

THE DEVELOPMENT COORDINATES OF A MOUNTAIN TOURISTIC RESORT IN ROMANIA. CASE STUDY: VOINEASA – VALCEA

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Abstract

The tourist life of mountain areas largely depends on potential customers' demands and needs as well as on the way various mountain area sites are perceived by the public. In this respect, a mountain resort's operations are a condition based on the complex interdependence among environment, general infrastructure and tourist flows. Those factors are essential in choosing the style that is to be set up and in drafting and achieving resorts' improvement.

The solutions to improve and manage mountain areas may differ significantly from one mountain to another, or from one country to another according to geographic, economic, social, or juridical conditions, as well as to researchers' creativity and expertise.

Mountains have become an important target in tourism and should be the concern of all those involved in such activities. One should emphasize the importance of promoting a proper policy in the field of mountain tourism that could create a balance between the need to extend material basis and the requirement to preserve flora, fauna, local architecture, between the need to develop transportation and infrastructure, and pollution, between soil erosion and habitat deterioration.

1. The coordinates of a model mountain touristic resort in Romania

Taking into consideration the touristic and anthropic attractions of the Romanian Carpathians chain, of its particularities in comparison to many other European mountain chains, as well as of the economic-social conditions specific to our country, there can be underlined several coordinates of a model location for a mountain resort and of a perspective development of small resorts already located.

These coordinates can be:

Concerning **skiing**, the location should provide, beside compulsory routes crossing low foreign areas, clearings or mountain areas of high altitude, where skiing can be largely practiced;

It is very important that in early winter skiing could be practiced on low altitude tracks, where unwanted effects because of the fog or snowstorms should not represent obstacles.

For calm weather periods and especially for spring time altitude up to 2000 m can be used, such locations offering the guarantee of a prolonged skiing season of about 150 days yearly.

Due to specific climate conditions, the skiing passages should be placed at over 1000 m altitude, because such type of snow is more resistant to warm currents.

The tracks slopes should be 10-35% inclined, the tourists' requirement being somewhere to 10-25%. For advanced ski men and performers there will be higher slopes of over 50% or even more. The orientation should be towards North up to 1800 m in order to assure snow presence until April-May

→ **The snow layer** should range during years within a favorable average, minimum 30 cm. This is a specially important condition that assure the success of such investments made for arranging skiing fields.

→ **Wind intensity and fog obscurity** should not represent an obstacle in skiing activities and in the functioning of such mechanical installations suited for climbing the mountain.

→ **The soil** should allow the operation of small and large ski-lift installations;

→ The resort should provide road, railroad and even air transport lines (an airport situated at a distance of at least 150km), making it possible to integrate easier the resort in the national and international touristic circuit;

→ The accommodation and catering area should be situated on an altitude lower than the skiing field. Thus, the roads that provide access and food supplying are easier to achieve or already offered by a mountain exploitation firm;

→ In developing equipments and „**apres ski**” or **summer ski** entertainment activities one should focus on a high using of great natural attractions (landscapes, passages, caves, lakes, nature monuments, belvedere areas, canyons) as well of anthropical areas, specially related to the Romanian folklore and popular crafts.

→ **The population in the area** should be interested and stimulated towards the development of mountain tourism so that the result should be an economic and social effect in the favor of surrounding areas, in all respects.

→ Developing **bivalent resorts**, through an equal representation of equipments meant for practicing winter sports and for meeting touristic needs in summer time: entertainment, walking, resting, summer sports, etc.

→ Developing a complex touristic product, by making use, where it is possible, of natural medical factors (thermal springs, mineral springs, salt mines), contributing thus to increasing the mountain resort attractiveness and to decreasing season dependence, by assuring its complex functionality (winter sports, treatment, summer entertainment).

Such conditions offer the possibility of setting up an attractive and efficient resort from economic point of view.

2. Premises for developing Voineasa touristic resort

2.1. The place history

Voineasa resort lies on the territory of Voineasa village in Valcea county at the heart of Meridional Carpathians mountains, that is Lotru Basin that lies on a surface of 1024 km².

Voineasa is surrounded by:

In the South – Latorita and Capatanii Mountains;

In the West – Parang Mountains;

In the North – Cindrel Mountains;

In the East – Cozia Mountains.

The touristic area included in Lotru Basin benefits of many types of soil: altitudes of over 2336 m (Mohoru Peak), ice lakes (Galcescu and Iezer), a rough mountain climate, high areas covered by different forest species, areas with mild subalpine climate.



Voineasa resort is situated on an altitude on 1650 m, surrounded by coniferous and leafy forests, with an yearly average temperature of 4-6⁰ C and over 2000 hours/year shining time.

The air is strongly oxygenated, rich in aerosols and fir-tree air essence and negative ions, while the pollution degree is zero, a strong quality of the area.

The building of the largest hydro-electric plant on the inner rivers of the country, at Ciunget, a real proof of engineering and art technique was to represent a great value moment in Voineasa resort history.

By improving and laying asphalt on the road Voineasa – Petrosani a new mountain touristic route will be built, a road that includes Vidra lake, whose bank holds a resort with the same name.

2.2. Access roads

The presence of some touristic areas largely attractive in Valcea county, the easy access from all regions in the country, all these represent favorable elements for attracting tourists. The European road E81A as well as the direct and quick modern route on the roads E70 and E79 allow the easy access in the city to foreign tourists and foreign touristic transit.

Voineasa can be also reached by rail up to Lotru train station and by bus (40Km) from there to the resort, or by road – DN7 – which is crossed at Brezoi town by E15A.

2.3. Voineasa tourism S.W.O.T. analysis

Strong points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High touristic potential due to the traditional cultural patrimony • Landscape touristic potential due to its situation close to Latorita mountains • Vidruta gorge, Vidra presence nearby • Rural tourism promoting association • Geographical position proper to services development, especially to the touristic ones
Weak points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient financial resources, nonexistent domestic and foreign investments • Lack of staff with professional training in the field of touristic services

Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extending the network of authorized farms and households for practicing agro tourism • Developing the touristic infrastructure in Voineasa, Vidra area • Underlying the rich cultural and historical patrimony of the area • Improving cooperation with non-governmental organizations, with special institutions and education bodies for attracting financial and human resources
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2.4. Material base

Since the main purpose of touristic voyages is entertainment and watching natural landscapes the existence of some means that provide accommodation is completely necessary

The material base includes:

► **Accommodation units**, that include 6 hotels and 14 villas, with an overall capacity of 1800 places, rated by the Ministry of Tourism to one, two or three stars, as follows:

- Lotru Hotel – two stars – 360 places;
- Brădişor Hotel – two stars – 340 places
- Lotrişor Hotel – one star – 320 places;
- Vidruţa Hotel – one star – 340 places;
- Voineşiţa Hotel – one star – 320 places;
- Poieniţa Hotel – one star – 64 places;
- Suites – three stars – 56 places in 14 villas.
- Private boarding houses

► **Catering units** with an overall capacity of 1500 places, rated by the Ministry of Tourism to the first and second category, thus:

- Lotru Restaurant – 1st category – 240 places;
- Lotrişor Restaurant – 1st category – 260 places;
- Brădişor Restaurant – 2nd category – 250 places;
- Voineasa Restaurant – 2nd category – 440 places;
- Lotru Bar – 1st category – 120 places;
- Brădişor Bar – 1st category – 40 places;

- Beer saloon – 2nd category – 110 places;
- Confectionary – 2nd category – 40 places.

► **Treatment base**, situated in Bradisor and Lotru Hotels, owns modern equipment where breathing illness and moving disabilities or other related diseases can be cured.



Table no. 1.

Number of accommodation structures

Index \ Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2007/2003 %
Romania	3569	3900	4226	4710	4694	103,7
Vâlcea	119	124	147	163	168	141,18
% of the total	3,33	3,18	3,48	3,46	3,58	-
Voineasa	28	28	29	31	33	117,86
% of the total	23,53	22,58	19,73	19,02	19,64	-

Source: The County Statistics Direction

Vâlcea county is the 6th in the country with 4,8%, after Constanța 24%, Brașov 6,6%, Bucharest 5,3%, Bihor 5,2% and Prahova 5,1%, regarding the accommodation capacity.

Table no. 2.

Number of accommodation places

Index \ Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2007/2003 %
Romania	273614	275941	282661	287158	283701	103,7
Vâlcea	10691	10058	10380	10223	10556	98,7
% of the total	3,9	3,6	3,7	3,6	3,7	-
Voineasa	1706	1725	1731	1751	1780	104,3
% of the total	0,6	0,6	0,6	0,6	0,6	-

Source: The County Statistics Direction

Concerning the places provided to tourists, Valcea county is the 3rd with 3,7%, after Constanța 43,2% and Brașov 4,4%.

The accommodation capacity has decreased between 1998-2002, many tourists choosing summer time. Voineasa resort owns a very important material base from the Technical-Material Base in the field.

2.5. Touristic circuit

The most relevant index for characterizing the domestic touristic dynamics is the tourists number or that of the persons accommodated at touristic units and, in close relation with it, the number of night stayings and the average time of stayings.

Table no. 3.

Tourists number evolution

index \ year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2007/2003 (%)
Romania	5057	5639	5805	6216	6972	137,9
Vâlcea	188	217	190	209	223	118,6
% of the total	3,7	3,9	3,3	3,4	3,2	-
Voineasa	17	16	13	13	16	94,1
% of the total	0,3	0,3	0,2	0,2	0,2	-

Source: The County Statistics Direction

In this period we can witness an increase in the number of tourists both in the country and in the county, while in Voineasa the number of tourists was decreasing until 2006 (compared to 2003 the number of tourists has decreased with 6%). This is partly due to a lack of involvement on the authorities part in attracting touristic flows as well as to the weak variety in the touristic offer.

Table no. 4.

The evolution of night accomodation

Index \ year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2007/2003 (%)
Romania	19.183	17.670	17.647	18.122	17.277	0,90
Vâlcea	1.244	1.245	1.271	1.399	1.346	1,08
% of the total	6,48	7,05	7,20	7,72	7,79	1,20
Voineasa	133	161	128	115	116	0,87
% of the total	10,70	12,91	10,1	8,23	8,6	0,8

Source: The County Statistics Direction

Night accommodation in Valcea county between 2003-2007 has grown with 8%, with no significant fluctuations sine most tourists choose the city for entertainment, resting and treatment.

Night accommodation in Voineasa resort has decreased with 13% because of the weak diversification of the touristic offer, as a natural consequence of the general tendency to reduce holidays.

Table no. 5.

year Index	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2007/2003 (%)
Romania	3,5	3,5	3,6	3,7	3,6	1,02
Vâlcea	6,3	6,4	7,1	7,2	6,7	1,06
Voineasa	1,7	1,7	1,5	1,5	1,6	0,94

Source: The County Statistics Direction

As we can see on the above mentioned table stayings average in Valcea county is higher than that in the country (almost two time). With an average of 6 days stayings are typically rich in treatment resorts (there are three treatment resorts of international interest: Călimănești-Căciulata, Băile Olănești și Băile Govora). In Voineasa stayings are reduced, since tourists come here especially for the week-end.

3. Voineasa resort development strategies

Market strategies seen on the market cover a very large range.

Found in the situation of showing its attitude towards all the main problems on the market, the company will adjust its strategy according to each type, so that its global strategy does not represent an “average” attitude, a sort of compromise, but it should include, as components, the firm’s position towards each group of aspects met on the market. The analysis allows a synthetic table presentation of the main strategies.

1. The firm’s position towards the market dynamics. Related to a market whose potential capacity is continually developing, has stopped or is decreasing, the firm has in view, according to its own potential, an *increase strategy* for developing the market activity.

2. The firm’s position towards the market structures. The existence of some segments on the market, with peculiar characteristics regarding the range and the quality of the articles required by customers, the buying habits, etc. forces firms to adopt a certain attitude towards the segments structure on the market. According to such criterion, Voineasa resort adopts an *undifferentiated strategy*, either through its services (products) or through the ways they are traded. The resort addresses the market globally, without taking into consideration its possible stratifications.

3. The firm's position towards the market changes. The development of the market requirements, in unexpected directions, requires firms a dynamic adjustment to the new conditions. Since the mobilization capacities, in this regard, are different, Voineasa resort has in view an *operative strategy*, that is it aims to keeping pace with the market changes, to anticipating them and to interfering some time ahead with changes in its activity (concerning technologies, product structures, trading forms, etc), so that it can adjust promptly to the new conditions.

4. The firm's position towards the market exigencies. If in the former case discussion was focused on the way of adjusting in time to the changes met on the market, otherwise said the adjusting speed, we now speak about the qualitative level on which the firm wants to perform its activity in accordance with the market requirements. The strategy chosen by the resort is that of average requirements, proper to firms with a modest potential that function within a market where there are differences among buyers determined by the exigencies level.

5. The firm's position towards competition level. In most cases, the firm functions in a competitive environment, where competition differs according to the number and action force of competitors, on the one hand, to the general relation between offer and demand, on the other hand. The market strategy should also mention the firm's attitude towards other competitors. The adapted strategy will be the *defensive* one, that is of *maintaining the market quota*.

This has in view creating a resort with a complex profile, of great attractiveness that should develop an efficient activity, contributing directly, through its income and new jobs opportunities, or indirectly, by determining other branches economic development

Thus, the strategic development plan will be developed in three directions:

- 1. Developing the ski offer, related to that for treatment;**
- 2. Developing summer offers;**
- 3. Developing compatible and complementary branches**
Developing the ski offer, related to that for treatment;

Taking into consideration the world exigencies for a ski resort according to the touristic demand, as well as its natural environment, we can say that the resort will have to be competitive in order to attract a large number of tourists and a large volume of income, which can allow investments covering.

The main elements of the developing strategy are the following:

- Extending the ski area already arranged:
 - Mountain slopes allow a diversification of ski passages, according to the difficulty involved;
 - Many basic or walking ski routes can be arranged
 - Sky lifts building for serving each passage according to its capacity;
- The ski offer will be completed by snowboard, snowmobile passages, sledges or bobsleigh;
- Increasing the accommodation capacity of the resort and diversifying the offer for accommodation places; according to some indices on the level of international requirements, the accommodation capacity is of 5000 places. On international and national level, we consider more proper to increase the number only up to 3000 places, at least on medium term. Thus, they can build three-four stars hotels, villas complex or small hotels of three stars and high comfort chalets.
- Developing and diversifying tourism catering units assuring high quality services and different menus (with local specific meals, or food for vegetarians)
- Developing après ski activities.

Developing summer offers

For summer time, Voineasa resort can be promoted as a cultural centre, being able to hold summer manifestations of folklore groups, art camps or pupils camps. The resort can become the centre of sports trainings, offering good conditions for keeping fit, due to its climate and fresh air.

Many activities and summer sports can be practiced in the resort or nearby: mountain climbing, mountain cycling, sky diving fishing. They must be strongly promoted on the Romanian market and foreign ones and sold as touristic packages, suited for different types of tourists: summer sports packages for young people, cycling, cultural tourism packages, etc.

Specific equipment will be also provided. Thus they will build clubs, discos, billiard, tennis electronic games bars. Mountain passages marking has to be improved, providing mountain guides and some leaflets for knowing the explored area.

Developing compatible and complementary branches

Having as a starting point the fact that tourism in the area has to be supported and accompanied by an economic increase in other branches too, we consider that local and county authorities interest should focus on encouraging people to increase their domestic animals number, meadows rehabilitation building some factories for diary and meat products, alongside with building a distribution network in Valcea and the counties nearby.

Tourism development in Voineasa will determine the affirmation of local crafts which is obvious in products such as : wood souvenirs, materials, other art objects.

Besides these major directions there are also some necessary elements that can support the touristic development of the area. First, the resort should benefit of some complementary services such as: ski schools, mountain climbing, emergency medical care, sport equipment maintaining units, commercial units, banking and insurance services, tourism agencies, inquiry office or a tourism regional office.

Secondly, tourism schools should be organized so that local labor can be trained.

Thus, we can say that the resort touristic development cannot be done without a close relation to economic development, this interdependence relation being obvious on many levels. Moreover, private initiatives of investing in the resort, for creating new equipment, should be done under the efforts coordination by an integrated project, under the control of the local council and with special assistance provided by the National Assembly of Mountain Areas.

Voineasa resort development contributes to sustainable tourism development in this mountain region, which means:

► *from economic perspective:*

- Developing a sustainable touristic economy in this region compensate unprofitable traditional economic activities.

► *From social perspective:*

- creates new jobs and qualification labor vacancies – e necessary condition for developing some activities and for assuring vacant jobs occupation.

- supports experience change by combining local organizations and people.

- facilitates the access to the information about touristic infrastructure (accommodation, roads, traffic) for the public.

- change of experience and knowledge transfer between European mountain areas.

► *From ecological perspective*

- assures a sensitive ecological field (mountain area) for ecological training. Voineasa benefits of a tonic bio-climate, without so much pollution, rich in aerosols.

The resort management and promotion can be done by a management-marketing company, built on the terms of a partnership among companies detaining touristic equipments.

The promoting activity will be directed both towards the internal market and the foreign ones, such as: Hungary, Poland, Russia, Germany, Great Britain, Ukraine, Scandinavian countries.

4. Conclusions

Taking into consideration the fact that in many mountain resorts there more touristic companies that provide different competition or related services, from the point of view of the touristic product components, we may speak about the necessity of a unitary concept of arrangement and development. This becomes possible alongside with the involvement of authorities and local communities in coordinating the efforts of every economic agent, in finding the development opportunities that can bring benefits for everyone, as well as in promoting the resort on domestic and foreign markets,

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