Abstract: The tourism development of an area is an ongoing process of designing tourism facilities, the renewal of the existing ones, their dimensioning according to the changes of the tourism demand and supply and most important rendering the tourism activity efficient. According to the realities of the geographical space, the focus of the present study rivets on differentiating certain typologies and principles of tourism development in an area strongly affected by the economic streamlining following the effects that the tourism development has had upon the social and economic reality of the area. Apart from the analysis of the development of the Straja resort, the author realized a diagnostic analysis of the territory underlining the favourable agents for tourism activities, and in the same time the necessary steps that need to be taken in order to ensure the optimal development of the area. The detailed analysis included a series of parameters among which we name a few: number of sky slopes, length of the sky slopes (total and for each category), tourists transport to the sky slopes using the cable transport equipment as well as other auxiliary equipment. In order to dimension this resort, and according to its tourism potential, the optimal accommodation capacity was calculated, the indicator that represents the tourism frequency that a regional socio-economic system can permanently support without suffering any irreparable changes to its structure.

Key words: economic streamlining, sustainable tourism, tourism area, skiing domain, tourism accommodation, optimal accommodations capacity, economic development strategies.

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT OF THE AREA

The tourism development of an area is an interdisciplinary action – including the economy and tourism organization, ecology, geography, architecture, natural sciences, geology, sociology, psychology, etc – that starts from detailed studies and ends with the retroaction of the tourism exploitation. In order to do this, in international studies a series of criteria and correlation indices are used, that are the base of the scientific tourism development of an area. Among these the most important are: accommodation capacity, correlation indices between the tourism fluxes, accommodation facilities and tourism resources.

In the course of time numerous opinions were formed in the speciality literature regarding the development of tourism. Thus, F. Prikvil considers that the development of a territory represents „an effort of planned development applied to different sectors of the national economy in order to achieve the optimal solution for the coordinate
development of an area in a complete ensemble\textsuperscript{1}. In the notes of the interregional O.N.U seminar on the planned and regional development of the territory (Dubrovnik, 1970) there is stated that territorial development of the tourism areas represents a dynamic and complex process of scientific organization of the tourism space, considering the existing relationships between the environment and the human collective as well as all the factors that influence that relationship. I. Berbacaru and M. Botez sustain that in the tourism marketing vision the development of an area or a resort as tourism products are of the most capital importance because the usage of the other marketing instruments (price policy, distribution, advertising) is conditioned by their scientific substantiation\textsuperscript{2}. Included in the policy for systemizing the territory the tourism development aims to value the specific resources, it ensures the harmonious development of certain regions, it stimulates the balanced increase also made in superior rhythms of the national economy\textsuperscript{3}.

Within the tourism development the studies regarding the perspective analysis of the phenomena are absolutely necessary, because introducing the parameters of the future potential of the area within the decision making models allows for their verifying and reorientation during the designing process. The prospective research is closely related to the socio-economic systems. The methodological instrumentation is broad and varied, the structural-quantitative techniques blend with heuristics, creativity, sociological enquiries, etc. In order to elaborate a tourism development strategy several factors must be taken into account: the natural and human tourism resources, their degree of capitalization, the material, human and financial resources allocated to tourism, the short, medium and long – term political and economic objectives, the tourism accomplishments regarding the accommodation structures, the tourism fluxes and the socio-economic results.

In order to optimize the functionality of the developing system, a knowledge and description of the behaviour of its constituent parts and the interactions among them is necessary because any mutation can modify the equilibrium of the system. In order to achieve this, the types, amplitudes, intensity and correlation between any potential mutations must be established, and whether they can be controlled or not as follows\textsuperscript{4}: organizing the tourism areas and the taxonomic subunits using a systemic vision, in which the elements that make out a tourism system integrate in the ensemble of the network and systems and subsystem of localities; the continuous cooperation between the constituting parts of the system, tourism (usually resorts) and other localities within the same area or from different tourism areas, in order to achieve a series of common economic, social – cultural, edilitary works like water and electric energy supply etc. objectives, with the purpose of ensuring a social and economic efficiency and a high level of investments in the area; maintaining the conditions for ensuring the efficient development of the areas with a high tourism potential by avoiding that objectives that might degrade the quality of the environment and disturb the tourism activities are located and developed within or in the close vicinity of the respective area; ensuring a series of fair proportions, corresponding to the tourist resources when developing the tourism facilities, so that they don’t cause a degradation of the soil due to excessive development of the built on areas, of the perimeters with various tourism resources and with a valuable natural environment; designing facilities and arrangements that would keep, conserve and improve the quality of the natural environment, by functionally distributing the territory and when needed through creating natural reserves that can be partially and in a planned, organized framework be visited by tourists.

Considering these factors the main objectives of the tourism developing strategies are as follows\textsuperscript{5}: superior valuing of the tourism potential; diminishing seasonality thus extending the tourism

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season by equipping the territory with facilitates that can be functional during the entire duration of the year; attracting based on this strategy a larger number of tourists; enlarging the geographical area of provenience of the foreign tourists; increasing the economic and social efficiency of the tourism activities; developing all the possible forms of tourism that are suited for this territory; keeping and conserving the environment and the tourism objectives. Developing and supplying a tourism area is part of an ample process of valuing a territory and its resources. Thus, tackling this mission needs to be made with a systemic vision, within the general framework of the Romanian tourism, closely connected with the other systems (political, social, economic, demographic, natural, etc.) with which to spatially and functionally interact in a balanced dynamic. In this context elaborating a tourism developing strategy must take into account the “territorial” realities of the areas and their determinants, of the elements of influence that act upon the quality of the natural environment as a recreation and rest area.

2. THE EVOLUTION OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRUCTURES.

The Straja resort is situated 8 kilometres from Lupeni. Lupeni was mentioned for the first time in 1770 and now has a population of 32,852 inhabitants. The settlement developed after 1840 when the first mining facilities were set up here. Foreign companies that owned different mining territories brought here Poles, Czechs, Austrians, Slovaks, Hungarians and Romanians miners from the Apuseni Mountains or Baia Mare thus generating numerous economic, demographic and social changes. Worker colonies appeared after 1881, due to the industrial exploitation of the pitcoal, one such colony still existing today. The economic development as well as the increase of the number of inhabitants lead to the changing of the urban appearance of the town, the colonies were replaced with new districts of apartment houses, with commercial spaces, green area and playgrounds for children. The city of Lupeni became the biggest producer of coke coal, having a single-industrial development (the income of 80% of the population derived from mining activities).

The huge layoffs that took place in the mining sector between 1997 and 1999 lead to the decrease of the living conditions in the area and to the significant increase of the local unemployment rate compared to the national one. At a local level, the real unemployment rate is valued around 50% because there are many persons that are no longer in the evidence of the labour force bureau. Due to those circumstances the migration phenomenon increased being one of the most important factors that lead to the decrease in the number of inhabitants. The transition period that Romania underwent starting with 1989 was the cause of the significant increase of the unemployment rate. Due to the layoffs that were done many jobs disappeared not only in the mining industry but also in a series of related sectors. As a matter of fact, in all the industrial sectors except tertiary (commerce, education, health, social assistance and public administration) the number of employed inhabitants decreased. Such important decreases of the employed population were registered mainly in the mining sector.

Nowadays the city of Lupeni is confronted with an acute lack of jobs that has been in effect for the last few years and that also had a negative influence on the living conditions of the population. The unemployed category is characterized by a very poor financial situation which often situates people close to the subsistence limit: precarious financial means, approximately 841 persons benefit from the minimal guaranteed income (Law no. 416/2001 concerning the minimal guaranteed income), critical health state (frequent illnesses, impossibility to buy medicine for treatments), lean houses, some of them even squalid, often disconnected from central heating system, etc.

Going from the industrial single-functional centre that Straja was before 1989 to the city in the beginning of the XXI century with a well represented service sector is a complex and long process with profound social implications and high costs. In this context a viable solution would be turning to the development of the tourism activities, the huge existing tourism potential is an important trump in implementing a series of strategies for the reviving of the social and economic activities in Lupeni, city that was strongly affected by the restructuring of the mining sector. Thus, through an optimal management of the investments of a series of people with initiative the Straja resort soon
became the most important point of tourism attraction of Jiu Valley. It was declared through the Governmental Decision no. 1122/October 10th 2002, annexe 2, paragraph 30 a tourism resort of local interest and according to the Law no. 526/2003 is included in the 2nd stage of the National Development Programme of the Supersky Mountainous Tourism in the Carpathians.

3. THE TERRITORY’S TOURISM POTENTIAL AND THE ELEMENTS OF TOURISM VALUING

Straja no longer represents only the name of a mountain peak; it is today the name of a resort that attracts mountain lovers from all over the country not only because of the beauty of the landscape but also due to the prices accessible for everybody. Situated in Hunedoara County, in Vâlc appears Mountains, the Straja resort is located on the northern slope of the above mentioned mountain, at an altitude varying from 1380m (Montana lodge) to 1554m (Straja lodge). The area catches the interest of both skiers and lovers of pedestrian tourism but it also has a cultural-historic heritage. If we were to analyze its landscape the area is particularly special offering two belvedere points accessible in the winter and in the summer: the Straja and Mutu peaks, which offer tourists a view of the Retzat and Parang Mountains, Jiu Valley as well as the old road that connected Wallachia known as the German road or Mihai Viteazu’s road. This road starts from the Gorjeana scaffold and it ends up on the peaks of the Meridional Carpathians, point from which it comes down in Țara Hațegului. In the ridge areas the Austrian-Hungarian border can still be traced as well as the trenches from the independence war. On the ridge there is a beautiful belvedere point where the “Heroes Cross” monument was places – a metallic 18.6m construction – visible from all the localities situated in the Jiu Valley. In the resort there is also the “Ascension of the Holy Cross” church – an important orthodox structure within the Carpathian archway.

At the base of the Straja resort the “Bâița” recreation area is set up, representing the starting point of the chairlift and in the same time the start of the road leading to the resort. This road, a forestry one till not very long ago, spreads on 10.5 km, and crossing it gives the tourist the opportunity to admire a spectacular and wonderful view and allows the access of vehicles both during the summer and the winter with the condition that in the winter time the vehicles are 4x4 and properly equipped for winter conditions. Close to the resort, near the chairlift the road goes on up to the last lodge. Nowadays the road is operational; it was opened on the 15th of October 2007 and lessens the access of tourists to the resort.

The natural environment of the Straja resort is completed by accommodation units that blend into the scenery and increase the tourism potential of the area. If in 1970 there were 78 accommodation places, today in Straja resort there are 3 696 beds in accommodation units. These accommodation spaces are located in 24 lodges and hostels that can be classified as up to three stars in comfort. From the 176 accommodation units (lodges), 40 of them are authorized to perform tourism activities (including offering cooked meals). The development of the material base of the resort, respectively the accommodation units is made according to the natural environment conditions as well as the interest of the visiting tourists. Thus, the accommodation units are placed close to the sky slopes, considering that skiing is the main sport practiced by tourists. When considering the dimensions of the accommodation facilities the capacity of the sky slopes which in Straja resort is 9 074.5m long, must be taken into account.

In order to fulfill its tourism function, the Straja resort has a series of facilities for practicing winter sports. The winter sports are favoured by the skiing domain that has 7 sky slopes (that have a total surface of 9 074.5m) as follows: 1. the Constantinescu Slope with the length of 1741.5m; 2. the Lupu Slope with a length of 519m; 3. the Mutu Slope of 1269m; 4. the Sfântu Gheorghe Slope of 700m; 5. the Platoul Soarelui Slope (for beginners) that has a total area of 405m; 6. the Canal Slope of 1240m; 7. the chairlift Slope, the most extensive one, of 3200m it is located as its name suggest close to the chairlift. In the Straja resort the indicator meters versus accommodation space is as follows:

\[
\text{Total slopes in Staja (meters)} = 9 074.5 \text{ m} \\
\text{No. of accommodation spaces in Staja = 3 696 spaces} \\
\frac{9 074.5}{3 696} = 2.45 \text{ m/accommodation spaces}
\]
Considering the results of this indicator in other famous resorts (as for example: 1. Cortina d’Ampezzo - Italy = 8.00; 2. Chamrousse - France = 5.00; 3. Zell am See - Austria = 5.60; 4. Făgăraș Area - Romania = 6.06), one can clearly see that meters versus accommodation spaces indicator has an inferior value which means a possible overcrowding of the resort. In such cases, when dealing with the amount of accommodation units from the Straja resort a series of supplementary slopes need to be developed.

The access to the resort is granted by the Straja chairlift that has a length of 2,536m, with a level difference of 593 and a journey that lasts 24 minutes, the chairlift has the capacity to transport 410 persons. In the same this transport facility is used for accessing the Chairlift slope. This installation was managed until recently by the Lupeni Mining Plant but later it was granted to Comexim R S.R.L. which gradually became that main supplier of tourism services in the resort and invested in its development and added many improvements. Other existing transport facilities in Straja are the sky lifts. There are six such facilities and they serve all of the seven slopes in the resort. Out of the six transport facilities, four are managed by Comexim R S.R.L.
Table 1. Cable transport facilities from Straja resort

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the facility</th>
<th>Serviced slopes</th>
<th>Length of the course</th>
<th>Level difference</th>
<th>Transport duration</th>
<th>Capacity persons/hour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sky lift No. 1</td>
<td>Lupului, Mutu, Constantinescu, Platoul Soarelui</td>
<td>519 m</td>
<td>163 m</td>
<td>4 min</td>
<td>675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sky lift No. 2</td>
<td>Mutu, Lupului, Canal, Platoul Soarelui, Constantinescu</td>
<td>905 m</td>
<td>260 m</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sky lift No. 3</td>
<td>Constantinescu, Sf. Gheorghe, Platoul Soarelui</td>
<td>952 m</td>
<td>180 m</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sky lift No. 4</td>
<td>Sfântu Gheorghe</td>
<td>650 m</td>
<td>145 m</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sky lift No. 5</td>
<td>Constantinescu, Platoul Soarelui, Mutu</td>
<td>1260 m</td>
<td>198.6 m</td>
<td>4 min</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sky lift No. 6</td>
<td>Platoul Soarelui, Constantinescu</td>
<td>385 m</td>
<td>102 m</td>
<td>4 min</td>
<td>520</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Lupeni Mayoralty)

The indicator concerning the hourly transport capacity of the cable facilities and the number of accommodation spaces in the Straja resort is as follows:

\[
\text{Total capacity of the mechanical transport facilities in Straja (persons)} = \frac{4249}{3696} = 1.15
\]

Comparing the value of the calculated indicator with the values from similar resorts mentioned above (Cortina d’Ampezzo - Italy = 1.00; Chamrousse – France = 1.13; Zell am See - Austria = 1.40; Făgăraş Area - Romania = 1.12) we can see that from this point of view Straja is comparable with other resorts because the indicator persons/hour/accommodation space being of 1.15 it shows an optimal of the development of the cable transport facilities serving the tourists flow from the sky slopes.

4. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES. CONCLUSIONS

Despite of the numerous efforts that lead to the successful implementation of qualitative tourism facilities, the tourism flow is negatively influenced by the polluted environment (approximately 17 000 hectares are affected), by the general state of the infrastructure, by the still forming economic environment form the Jiu Valley, by the limited possibilities of recreation and entertainment, by the lack of superior accommodation facilities of 4* and 5* (which could attract foreign tourists), and last but not least by the overall negative image of the area. Although the basic exterior equipping of the resort was done, serious investments are needed in order to improve them, but more importantly it is necessary to set clear development and improvement objectives and another option could be collaborating with specialized institutions in order to establish and realize those objectives.

One first improvement objective could be the improving the access road to the resort, whose development was marked by this road, the easier access would facilitate a series of activities and increase the number of tourists. The project for developing the road was financed mostly from Phare programmes and it was opened in October 15th 2007. Another important objective could be the development of additional sky slopes in order to ensure the practicing of this winter sport in optimal conditions. Apart from the sky slopes it is necessary to improve the cable transport facilities. The perspective objectives relate to improving the local infrastructure, in order to increase the attraction of the urban areas as far as investments goes, rehabilitating the urban environment and increasing the quality of life in the communities from the areas there the industrial restructuring took place, as well as rehabilitating the historical and cultural heritage in order to enhance the tourist potential of this area.

On the other hand, even if tourism in the area is not organized based on an unitary idea, developing only based on conjectural situations, one must underline the fact that a flow of tourists is large including the foreign tourists as well. Straja represents an alternative to other destinations for winter sport resorts located at bigger distances. The tourism offer addresses a regional target public mainly inhabitants from Oltenia and from Timiş
and Arad counties, with medium incomes, youth and adults and not only them. In order to consolidate the position the Straja resort has in this market and to increase the area of attraction to regions situated further away, the development of the tourist resources and the development of tourism itself must be done organically and correlated with the general provisions of the complex territorial systematization which will ensure the harmoniums development of all the economic sectors and a combination of the criteria of economic efficiency with those regarding the social environment.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY


