A SKI AREA OPERATOR’S EXPERIENCE

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Introduction

CLIMATIC RISK EVALUATION

- A natural, entirely legitimate concern
- A controversial subject
- One of a number of essential questions
## Table of contents

1/ Which climatic risks?  

2/ What steps can ski professionals take?
1/ Which climatic risks?

- What are the climatic risks?
  - Too much or too little snow (short term)
  - Global warming (long term)

- What have we observed?
  - Climate is changing: the 1990s was the warmest decade of the century,
  - Snowfall curves are at a much lower level than in the 1970s and ’80s.
1/ Which climatic risks?

Average temperatures at La Plagne (in degrees Celsius)

- Dec
- Jan
- Feb
- March
- April

Avg. 1970s
Avg. 1980s
Avg. 1990s
1/ Which climatic risks?

Depth of snow cover at La Plagne (in cm.)

Snow cover of the 2000s: -20% vs 1990s; -35% vs 1980s
IMPACT OF A 1.8° CELSIUS INCREASE IN TEMPERATURE
on the winter seasons between 2030 and 2050

- At an altitude of 1,500 meters
  - Snow falls later and begins to melt earlier
  - Period of winter snow cover drops by 20 to 50%, depending on the mountain range:
    - Northern Alps: 170 days ⇒ 135 days
    - Southern Alps: 120 days ⇒ 90 days
    - Pyrenees: 130 days ⇒ 70 days

- At an altitude of 2,100 - 2,400 meters
  - Warming has little noticeable effect on snow cover
2/ Climatic risks: steps to take

a) Choose your sites well

b) Prepare for the future

c) Be insured
a) Choose your sites well

- Characteristics of a good ski area:
  - Altitude: as high as possible
  - Latitude: the furthest north possible
  - A continental site: as far away from oceans as possible
  - Exposure of the trails: northern

- Type of resort: a major ski area linked to others
- An international client base

- Goals:
  - Make the season last 20 weeks
  - Fill up even in slow periods
  - Vary visitor risks
Breakdown of ski area receipts within a winter season

Seasonal profile - CDA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Receipts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-season and Christmas vacation</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter ski vacations in February</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late season March - April</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seasonal profile - France

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Receipts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-season and Christmas vacation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter ski vacations in February</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late season March - April</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Early season: +2%
Late season: +14%

OECD – WENGEN – October 2006
Cumulative CDA receipts in a ski season

2/ Steps to take
Probability of lack of snow from season’s beginning at high-altitude resort (about 1,800 m)
b) Risk prevention

- Expenditures to prepare trails, to:
  - Smooth out the terrain
  - Change exposure to the sun
  - Turf

- Snowmaking covers about 25% of the surface of ski trails

- Trail maintenance: renew snow cover

- Protect the snow surface: preserve snow as much as possible
Trail works
Trail works
2/ Steps to take

Snowmaking
Snowmaking
2/ Steps to take

Snowmaking
Daily maintenance
c) Insurance

- Covering worst-case risks through derivative products: lack of snow as the season begins, snowstorms over school vacations: weather is covered, not climate

- Diversification of business activities in the off-season: leisure parks
Conclusions

- We’ll be skiing in 2050!
  - At altitudes above 2,000 meters
  - At large-scale resorts with the will and the means to invest
  - In better-adapted ski areas

- Winter alternatives to skiing and snowboarding are not economically viable substitutes for resorts over 2,000 meters

- The summer season at high altitudes is not profitable for ski operators
THE EXPERIENCE OF AN OPERATOR OF SKI AREAS

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