

## ANALYSIS OF SEASONAL MOVEMENT IN MOUNTAIN CENTERS OF SERBIA, WITH A SPECIAL OVERVIEW OF KOPAONIK

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**Summary.** Depopulation of mountains has been an intense and lengthy process in Serbia. This paper will analyze the potential of Kopaonik mountain for the development of tourism, which can be one of the key factors for the demographic revitalization of the entire mountain. In tourism development so far, Kopaonik mountain stands out as one of the most important carriers of mountain tourism in Serbia. The limiting factor in the development so far is the pronounced seasonality of tourism promotion. The aim of the research in the paper will be to identify the factors that influence seasonality phenomena as the main limiting factor for achieving better economic effects.

**Key words:** mountain tourism, seasonality, recreation, Kopaonik.

### Introduction

Seasonality in tourism is a universal problem despite being studied for decades. There are many approaches to defining seasonality in tourism. According to Koenig-Levis and Bischoff (2005), seasonality represents repetitive movements in a time series during a particular time of the year. Butler (1994) explains it as “a temporal imbalance in the phenomenon of tourism, [that] may be expressed in terms of dimension of such elements as numbers of visitors, expenditure of visitors, traffic on highways and other forms of transportation, employment, and admissions to attractions”. Bar-On (1975) divides factors that influence patterns of seasonality into two groups - natural and institutional. The same approach regarding factors that influence seasonality had Hartmann (1986), Allcock (1989), Butler (1994), Hinch and Hickey (1997), Sylvester (1999) and many others. Natural seasonality refers to climate and weather conditions (temperature, rainfall, snowfall, daylight and visibility) and institutional reflects social aspects (human, religious, school, culture, ethnic and economic). Baum (1999) emphasizes inflexibility within wide institutional frameworks as a cause of seasonal inflexibility with respect to vacation patterns and so that major shifts in seasonal behaviour are difficult to achieve.

Natural resources of mountain areas encompass one of the essential attributes of the tourist destinations (Mihalič, 2002; Dolničar et al., 2013). However, mountain destinations face severe seasonality challenges, with a high demand pressure for tourism resources in winter times, but a significant surplus of tourism resources in other seasons. The general assumption of seasonality in tourism of mountain destinations is that tourism indicators peak during the winter season and fall during the warmer season. Based on the tourist movements in the last ten years, the domination of seasonal movements, which is more

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prominent in the winter season, can be noticed. The seasonal type of movements in mountain tourism in Serbia is much more intense in the last fifteen years. (Paunovic, Radojevic 2014). In this case, a mountain resort gives a better tourist offer during the winter months, offering tourists open space activities, such as skiing, sledding, driving sports cars, and other activities. Big problems that seasonal movements cause are the expenses of the tourist destination, which not only companies at the destination face, but also the local community. Movement out of season is a challenge to companies, since a large number of unfilled capacities, non-use, reduced number of workforce, and lack of drawing investments, appear. The employment of the workforce becomes a great difficulty, since no company that is in the tourist center with dominant seasonal character requires the workforce during the whole year, and thus the focus is on the seasonal workers.

Recent research points out the fact that seasonality is being mitigated in advanced western societies becoming a secondary issue in tourism (Cannas, 2012) due to different improvement measures such as enriching touristic offer by organizing events and festivals, etc. Some of the proposed solutions for challenging the off-peak season are extending activities beyond the main season, organizing events through the off-peak season, seeking to cultivate an all year round market (Connell et al. 2015).

Despite that, seasonality in tourism in Serbia is still a burning issue affecting numerous aspects of life like depopulation, economic decline, social displacement, and spatial depletion. Seasonal movement in mountain centers of Serbia is a central issue caused by among other factors poor economic situation, insufficiently developed infrastructure and superstructure, inappropriate marketing strategies, non competitively positioned in the world market and lack of touristic elements in off-peak season.

Mountains of Serbia have been drawing the attention of tourists, nature lovers, mountaineers, and many more, for a long time. Most of them have been well geographically studied, thus providing a ground for their valorization. However, despite its considerable resource base, Serbia's mountainous area is severely depopulated and economically underdeveloped. The problem of depopulation is particularly pronounced in the mountainous area of Stara Planina, Kopaonik, and the highlands of Western Serbia. Possible mitigation of negative demographic trends in such areas can be found in various activities, especially in tourism. A diverse resource base is an important factor in the development of many industries, and therefore in tourism. Within that group, Kopaonik stands out.

Kopaonik is spreading between the river valleys of Jošanica and Koznička in the north, Ibar in the west, Lab in the south and Toplica and Kosanica in the east. The lowest point of Kopaonik is the place where the river Jošanica joins Ibar – 370 m, and the highest is Pančić's peak – 2017 m. At mountain foothills of Kopaonik, there are mineral springs of Jošanička, Lukovska, and Kuršumlijska Spa. From a touristic and traffic points of view, location of Kopaonik is very favorable and gets apparent benefits from the proximity to tourist centers of Brus and Raška, as well as spas at the foothills of Kopaonik (Stanković, 2008) but one of the problems of excessive concentration of touristic facilities on a plateau Ravni Kopaonik (1800 m) has negative consequences on tourism (Stanković, 2003).

As it is noticed for Garmisch-Partenkirchen in Germany (Schmidt et al, 2016), ~~also~~ Kopaonik also has the characteristics, such as size (large, but not oversized), location (it is positioned to maximize the benefits of both upper and lower elevation areas and it is also centrally positioned on the Balkan peninsula), profile (sport, health and convention tourism). that could enable an effective and long-term shift from winter mountain resort to an all-season destination. As they noticed, the biggest challenge is making a change from the mindset of winter to all-year mountain tourism. Stakeholder management, political, eco-

conomic and social leadership will be critical for creating an enduring future as a mountain tourism destination that is able to escape the shortsightedness of status quo decision making (Buhalis, 2000; Mayer and Steiger, 2013). This one-sided approach to mountain tourism could damage the environmental ecosystem to irreparable state. The results of a research (Bošković, 2019) indicate that the development of tourism in mountain destinations of the Republic of Serbia does not fully comply with sustainable development.

## **Materials and Methods**

The main aim of the research in the paper will be the issue that has been spoken about for a long time, and that is seasonality. For seasonal movement measurements in the mountain resorts, a wide range of methods applied in tourism is used. Precisely, in this paper, t-test and ANOVA have been applied, as well as correlation analysis. Besides that, descriptive statistics have been used to specify the attitudes that have the most significant impact on tourist grouping. For the needs of this analysis, a survey questionnaire has been made that was applied during June, July, August, and September 2019. The survey questionnaire consisted of three groups of questions. The first part of the questionnaire referred to the interviewees' satisfaction with touristic elements considering the beauty of nature, cultural heritage, gastronomy, accommodation, restaurants and other food places, local transportation, sport and recreational activities, tourism signalization, cleanliness, professionalism of tourist service providers, hospitality of local population, and safety and security. The second part of the questionnaire had the aim of grading the need for improvement of touristic elements that influence tourists to visit the mountain resort. The third part of the questionnaire referred to demographic features: gender and marital status of tourists, nationality, education, accommodation type, and funds they spent during their stay. Tourists have been divided into different categories according to demographic features, as well as touristic habits.

The survey included 123 interviewees suitable for further analysis, right after evaluation. In the overall sample, a total of 64 women and 51 men have participated. Regarding the age structure of tourists shows that the most dominant number of interviewees are younger than 25 years 35.83%. The level of education of tourists that visit Kopaonik mountain resort shows dominance of tourists with secondary or short vocational qualifications. The nationality of tourists is homogenous, with the most considerable part of local tourists (84.17%).

## **Results and Discussion**

The differences appeared in average grades of satisfaction with touristic elements, and average grades of the need for improvement of touristic elements, between tourists of different categories. The survey questionnaire shows the oscillations in tourist movements, and clearly separated seasons in mountain resort Kopaonik. The reason behind that is the insufficient engagement of managers who work in the tourism sector of the development of this mountain resort. Overall satisfaction has been obtained as the mean value of grades of tourist satisfaction with 12 touristic elements (beauty of nature, cultural heritage, gastronomy, accommodation, restaurants and other food places, local transportation, sport and recreational activities, tourism signalization, cleanliness, professionalism of tourist service providers, hospitality of local population, and safety and security).

**Table 1.** Demographic features of tourists  
**Tabela 1.** Demografske karakteristike turista

		n	%
What is your family status	In a relationship (no kids)	11	9.4
	In a relationship (with kids)	27	23.08
	Single	79	67.52
	Total	117	100
Gender	male	51	44.35
	female	64	55.65
	Total	115	100
How old are you	≤25	43	35.83
	26-35	36	30
	36-45	19	15.83
	46-55	11	9.17
	≥56	11	9.17
	Total	120	100
What is the highest level of education you completed	primary school or less	14	11.86
	secondary or short vocational	50	42.37
	bachelor	41	34.75
	master or higher	13	11.02
	Total	118	100
What is your employment status	unemployed	37	31.09
	employed	58	48.74
	student	16	13.45
	retired	8	6.72
	Total	119	100
Where do you live most of the time	urban area (e.g. in the city)	98	81.67
	rural area (countryside)	16	13.33
	sub-urban area (on the outskirts of the city)	6	5
	Total	120	100
Where did you stay during this visit	hotel	95	79.17
	private accommodation	25	20.83
	Total	120	100

Overall score of the need for improvement of touristic elements have been obtained as the mean value of grades of the tourist opinions on a need for improvement of 15 touristic elements (accommodation, offer for kids, hiking trails, ski slopes, camping facilities, events, ski lifts, bike trails, gastronomy, wellness and spa services, adrenalin sports, transportation infrastructure, information sites, promotion, booking). Interviewees were divided into different categories according to demographic features, as well as touristic habits.

**Table 2** Results of *t*-test for differences in satisfaction and improvement need based on the number of visits**Tabela 2** Rezultati *t*-testa za ispitivanje razlika u zadovoljstvu i potrebama za poboljšanjem u zavisnosti od broja poseta

	How many times have you visited this area?	N	Mean	Std. dev.	sig
Satisfaction	This is the first time	37	5.76	1.23	0.046
	I have been here before	76	5.29	1.13	
Improvement need	This is the first time	37	3.15	1.54	0.004
	I have been here before	75	4.03	1.43	

Student's *t*-test was performed in order to check if there are significant differences in satisfaction and improvement need grades of tourists who were for the first time on the mountain and those who have been there before. Based on the results of the *t*-test, it can be concluded that those who were on the mountain for the first time are more satisfied by touristic elements than the tourists who have been there before. Besides, the tourists who have been there before have a significantly more prominent opinion that touristic elements need some improvement.

**Table 3.** Results of *t*-test for differences in satisfaction and improvement need based on a tourist habits**Tabela 3.** Rezultati *t*-testa za ispitivanje razlika u zadovoljstvu i potrebama za poboljšanjem u zavisnosti od navika turista

On this trip, which of the following best describes you as a tourist?			N	Mean	Std. dev.	sig
Relax & rest	Satisfaction	No	68	5.59	1.14	0.051
		Yes	55	5.17	1.22	
	Improvement need	No	66	3.48	1.62	0.058
		Yes	55	4.00	1.29	
Sport & recreation	Satisfaction	No	64	5.17	1.25	0.025
		Yes	59	5.65	1.08	
	Improvement need	No	63	3.78	1.46	0.622
		Yes	58	3.65	1.54	
Gastronomy	Satisfaction	No	111	5.44	1.21	0.203
		Yes	12	4.98	1.00	
	Improvement need	No	109	3.63	1.52	0.049
		Yes	12	4.52	0.95	
Wellness & wellbeing	Satisfaction	No	113	5.42	1.22	0.521
		Yes	10	5.17	0.90	
	Improvement need	No	111	3.71	1.51	0.801
		Yes	10	3.83	1.37	
Culture & socializing	Satisfaction	No	101	5.35	1.22	0.294
		Yes	22	5.64	1.03	
	Improvement need	No	100	3.42	1.36	0.000
		Yes	21	5.13	1.32	
Adrenalin	Satisfaction	No	104	5.32	1.22	0.109
		Yes	19	5.80	0.96	
	Improvement need	No	103	3.79	1.47	0.213
		Yes	18	3.31	1.63	

Differences in satisfaction and opinions on improvement needs between tourists with different habits during their stay were also analyzed. Regarding each of their habits, tourists were being divided into two groups, one containing tourists with and other containing tourists without a particular habit. Based on the *t*-test results, it can be concluded that the tourists who travel for sport and recreation are more satisfied with touristic elements than the tourists who have a different cause for traveling. Tourists who travel for gastronomy, have a more prominent opinion that touristic elements need improvement. This is also the case with tourists who travel for culture and socializing.

**Table 4.** Results of *t*-test for differences in satisfaction and improvement need based on preferred season for traveling

**Tabela 4.** Rezultati *t*-testa za ispitivanje razlika u zadovoljstvu i potrebama za poboljšanjem između turista koji putuju u različitim turističkim sezonama

When do you travel often?		N	Mean	Std. dev.	sig	
Winter	Satisfaction	No	77	5.29	1.17	0.130
		Yes	43	5.64	1.23	
	Improvement need	No	76	3.61	1.49	0.389
		Yes	43	3.86	1.53	
Spring	Satisfaction	No	100	5.54	1.20	0.009
		Yes	20	4.78	0.99	
	Improvement need	No	99	3.60	1.56	0.111
		Yes	20	4.19	1.07	
Summer	Satisfaction	No	32	5.05	1.23	0.042
		Yes	88	5.55	1.17	
	Improvement need	No	32	3.47	1.12	0.315
		Yes	87	3.79	1.62	
Autumn	Satisfaction	No	116	5.43	1.20	0.506
		Yes	4	5.02	1.35	
	Improvement need	No	115	3.68	1.52	0.304
		Yes	4	4.47	0.43	

According to their most preferable seasons for traveling, tourists are divided into two groups, one consisting of tourists who prefer to travel during a particular season and the other consisting of tourists who do not. Based on the results of the *t*-test, it can be concluded that the tourists who mostly travel during spring are less satisfied with touristic elements on the mountain than the tourists who travel during other seasons. Also, the tourists who mostly travel during the summer are more satisfied with touristic elements than the tourists who travel during the other seasons.

**Table 5.** Results of *t*-test for differences in satisfaction and improvement need according to gender

**Tabela 5.** Rezultati *t*-testa za ispitivanje razlika u zadovoljstvu i potrebama za poboljšanjem između turista različitog pola

Gender		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	sig
Satisfaction	Male	51	5.22	1.24	0.102
	Female	64	5.58	1.13	
Improvement need	Male	50	3.75	1.59	0.560
	Female	64	3.58	1.42	

The differences in opinions between the genders are examined using *t*-test. Based on the results of the *t*-test, it can be concluded that there are no significant differences between men and women in the observed marks of satisfaction and needs for improvement of the tourist's elements.

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) has been used to test the differences in the overall scores of satisfaction with touristic elements, as well as the overall scores of the need for improvement of touristic elements between the tourists of different marital status and the tourists of different work status.

**Table 6.** Results of ANOVA for differences in satisfaction and improvement need based on marital status

**Tabela 6.** Rezultati ANOVA za ispitivanje razlika u zadovoljstvu i potrebama za poboljšanjem u zavisnosti od porodičnog statusa

	Marital status						sig
	Married (without kids)		Married (with kids)		Single		
	Mean	Std. dev.	Mean	Std. dev.	Mean	Std. dev.	
Satisfaction	4.83	1.27	5.00	1.39	5.62	1.08	0.018
Improvement need	3.65	0.84	4.11	1.33	3.60	1.62	0.319

Based on the results of the ANOVA, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in satisfaction level by touristic elements between tourists of different marital status. The most satisfied are the tourists who are not married. The least satisfied ones are the tourists who are married and do not have children.

**Table 7.** Results of ANOVA for differences in satisfaction and improvement need based on employment status

**Tabela 7.** Rezultati ANOVA za ispitivanje razlika u zadovoljstvu i potrebama za poboljšanjem u zavisnosti od radnog statusa

	What is your employment status?								sig
	Unemployed		Employed		Student		Retired		
	Mean	Std. dev.	Mean	Std. dev.	Mean	Std. dev.	Mean	Std. dev.	
Satisfaction	5.98	0.96	5.31	1.21	5.22	1.00	3.91	0.87	.000
Improvement need	3.44	1.98	3.74	1.26	3.80	1.12	4.48	1.24	.346

Based on the significance of the ANOVA, it can be concluded that there are significant differences in the satisfaction with touristic elements between tourists with different employment status. The most satisfied are the tourists who are not employed, and the least satisfied are the retired ones.

For examining the influence of age and education level on the satisfaction and the opinion on improvement need, Spearman's rank coefficient has been used.

**Table 8.** Results of correlation analysis  
**Tabela 8.** Rezultati korelacione analize

		Age	Education
Satisfaction	Rs	-0.301	-0.224
	sig	0.001	0.015
	N	120	118
Improvement need	Rs	0.178	0.113
	sig	0.053	0.224
	N	119	117

The results of the correlation analysis point out the existence of a significant negative correlation between age and education level on one side and the satisfaction with touristic elements on the other. This means that the older the tourists are, the less satisfied they are. Also, with the increase in the education level, the level of satisfaction with touristic elements decreases.

## Conclusion

By applying adequate literature, statistical analysis and methods used in the paper, we have analyzed seasonal movements in the mountain resort Kopaonik. Mountain resort Kopaonik possesses significant natural attractions, valuable for the development of different forms of tourist movements, and especially the recreational form. According to the results of the analysis of the present state, it is found that the most dominant form of touristic movement is sport and recreation. Recreational significance of Kopaonik can be seen through the vertical and horizontal division of terrain, morphometric elements of topographic surface, as well as the mountain climate, which turns into sub-alp in the area between 1500 – 2000 m. Snow cover of this mountain resort has a special meaning since winter tourist season in this area, according to meteorologist data, lasts from November to May. As an already affirmed mountain tourist resort, Kopaonik abounds in mountain terrains, which are especially suitable for skiing. Besides the recreational elements of tourist movement, mountain resort Kopaonik has attractive intriguing elements of tourist attraction. But the geographical location of the mountain, i.e., the proximity of urban and spa centers can widen touristic offer. It could be achieved by combining different types of touristic movement forms such as rural, eco, spa, urban, cultural, congress and manifestation tourism with mountain tourism forming a unique product that would be essential for mitigating consequences of poor development and unplanned construction.

Based on all of the above mentioned, we can conclude, that mountain range Kopaonik possesses the potential for creating a wide range of tourist products, designed for clients of different demographic characteristics and purchasing power; such as summer vacations with family, and older couples in combination with wellness or summer activities (hiking, mountain biking, free climbing classes, gastronomic tradition, picking of herbs and collecting mushrooms). Outside the summer and winter season, it can be used for congresses and seminars, summer schools for students, winter schools for students, smaller conferences, business meetings, and workshops, as well as for special interests such as horseback riding, orientation running, observing the rare samples of flora and fauna, and similar. Connecting the mountain range with spa centers in its foothills, establishing new health touristic resources and improving existing ones, better organization of recreational activities could significantly increase the satisfaction of the tourist, especially the eldest visitors.



Solving the seasonality in the mountain resort Kopaonik, as well as in the whole of Serbia, is still in the initial phase. Stronger and better marketing and promotion are necessary, as well as significant investments, in order to enrich the mountain touristic offer in the off-peak season. Solving the problem of seasonality would establish an annual continuity of tourism activities. This would ensure a year-round inflow of material resources to both large businesses and smaller tourism employees. This will create better economic conditions for the rest of the population in mountainous areas and especially in rural settlements, which would mitigate the depopulation effect.

In the future, mountain resort Kopaonik could extend its tourist offer outside the clearly distinguished summer and winter season with tourist movement forms mentioned above. The all-year activities would influence rural revitalization acting against the abandoning of villages. A combination of mountain and spa tourism can enhance the financial situation of this area and create stable communities. While planning this connection of mountain resort Kopaonik with three spa centers in the foothills, it is essential to emphasize the sustainable development of tourism, in order not to endanger the ecological, economic, and social elements.

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## ANALIZA SEZONALNOSTI KRETANJA U PLANINSKIM CENTRIMA SRBIJE SA POSEBNIM OSVRTOM NA KOPAONIK

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**Sažetak.** Depopulacija planina Srbije predstavlja intenzivan i dug proces. U radu će biti analiziran potencijal planine Kopaonik za razvoj turizma koji bi mogao biti jedan od ključnih faktora demografske revitalizacije čitave planine. U dosadašnjem razvoju turizma Kopaonik se izdvojio kao jedan od najznačajnijih nosioca ponude planinskog turizma u Srbiji. Ograničavajući faktor u dosadašnjem razvoju je izrazita sezonalnost turističkog prometa. Cilj istraživanja u radu biće utvrđivanje faktora koji utiču na pojavu sezonalnosti, kao glavnog ograničavajućeg faktora za postizanje boljih ekonomskih efekata.

**Ključne reči:** planinski turizam, sezonalnost, rekreacija, Kopaonik.