

Semenic Mountains' alpine skiing area

Petru BANIAȘ¹, Daniel AMARIEI²

Abstract

The present paper presents, after a short history of alpine skiing which describes apparition, necessity, utility and universality of skiing during time, a comparative study referring to the alpine skiing domain in the Semenic Mountains area. In the paper are also presented general notions about alpine skiing methodology together with an ample description of the plateau area form Semenic Mountains, describing localization and touristic potential. Based on the SWOT analysis made for each slope, was realized a complex analysis of the entire skiing domain, an analysis which includes technical, financial, climatic and environmental aspects, along with an analysis of the marketing policy applied for the specific zone.

Key words: *alpine skiing, SWOT analysis, Semenic Mountains, slope.*

Rezumat

Lucrarea de față prezintă, după un scurt istoric al schiului alpin ce descrie apariția, necesitatea, utilitatea și universalitatea schiului de-a lungul anilor, un studiu comparativ referitor la domeniul schiabil alpin din arealul munților Semenic. În lucrare sunt de asemenea prezentate noțiuni generale ale metodicii schiului alpin împreună cu o amplă prezentare a zonei de platou din Munții Semenic, cu descrierea localizării și a potențialului turistic. Pe baza analizelor SWOT făcute pentru fiecare pârtie s-a întocmit o analiză complexă a întregului domeniu schiabil, analiză ce include aspecte tehnice, financiare, climatice și de mediu, precum și analiza politicii de marketing aplicate pentru zona specificată.

Cuvinte cheie: *schi alpin, analiza SWOT, munții Semenic, pârtie.*

¹ Assoc. Professor, PhD, West University of Timișoara, Faculty of Physical Education and Sports, e-mail: petru_banias@yahoo.com

² Athletics teacher, CSS Reșița

Spending one's leisure time at high altitudes, engaging in pleasant and useful activities in a natural setting, in a „snow paradise”, gradually becomes a more prominent pursuit for people of all classes, although it requires substantial financial efforts.

Skiing becomes integral to man's evolution, its history well integrated with the history of human civilization. Skiing has contributed to the understanding of natural phenomena which, for millennia, marked man's struggle for supremacy and knowledge.

On its path of evolution, from the primeval needs of man until the present day, skiing is “a temple in which courage, physical and spiritual vigor entwine beautifully with a drive for beauty and improvement. It is a testing ground for human skill, and certainly also a fascinating field of research and development. Skiing rejuvenates obscure settlements, and above all, it represents a universal melting pot for millions of skiers, regardless of age and ethnicity, an opportunity for them to gain knowledge and communicate to better the world” (1).

The purpose of this paper is to analyze and highlight the skiing potential of the Semenic Mountains. The hypothesis represents a highly probable statement of truth which the results of this body of research shall validate or invalidate.

Sustainable tourism involves the development of all types of tourism, in this case tourism with the purpose of engaging in alpine skiing, as well as tourism marketing that respects the natural, social and economic integrity of the environment by ensuring that natural resources can be exploited by future generations as well. We have pursued the following objectives in this paper:

- Analysis and classification of ski slopes from the point of view of available technical support, altitude, number of users, difficulty and length;
- SWOT analysis of the entire Semenic resort.

The Semenic resort is situated in the plateau area of the Semenic mountain range, a zone with rising tourism potential within the Banat Mountains. To raise the number of visiting tourists, this area is in

need of new investments and improvements to infrastructure provided by local councils.

The Semenic resort is situated in Caraș-Severin County, within the Semenic Mountains which in turn belong to the western part of the Southern Carpathians. Surrounded and covered by beech, white birch and fir tree forests, this mountain range holds the springs of Bârzava, Nera, and Timiș rivers. The mountain range has three peaks: Semenic (1446 m), Piatra Goznei (1447 m) and Piatra Nedeei (1437 m). Vehicle access is along the county road number 582 from Reșița-Văliug-Pasul Prislop-Semenic (40 km). (2)

The skiing area of Semenic has an elevation of 1440 meters, offering tourists the possibility to practice winter sports. The resort is equipped with cable transport installations such as lift, ski lift and baby ski lift. Sports equipment can also be rented from specialized centers in the resort (Figure 1). (3)

The hypsometric map shows an elevation difference of approximately 115 m for the plateau (Figure 2).

The Semenic-Văliug skiing area has a leading position among national mountain resorts, as can be attested by all who skied on those slopes. The main attraction is one slope that extends from Semenic downward to the banks of Văliug Lake, totaling over 5600 meters in length. The entire Semenic- Văliug skiing area is about 9.6 kilometers long and very much appreciated by skiers.

Even though cable transport installations for the entire slope length do not exist, the area administrator has found a solution by introducing ski-busses between Văliug and Semenic, which leave every half hour to travel the 16 kilometer-long path between stations. Access is available with the same ski pass for both Semenic and Văliug ski lifts. Moreover, skiers can benefit each morning from transport from Reșița to the top of the mountain. A one day ski pass costs 60 RON.

From a tourism point of view, Mount Semenic has a lot of potential, but right now it lacks appropriate accommodation facilities. Skiers are hard pressed to find satisfactory bed and breakfast facilities. The best hotels are near Lake Văliug, but skiers need to make bookings well in advance to find a room.

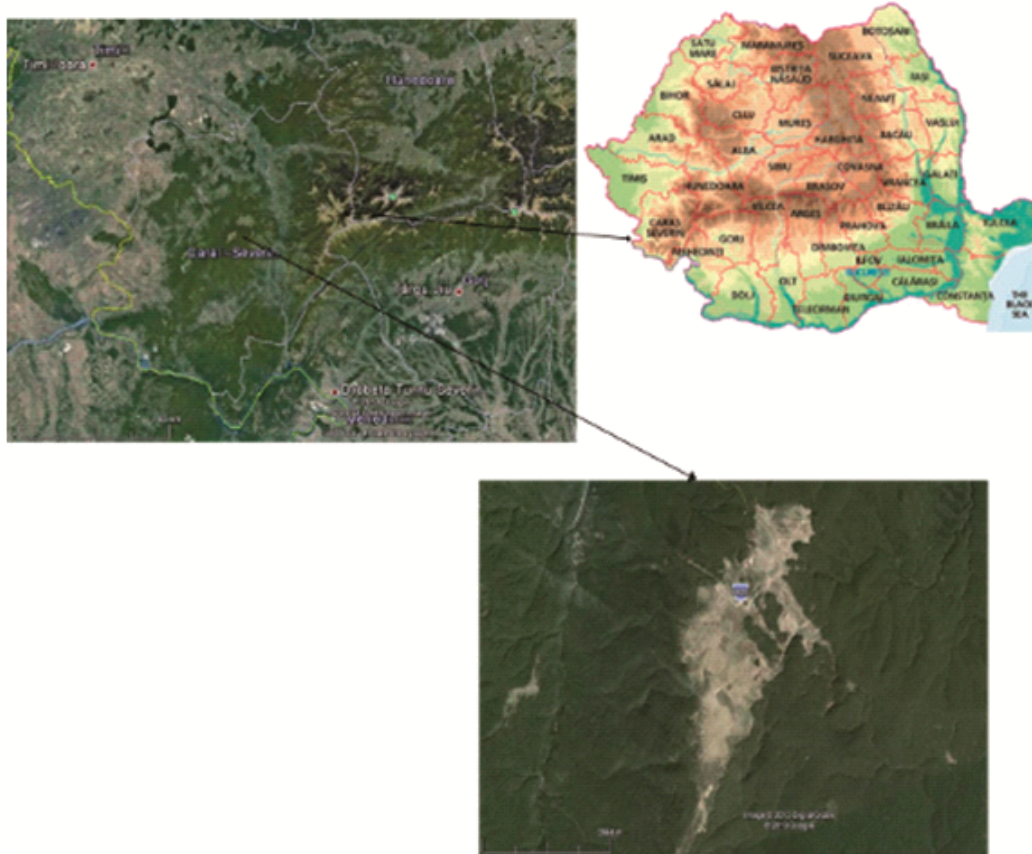


Figure 1. Location of Semenic Plateau

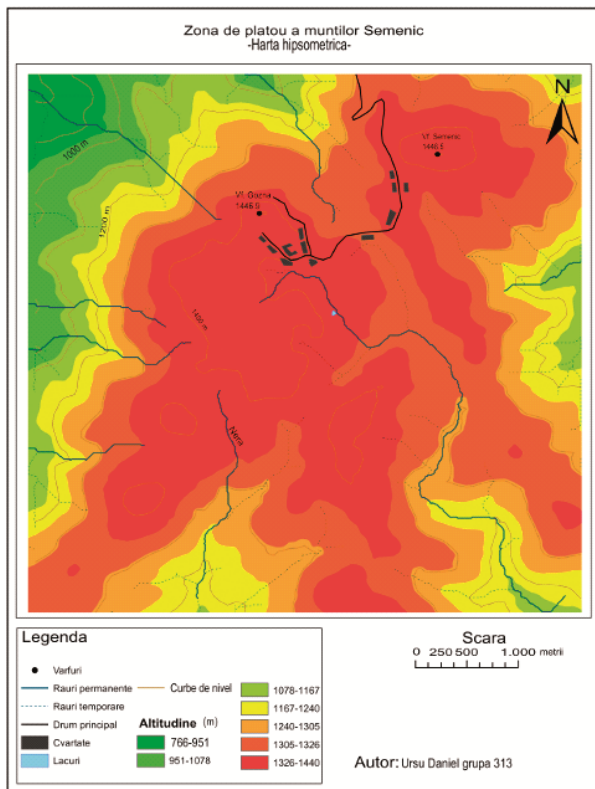


Figure 2. Hypsometric map of Semenic Plateau

Although at first looked upon with skepticism by tourism professionals, the Semenic-Văliug skiing area has immediately won the acclaim of winter sports enthusiasts in Banat. Văliug has an artificial snow installation which ensures that skiing can be practiced even during spring, before the air temperature nears 15° C.

During the following years, the current administration of Caraș-Severin county skiing areas hopes to increase the number of cable lift installations and have already imported a gondola from Italy. People from Banat also plan on installing another three kilometer-long cable lift on the Semenic Peak. (4)

SWOT Analysis of Semenic Resort

The table I shows Semenic slope is the longest one on the plateau. The Fir Tree Cross I, II and Giant Slalom slopes start from the highest altitude. In opposition, the shortest is the Fools' slope, while the Pontoon slope stops at the lowest altitude.

A comparison of average incline for slopes shows that the steepest is the Special Slalom slope, while the least steep is the Fools' slope.

Considering elevation difference, the longest slope is Semenic, while the shortest one is the Fools' slope.

The chart in Figure 6 shows that the Giant Slalom slope is widest, while Semenic slope is narrowest.

In a nutshell, the characteristics of Semenic area slopes are (Table I):

- Longest: Semenic slope
- Shortest: Idioșilor slope
- Highest starting position: Crucea de brazi I, II and Slalom Uriaș slopes
- Lowest stopping position: Casa Baraj slope
- Widest: Slalom Uriaș slope

- Narrowest: Semenic slope
- Largest elevation difference: Semenic slope
- Smallest elevation difference: Idioșilor slope
- Best equipped: Casa Baraj slope
- Most difficult: Slalom Special slope
- Least difficult: Idioșilor and Slalom Uriaș slopes
- Easiest access: Idioșilor and Slalom Uriaș slopes
- Total route length: 5600 m
- Total length Semenic-Văliug skiing area: 9600 m.

All of these slopes function depending on meteorological conditions. The probability of snow coverage on slopes decreases as follows: Casa Baraj, Goznuța, Idioșilor, Crucea de brazi, Slalom Uriaș, Slalom Special, and Skiing Route. (5)

Table I. Characteristics of Semenic resort slopes

Slope	Length [m]	Starting Altitude [m]	Stopping Altitude [m]	Average Incline [%]	Elevation Difference [m]	Average Width [m]	Area [ha]
Idioșilor	350	1370	1331	17	39	50	1.7
Casa Baraj	800	720	610	18	110	45	3.2
Goznuța	500	1430	1300	23	130	60	3.5
Crucea de brazi I	700	1435	1305	21	130	40	2.8
Crucea de brazi II	530	1435	1305	21	130	40	2.0
Slalom Special	800	1364	1246	34	118	40	3.2
Slalom uriaș	1250	1435	1169	17	266	70	8.4
Semenic	5800	1430	610	23	820	20	11.6

Conclusions

Tourism, both as an occurrence, and as an activity, is unique in its dependence on the natural, social, cultural environment, and on its values. This very dependence means that the tourism industry has an undisputed interest in maintaining environmental sustainability.

Marketed tourism offerings should be carefully assembled in such a way as to not negatively impact the environment or the tourist activities themselves. Developing competitive tourism offerings will also lead to better quality of life and a rejuvenation of disadvantaged areas. The strengthening of inter-institutional, organizational and economic bonds can contribute to a re-adaptation to present socio-economic realities.

Drawing from this study, we propose that competent authorities find solutions to revitalize rural structures in Văliug and Gărbăna.

A management and marketing effort is needed to revitalize the Semenic resort, making use of the existing potential, since this location has quite a number of resources which could attract tourists.

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