrics, have the effect of increasing the interest of tourists in the values of folk tradition, the knowledge of customs and traditions, many of which have been exhibited at numerous festivals and popular events, fairs and exhibitions, holidays;

- high conservation status of the mountain areas;
- increasing the area of protected areas in the mountain areas;
- low levels of pollution in air, water and soil;
- the technical and material accommodation base [4]. Possibility of stationing the tourists in different localities depending on the forms of tourism practiced and the preferences of the tourists for certain types of reception structures (hotels, motels, cottages, villas, hostels, camping sites, tourist stops, caste units as well as in camps), as well as the quite significant number of tourists (almost a quarter of the total tourist traffic in Romania) that are of interest for the mountain sports.

#### WEAKNESSES:

- poor quality of the general infrastructure and access routes to the resorts, the deterioration of many routes especially of the secondary roads, which creates some conditions of transport dissatisfaction with tourists, lack of confidence in the safety of the trip and accessibility in the areas of interest, until the tourist objectives are abandoned;

- hiring staff without training or specialist studies;

- the price-quality ratio is inadequate in terms of service offerings, the tariffs being high compared to the services offered, creating the image of an expensive destination in relation to the quality of the services received;
- accommodation and catering services of a quality that is inadequate to the standards in the field;
- the lack of correlation of the development of the ski area with the general infrastructure;
- not fully arranging the mountain tourist routes from the circulating massifs (bookmarks, safety features for tourists);
- the insufficiency of tourist accommodation facilities with functions of specific mountain areas (chalets, refugees, etc.) (table 1);
- the existence of numerous tourist equipment in an advanced stage of physical wear;
- obsolete, physically and morally worn cableway installations;
- the lack of small cableway installations for lifts, babyskiing, in many resorts;
- the lack of information on the status of mountain tourist routes (degree of difficulty, accessibility by season, etc.)

**Table 1.** Establishments of tourists' reception with functions of tourists' accommodation and the tourists' accommodation capacity, by type of establishments and tourist destinations, in 2016 [5]

<b>Total</b>	<b>1878</b>
Hotels	205
Motels	18
Tourist inns	-
Hostels	31
Tourist villas	183
Bungalows	21
Tourist chalets	113
Holiday villages	4
Camping sites	13
School and pre-school camps	17
Tourist halting places	13
Tourist boarding houses	375
Agro-tourist boarding houses	872
Houselet-type units	12
Ship accommodation places	1

#### OPPORTUNITIES:

- increasing demand for ecotourism / tourism in protected areas;
- international attention to mountain tourism in general and the main ski area;
- the development of accommodation facilities mainly in rural areas;
- the exploitation and the complex capitalization of the tourism resources in the conditions of observance and promotion of the principles of sustainable development;
- development strategies for the road system, rehabilitation of national roads, bridge construction (reconstruction), construction of bypasses of major cities, construction of motorways;
- diversifying the offer by building theme parks with themes based on local specifics, folklore, habits to meet the needs and wishes of entertainment for as many tourist segments as possible;
- the restoration of representative buildings, architectural monuments, enjoying a historical reputation for the purpose of recreating the tourist circuit and creating a specific environment;
- the opening of tourist offices abroad for promotion, in order to get in direct contact with the tourists interested in the offered tourist products;
- establishing partnerships with foreign organizations and agencies in order to promote Romanian mountain resorts [6];
- organizing training courses and professional policing of the employees in tourism; stimulating them by participating in professional career competitions; using the facilities provided by distance learning.

#### THREATS:

- the ski area is much more developed in most European countries;
- the quality and diversification of foreign tourism services [7];
- the lack of charter and airline aircraft from major European major markets for the development of mountain tourism;
- the lack of promotional material for mountain areas or poor quality of information in most cases;
- the stagnation of ski demand;
- the relatively high costs of such services;
- the high level of investment needed to develop the ski resorts, whether public or private (some local communities have to change their investors after a few years when the resort faced difficulties), which could

lead to the loss of opportunities (skiing, walking on snow, summer activities);

- the need for foreign contractors to develop the ski resorts;
- the life of ski products, which require continuous investment to maintain the ski lifts, to improve the slope difficulty or the quality of the snow cover.

### **3. Research Questions/Aims of the research**

For the development of the mountain tourism development strategy in Romania we started from the concept of sustainable development, which implies the balance between economic growth and preservation of the natural environment. The purpose of developing a development strategy is to capitalize on natural heritage, to find solutions for the problems faced by the country in tourism services and the development of mountain tourism in Romania [8].

The objective of the strategy is to identify ways to develop mountain tourism services in Romania. Other objectives are represented by:

- substantiating and promoting projects for the protection, preservation and enrichment of Romania's heritage and ensuring sustainable development [9];
- training of human resources;
- developing projects, programs for the population and tourists to understand the need to protect the environment (educating them in this respect);
- improving the tourist infrastructure;
- arrangement, modernization and extension of recreational areas and green space;
- investment in tourism in order to increase the quality of services offered to tourists (accommodation, food, etc.);
- promoting Romanian mountain tourism to attract tourists.

### **4. Research Methods**

In order to meet demand at a high level, there must be an appropriate offer tailored to the mountain tourism potential, the current state of exploitation and the economic, social and political context that influences the evolution of tourism. The marketing tools used to meet demand are:

- ***Tourism product policy*** - can be achieved by designing, selecting and placing on the market of tourism products that can successfully satisfy the needs or even the development of the existing products;
- ***Pricing and tariff policy*** - applying differentiated pricing and pricing over seasons.
- ***Distribution and promotion policy of the tourist product*** - usually the marketing of the mountain tourism product is done by the suppliers through two sales systems: directly to the client and indirectly through a chain of intermediaries: travel agencies, tour operators, etc [10]. This involves analysing the internal market environment, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the Romanian mountain tourism as well as the external environment, as well as identifying the opportunities and factors limiting the development of the mountain tourism.

In order to promote Romanian mountain tourism, it is necessary to take measures to act both within the companies providing mountain tourism services and on the potential clients. The promotion of Romania as an internal and external tourist destination in the following years can be achieved by a series of activities:

- organizing and participating in tourism fairs, international specialized exhibitions with a national stand that reflects the country's tourism potential, as well as national traditions and culture;
- editing and broadcasting of promotional materials such as: tourist guides, promotional CDs, travel map of Romania, road-tourist map, souvenir with images of the tourist attractions in Romania;
- the annual organization of an informational tour for media representatives from countries of interest to Romania;
- the production of video advertising spots (10-30 sec.), which will aim at forming a positive image of the country as a destination for tourism, both internally and externally;
- the inclusion of national tourist routes in international tourist routes.

## **5. Findings. The strategy for the development of mountain tourism services in Romania. The action program.**

Following the SWOT and PEST analysis, as well as the analysis of the tourist traffic, of the Romanian tourist demand and offer, we have developed a program of actions aimed at achieving the established objectives. It includes:



**a. *Funding and promoting projects for the protection, preservation and enrichment of Romania’s heritage***

In this respect, viable projects for the development of mountain tourism services should be identified by accessing European funds, especially as mountain tourism ranks 3rd in the top tourist destinations preferred by tourists (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Tourists accommodated in the establishments of tourists’ reception with functions of tourists’ accommodation, by tourist destinations, in 2016 [5]

	Number
Seaside	977386
Spas	851040
Mountain Resorts	1748157
The Danube Delta	73114
Bucharest and county capital cities	5562743
Other localities	1790082

**b. *Training of human resources***

For the training of human resources it is necessary to support the entrepreneurs and the current institutions of tourism training for the maintenance and the qualitative and quantitative increase of the educational offer; addressing types of training that meet the training requirements of the tourism market; exchanges of experience and information for tour operators and structures organized in the country and abroad; analysis and adaptation of international tourism experiences; editing of good practice guides in tourism.

**c. *Improving tourism infrastructure***

Rehabilitation and modernization of road transport infrastructure is required at European standards: county roads; access roads; bridges; links between tourist and business areas of interest and national and European roads;

**d. *The development, modernization and extension of green areas and recreation areas in order to ensure sustainable development and capitalize on the national tourist patrimony***

In many of the mountain rural localities there are important tourist attractions, so it is necessary to develop these areas, not only from a social point of view but also from the point of view of the development of tourist services.

**e. *Investment in tourism (accommodation, food, etc.) in order to increase the quality of basic and additional services offered to tourists***

Investments in tourism are necessary for the development of tourism and these can be the rehabilitation of the cultural, historical, ecumenical heritage objectives; rehabilitation of accommodation and treatment facilities; creating, upgrading and diversifying recreational facilities (including landscaping and ecology of lakes); improving the tourist marking system in mountain areas (billboards, tourist maps on national and county roads, railway stations, bus stations, airfields); recreational infrastructure development associated with winter sports.

f. ***Promoting mountain tourism in Romania to attract tourists***

The modalities for promotion were presented in point 4.

We propose a deadline to run the above program in more detail, in 3 years, so we are talking about a likely development of mountain tourism in Romania as a whole in 2021, given the fact that there are financing needs for the elaboration of projects for the protection, preservation and enrichment of the patrimony, but and for the formation and education of local communities, which will be requested both by the European Union and the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration or other institutions or private companies that want to cooperate in the development of Romanian mountain tourism. The resources to be involved in the proposed action program will be primarily human resources plus the funds to be requested from the European Union and the authorized ministries, etc [11]. Those who will be directly involved in the implementation of the tourism development program will be the Romanian Government, County Councils and Local Councils, Environment Protection Agency, Tourism Employers Federation, Ministry of Transport, Construction and Tourism, NGOs, private companies, etc.

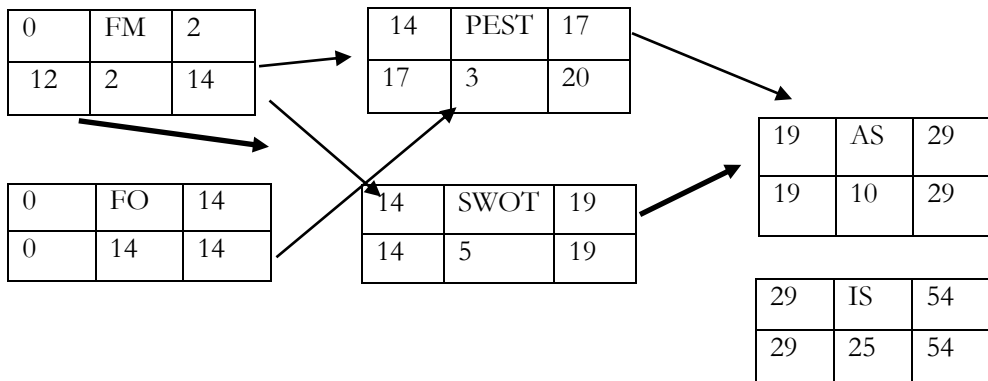
**Table 3.** Elaboration of the critical path through the PERT method

Current No.	Stage	Symbol	Duration (days)	Previous step
1.	Mission statement Development of mountain tourism in Romania	FM	2	-
2.	Formulation of Objectives 1. Funding and promoting projects for the protection, preservation and enrichment of Romania's heritage 2.Training human resources 3.Elaboration of projects, programs for the population and tourists to understand the need to protect the environment (educating them in this respect)	FO	14	-

- 4.Improving tourism infrastructure
- 5.Development, modernization and extension of recreational areas and green spaces in order to ensure the sustainable development and valorisation of the national tourist patrimony
- 6. Investment in tourism (accommodation, food, etc.) in order to increase the quality of basic services.
- 7.Promoting mountain tourism in Romania in order to increase the number of tourists

3.	External Environment Analysis	PEST	3	FM, FO
4.	Analysis of the internal environment	SWOT	5	FM, FO
5.	Choosing the strategy	AS	10	PEST, SWOT
6.	Strategy implementation	IS	25	AS

**Critical road calculation**



The critical path, calculated above, is the one for which the time reserve is zero, represented by the bold lines. In the case presented the minimum duration of the entire share program is 44 days and the maximum duration of 54 days.

**6. Discussions**

Romania has a particularly valuable mountain tourism potential, of great complexity and variety of natural and anthropogenic resources, as well as a virgin nature, but still fails to achieve the maximum possible results due to the weaknesses points that are more obvious than the strengths.

Among the most prominent limits in tourism in our country we mention: the strong competition on the European mountain tourism market

in countries such as Austria, France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Poland, relatively slow implementation of modern managerial practices in tourism management at all levels, poor involvement of local authorities in the development of mountain tourism due to lack of experience, lack of adequate infrastructure for the development of mountain tourism, absence of an investment policy to modernize the material structure in the field of mountain tourism [12].

Through the SWOT analysis, we noticed that many customers are unhappy with serving in food, which is quite a problem, and the preparation of international menus in exchange for traditional meals is a shortcoming from restaurants because tourists come this area for culture and traditions.

## 7. Conclusions

Mountain tourism represents for our country a significant element of its tourism potential, thus being a competitive tourist product on the domestic and international market. The need to develop mountain tourism derives from the many possibilities the mountain has in satisfying the very diverse tourist motivations, but especially from the trend of increasing demand for practicing winter sports, as well as the possibility of obtaining high receipts/a day for tourists and achieving economic and social high efficiency.

As recommendations for improving mountain tourism in Romania we have proposed:

- ensuring accessibility in mountain resorts in the most modern means of transport
- creating cableways for both leisure access and effective access to the ski slope
- setting up the ski area but also creating the best conditions for practicing other winter sports
- sizing, structuring and placement of facilities for basic services (accommodation, food, recreation) according to the characteristics of the ski and transport area
- optimal conjugation of tourism activities for winter sports with leisure facilities
- involvement of the state as an authority and coordinator of credit for the achievement of prestigious offers (international competitions, festivals, etc.)

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