
THE IMPACT OF WINTER TOURISM ON REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: CASE STUDY OF ZARNOVICA REGION

Bieliková H.

Department of Ecology and Environmentalistics, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Tr. A. Hlinku 1, 949 74 Nitra, Slovak Republic

E-mail: hana.bielikova@ukf.sk

ABSTRACT

The main objective of this contribution is to determine impacts of winter tourism on a certain district, specifically Zarnovica district situated in Slovakia. The focus is set on evaluating the economic impact of winter tourism on business subjects and population. To meet the objective, mostly qualitative methods were used. To evaluate the impact, several sources were used to gain the data needed to construct this study. Owners and management of ski resorts completed questionnaires about their operations, including number of employees, number of visitors, revenues and other information. Another survey was administrated to customers of ski resorts. Data gained from surveys were used to compute the direct and indirect impact of ski resorts on the region. The following assumptions were confirmed: Ski resorts produce significant economic contribution to the region as the revenue generated from customers and the income of businesses related to ski resorts are handed back to the residents of the region in the form of wages and different social advantages.

Key words: ski resorts, regional development, economic impact

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, tourism is part of everyday human lives. It brings not just social benefits to people but it has also big economic impact on society that is confirmed by constantly rising contribution to the world GDP.

Tourism is divided into many types and one of them is winter tourism represented also by ski resorts. There are many studies conducted to confirm economic impact of ski resorts on regions as for example study of Bunting – Wagner – Jones (2005). This study is focused on ski resorts situated in state Washington, USA. Study was a clue by conducting research dealing with economic impact of ski resorts in Zarnovica district.

Visit of ski resorts and winter sport resorts belongs to often forms of spending free time in Slovakia. There are approximately 127 ski resorts in Slovakia, three of them are located in Zarnovica region. This is quite young destination of winter tourism but it has tremendous potential thanks to its location close to the west and south part of the country.

There are not studies concerning economic impacts of ski resorts in Slovakia that would approve their benefits to region and its development. This study shows how big impact ski resorts have on regions where they are located and it shows also the potential role of ski resorts in local and regional development.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

To evaluate the impact of ski resorts on region mostly qualitative methods were used, concretely surveys and questionnaires. Owners and management of ski resorts submitted questionnaires about their operations, including number of employees, skier visits, revenues and other information. Personal communication was also used to achieve the goal. Data concerning revenues and visitors are from the winter season 2012/2013. Another survey was administrated to customers of ski resorts. The guest surveys profiled mostly their spending patterns. The total amount of 304 surveys were collected during the winter season 2012/2013 in three ski resorts. The time of the examined data is limited by four winter seasons, 2009/2010 – 2012/2013. The beginning of collecting data is set by opening of the Salamandra resort in season 2009/2010.

The data gained from surveys were used to compute a direct and indirect impact of ski resorts on region. Total economic impact of tourism according to Stynes (1997) is computed as:

Total economic impact of tourism = #visitors * average expenditure of customer * multiplier

The direct effect is represented by changes in production related to sudden effects in tourist expenditure changes. The indirect effect is a change in production that comes out of income of tourism sector reused in other related sectors. (Ardahaey 2011)

One of the functions of customer questionnaires was to plot customer expenditure structure. Customers filled in Euro amounts they spent during their visit in ski resorts in different categories including ski passes, ski and snowboard lessons, equipment rental, lodging accommodation, food/beverages expenditures, shopping, entertainment and other spending.

Questionnaire results were evaluated for all the respondents and all the categories separately and consequently they were divided by number of all respondents. Sum of all categories gave us idea of total expenditures of one customer in ski resorts. Expenditures of one customer were multiplied by total amount of skiers in resorts in winter season 2012/2013 in order to acquire estimated sum of total direct expenditures. The average expenditures were reduced by expenditures on

accommodation due to the fact that not every skier who came to the resort used also lodging and lift tickets. Furthermore, there are exact numbers of these expenditures.

There is multiplier used to assess indirect effect, which estimates secondary effects on state economy of one chosen sector. (RRS Associates 2011) Computing the multiplier is beyond the objective of this study and so estimated multiplier was used in this paper.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

As shown in table 1, in Zarnovica region there are 5 full-time and 56 seasonal employees. Ski resorts generated just from lift tickets total revenues 667,376 €

Tab. 1: Key statistics for ski resorts in Zarnovica region

2012/2013 Season statistics	
Total visits	61,653
Total revenue (€)	667,376
Total revenues in ski resorts (€)	793,727
Year-round employees	5
Seasonal employees	56

Source: Own findings gained from questionnaires 2013

Ski resorts Salamandra and Drozdovo have their own accommodation situated in resort areas. These lodging facilities generate noticeable seasonal revenues. Table 2 shows visits in these amenities as well as revenues of amenities. Visits and revenues are shown from the beginning of month in which ski season started (most of the times December/January) until the month when season ended. It is good to notice differences in Pension Drozdovo's values until the winter season 2011/2012. It is caused by the fact that in 2011 was technical snowmaking put into operation.

Tab. 2: Visits and revenues in chosen lodging amenities

Number of visitors				
	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013
Salamandra hotel	NA	NA	NA	1,134
Pension Drozdovo	163	214	691	859
Revenues in lodging amenities in €				
Salamandra hotel	NA	NA	NA	63,875
Pension Drozdovo	4,937	5,632	22,287	26,341

Source: Own findings 2012, 2013

Another important index showing the economic impact of tourism are economic revenues gained from customer expenditures. These numbers give information about customer expenditure structure.

Average person's expenditure on ski trip in Zarnovica region is 60,76€ Customer expenditure structure is shown in table 3. The biggest amount is spent on accommodation and lift tickets.

Tab. 3: Average spending per person in winter season 2012/2013

Type of expenditure	Per person spending	Percent of total
Local transportation	5.73 €	9.4%
Lodging accommodation (nightly rate)	19.85 €	32.7%
Food/beverage/restaurant	7.31 €	12.0%
Lift tickets	14.55 €	23.9%
Ski/snowboard lessons	2.98 €	4.9%
Ski/snowboard equipment	4.67 €	7.7%
Shopping/presents/souvenirs	1.93 €	3.2%
Entertainment/activities	2.32 €	9.0%
Other spending	1.42 €	2.3%
Total per person spending	60.76 €	

Source: Own findings 2013

Total direct customer expenditures were derived from average spending per person and total amount of expenditures is 1.6 million Euros in winter season 2012/2013. After summing the assessed direct customer expenditures to revenues from lodging accommodation and revenues from lift tickets we get total direct value of ski resorts which is **2,382,765 €** Direct spending was estimated to be 60.76€ Taking the multiplier (0.031) into account, the total economic value of the ski resorts to the Zarnovica region is **2,498,892 €**

CONCLUSIONS

The study shows the economic value of ski resorts during few winter months which are not quite fruitful for the tourism in country. Regions that have good conditions for operating ski resorts have a big advantage. They offer economic value in a very important part of the year. Ski resorts as well offer seasonal employment to the region population. Three rather small ski centres are able to contribute economic value of almost 2.5 million Euros to small regions and their inhabitants, which has positive impact on further regional development.

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