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## TOURISM AS IMPORTANT REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FACTOR (on the example of the chosen region in Slovak Republic)

**Abstract.** Tourism as very important economic factor can play significant role in developing the region and its attractiveness. The global statistics shows that it brings positives in different meanings. Regional development in the way of tourism should be generally based on natural potential in a harmony with local inhabitants and marketing activities which help to recognize the destination and bring it up even to the unknown tourism participants. The main aim of the paper is to show importance of tourism activities in the chosen Presov region of north-eastern Slovakia. Using the method of desk research and secondary data analysis, we provide an overview of tourism performance in Presov region on the one hand. Until now, statistics shows that the chosen region has sound tourist attractions, which prove numbers of visitors attending Presov region. On the other hand, we point to perception of local inhabitants (at the example of young generation who are going to be future tourism service providers) that tourism and its activities can be important regional development factor. They treat it as one of the most important activities that could help region not only to survive, but to become more competitive to other regions. Opinions of the young inhabitants are statistically evaluated and presented in the paper.

**Keywords:** tourism; regional development; Presov region; tourism performance.

**JEL Classification:** R58, L83

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### ТУРИЗМ ЯК ВАЖЛИВИЙ ФАКТОР РЕГІОНАЛЬНОГО РОЗВИТКУ

#### (на прикладі окремого регіону в Словацькій Республіці)

**Анотація.** Туризм як дуже важливий економічний чинник може відігравати значну роль у розвитку регіону та його привабливості. Глобальна статистика показує, що це приносить позитивні зрушення в різних значеннях. Розвиток регіонів у напрямі активізації туризму повинен ґрунтуватися на максимальному використанні природного потенціалу, місцевих традицій та маркетингової діяльності, які допомагають краще пізнати призначення певної території і довести цю інформацію до ще невідомого туриста. Основна мета статті – обґрунтувати важливість туристичної діяльності в обраному нами для дослідження Прешовському регіоні, розташованому в північно-східній частині Словаччини. Застосований для цього метод кабінетних досліджень (desk research) і аналіз вторинних даних дали змогу виявити, з одного боку, рівень продуктивності туристичної галузі у Прешовському регіоні, а з другого – сприйняття місцевими жителями (на прикладі молодих людей, які збираються в майбутньому працювати постачальниками туристичних послуг) того факту, що туризм і власне діяльність у цій сфері можуть стати важливим фактором регіонального розвитку, оскільки активізація туристичних потоків спроможна допомогти регіону не тільки вижити, а й збільшити конкурентоспроможність порівняно з іншими регіонами.

**Ключові слова:** туризм; регіональний розвиток; Прешовський регіон; ефективність туристичної галузі.

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### ТУРИЗМ КАК ВАЖНЫЙ ФАКТОР РЕГИОНАЛЬНОГО РАЗВИТИЯ

#### (на примере отдельного региона в Словацкой Республике)

**Аннотация.** Туризм как очень важный экономический фактор может играть значительную роль в развитии региона и его привлекательности. Глобальная статистика показывает, что это приносит положительные сдвиги в разных значениях. Развитие регионов в направлении активизации туризма должно основываться на максимальном использовании природного потенциала, местных человеческих ресурсов и маркетинговой деятельности, которые помогают лучше познать назначение определенной территории и довести эту информацию к потенциальному туристу. Основная цель статьи – обосновать важность туристической деятельности в избранном нами для исследования Прешовском регионе, расположенном в северо-восточной части Словакии. Примененный для этого маркетинговый метод «исследования за столом» (desk research) и анализ вторичных данных дали возможность определить, с одной стороны, уровень эффективности туристической отрасли в Прешовском регионе, а с другой – восприятие местными жителями (на примере молодых людей, которые собираются в будущем быть поставщиками туристических услуг) того факта, что туризм и деятельность в этой отрасли могут стать важным фактором регионального развития, поскольку активизация туристических потоков позволяет помочь региону не только выжить, но и увеличить конкурентоспособность сравнительно с другими регионами.

**Ключевые слова:** туризм; региональное развитие; Прешовский регион; эффективность туристической отрасли.

### Introduction and Brief Literature Review

Each region has its own unique character. The unique is hidden in its culture, namely in its folk traditions, traditional craft products, folklore, through which it can offer unique products specific to individual regions and present itself by means of them. It is important to offer this potential especially to the attention of children and youth, tourists, by organizing public events, festivals with the traditional culture of the region which will be connected with presentation of traditional folk handicrafts. The cultural product of the region can be extended by cultural and historical monuments, museums, galleries. A quality product can be created and offered also in the area of tourism by the regions. Tourism as a sphere is dependent on natural potential of the certain region but in combination with services. That is why it is important to use this potential to develop activities that could be interesting and attractive for tourism participants. In Slovak conditions «tourism is in many regions of Slovakia considered to be a key sector for the development of a region. It is obvious that a large part of the territory of Slovakia has good natural, historical and cultural conditions for the development of tourism [7].

Regional development includes economic and social processes in natural and social environment of the region, which should be used, but also respecting options, assumptions and peculiarities of the region. Regional development can be seen as ensuring economic growth and social potential of the region in order to lead to an increase in the standard of living of its people, to social and economic development of the country [4; 12; 3].

All countries with well-developed tourism have already understood that the main power lies in regions. Slovak entrepreneurs and regional governmental authorities are becoming more and more aware of it. At the same time, it is important to say that besides the effort which undoubtedly has been made, another thing is visible. Many of them want, but do not know how to do it. It is advisable to visit the neighboring Austria to see how the regional structures function. Regional unions in Slovakia and clusters are being established. They are, however, at the very beginning and their only goal is to survive, they are not capable of competing or representing the region. We hope that it is only a matter of time while all regions will understand that it is inevitable to focus their attention at marketing activities and to identify the most suitable model of these activities financing [10]. Using of regional potential depends not only on natural potential, but also on tools that help people to get information about the tourist opportunities. Marketing activities could help to attract tourists to the certain region. From a marketing point of view, the concept of region cannot be determined only by the criteria resulting from its administrative organization [11]. In this case, we are talking about the successful promotion of the region in the interregional competition in terms of the so-called «Enterprising region» consisting of a number of separate subsystems, which includes municipalities, towns, micro-regions, businesses, interest groups of businesses and citizens, various initiatives etc. which have relationships with the external environment, consisting of regional offices, regional governments (self-governing regions), ministries, government, European Union, etc. Such regions often arise independently of administrative structuring. Marketing approaches require a strong focus on «customers» [5], their needs and quality satisfaction. Regional marketing is based on the concept of social-ethical marketing and applies the best of it, respectively that what can be utilized the most effectively from corporate marketing in the specific conditions of the market of regions [2]. The role of the regional marketing is to meet the needs of all who are present in the given territory [9]. This marketing has become an important instrument for regional development promoting and supporting and it contributes to competitiveness. Marketing activities carried out by local government should be the major contribution to that. A significant and important component of regional marketing is territorial marketing [1]. Economic development as well as consistent influx of investments, invigorate tourism and meeting the needs of the population, then other reasons, such as image building, raising legal awareness of citi-

zens and the feeling of belonging, including the fact that it is the most effective concept of working with the market, are considered as the most important reason for marketing activities application in regional conditions by a self-governing region [8]. Promotion is, on the contrary, an impersonal form of marketing communication. It uses various forms of print advertising, i.e. leaflets, posters, flyers, brochures, catalogues. It is also a communication in the form of audiovisual advertising on radio, television, websites, etc. [6].

### Presov self-governing region and its tourism potential

Presov Self-governing Region is located in the northeastern part of Slovakia. Slovakia is administratively divided into 8 higher territorial units (self-governing regions). Presov region is the most populous of all the regions; with total area of 8 974 sq km, it occupies 18.3% of the Slovak Republic and it is the second largest region. It consists of the historical regions of northern, central and partially southern part of Spis, upper and lower Saris and upper Zemplin. The average population density is 89 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>. The northern border of the region is with Poland, in the east, it borders with Ukraine. The regions' surface is heavily dissected. The highest point is Gerlach Peak (2665 m), which is the highest within the Slovak Republic. Of the total area of the Presov region (899 761 ha), agricultural land occupies 43.0% and 49.1% is forest land. It consists of 666 municipalities, of which 23 are towns where 54% of total inhabitants live. Tourism sphere in this region has a high potential of natural, cultural and historical attractions and tourism centers. On the territory of Presov region, there are almost two-thirds of all Slovakia's cultural monuments. These include a set of 26 wooden articular churches. Some of them are listed as UNESCO World Heritage. In the Presov region, there are other sites with huge potential for tourism development: historical towns of Bardejov, Levoca, Presov, Kezmarok; Opal mines in Dubnik, Andy Warhol Museum in Medzilaborce, unique castles, caves, water tanks, mineral and thermal springs, spas and many more. According to the Programme of Economic and Social Development of Presov Region for the period 2008-2015, three priorities are defined in the field of tourism, relating to: increase the attractiveness of the region; better and broader range of products and services in the tourism sector; use of region's cultural and historic potential for tourism development and development of partnerships. The strategy of tourism development interest is focused at five specific objectives: 1. Creation integrated products in tourism and spa industry. 2. Modernization tourism infrastructures at tourist destinations. 3. Rise of visitors' awareness in tourism and spas industry. 4. Restoration important monuments and objects as well as including them into tourism products. 5. Strengthening and building partnerships and more effective coordination of activities in tourism sphere.

### Results and discussion

Tourism sphere and its activities seem to be one of the pillars of Presov region performance improving: its economic performance, employment development and competitiveness. Based on preliminary analyses, surveys and forecasts for the potential economic and social development of Presov self-governing region, it can be stated that the concentration of resources and the usage of the region's internal tourism potential maximizing can have a positive impact on solving some of this current problems of the rural region. Among such problems, for instance: low productivity, low economic growth, high and long-term unemployment of rural population, low share of services in the creation of regional GDP.

Concerning tourism indicators that show results of combination of significant natural potential, quite well developed services and promotional activities of Presov region, we can get to conclusion that tourism performance reaches important results (Table 1).

In average in the last years, Slovak tourism reaches about 4 million tourism participants. From that we can see that around 700 thousand stay only in Presov region, even though its location and infrastructure availability is not at favourable level. The number of establishments in tourism sphere is very important part of the material and technical base. Since 2000, it has increased in more than 400 establishments in Presov region,

Tab. 1: Tourism development indicators in Presov region, 2004-2013

Activity	Year									
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Number of overnights	2.356.664	2.170.128	2 265 092	2 357 265	2 447 577	2 008 277	2 024 817	2 027 582	2 112 644	2 256 759
Number of beds	32 807	31 049	31 263	35 420	33 942	32 764	31 844	31 207	34 163	34 131
Number of visitors	608 514	621 032	647 068	699 415	736 051	586 447	611 663	618 470	664 863	700 248
Number of establishments	471	449	464	572	625	605	585	551	724	701
Average number of overnights (per year)	3.9	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.2	3.1	3.2

Source: Own processing based on data of Statistic Office of Slovak Republic

which shows tourism in attractive light. The maximum number of tourism establishments was reached in 2012, after crisis influence stopped to be visible in tourism. Since year 2001, the number of tourism establishments was slowly increasing and for longer time oscillated around number 4 hundred. Most significant changes happened between year 2000 and 2001, when the number increased in 162 establishments, and between 2006 and 2007, when the number increased in 108. In after-recession period, the most sensible changes happened between 2011 and 2012, when the increase was the most significant. It went higher from 551 to 724 establishments (173). As it can be seen in the Table 1, at the example of number of overnights, number of them ranges usually around the same numbers, even the number of establishments increased. High fluctuations are rare, so, because of that statistics, we can conclude that situation in this sphere is quite stable, and that is why the marketing support is more than needed, to support the visits, attractiveness and increase the number of tourists. When mentioning number of overnights, it is important to point that Slovakia is still considered as transit country and not the country of a final destination. From this fact we can conclude that in such circumstances the number of overnights is quite positive. National strategy of future development of tourism in Slovakia since 2013 counts with the prolongation of the days and nights spent in the country that might not be possible. This status is based on the fact that global trends show that length of tourists' stay is shorter. Modern tourist prefer shorter stays but more often per year. This effect can be caused by actual lifestyle and working conditions. Current trends in tourism show that tourists travel more often, but spend shorter time in one destination, which might influence extension of the performance expected by the Government.

*A short survey of tourism as a regional development factor*

Perception of tourism by local inhabitants represents important part of tourism development. If locals are not convinced of tourism as an important factor, its development might be negatively influenced in the future. That was the reason for us to realize the short survey oriented at tourism perception by the local inhabitants. Main aim of this survey was to investigate the tourist perception of tourism as important regional development factor. The main objective of that was to find out

whether young regional inhabitants of Presov region (as future productive generation) treat tourism as significant help to the current economic situation.

The main survey method was a structured questionnaire. The sample of the survey consisted of 159 respondents. The part of its results can be seen in Figure.

The sample was selected based on availability, so it is available (occasional) selection, which is a form of non-random selection. Proportion of women and men included 121 young women and 38 young men. The description of research sample by age and gender

shows Table 2 (Segregation of survey results by the respondents' age and gender). Survey respondents could answer and express their opinion at Likert scale from 1 to 5 which represents a scale of agreement with the statement between definitely «yes» (1), yes (2), do not know (3), no (4) and definitely «no» (5). The survey was held in Presov region. Main part of the respondents consisted inhabitants of town of Presov which is also the seat of self-government and administration. The other respondents were from other town and villages. Figure shows us as to whether there are differences in perception of tourism as important development factor. Primary research was conducted on the basis of its own information collection. Data collection took place from March – May 2014. Data were collected through a questionnaire in person within the Presov region. Selection of respondents was non-random (survey did not focused exclusively on women only or men), therefore, is the disproportion between men and women, as recorded in Table 2.

From the results of correlation analysis, we can see that most of asked respondents treat tourism as important development factor that can help to economically position the region. Another finding is that women more identified themselves with this statement.

The findings differ most markedly when mentioning the gender of respondents. The other variables (resident place town/village, level of education, working position) did not show significant differences in answers. From this we can conclude that tourism sphere is more sensitively treated by women who find it

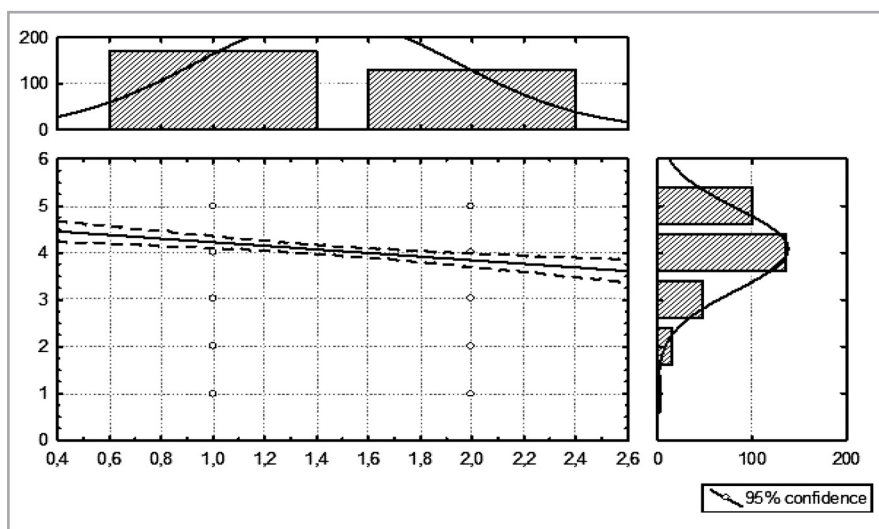


Figure: Could tourism be a significant development factor of Presov region

Source: Own processing



Tab. 2: Segregation of survey results by the respondents' age and gender

Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
19 years old	4	2.51	2.51	2.51
20 years old	40	25.16	25.16	27.67
21 years old	31	19.50	19.50	47.17
22 years old	16	10.06	10.06	57.23
23 years old	47	29.56	29.56	86.80
24 years old	19	11.95	11.95	98.74
25 years old	1	0.63	0.63	99.37
27 years old	1	0.63	0.63	100.00
Men	38	23.90	23.90	23.90
Women	121	76.10	76.10	100.00
Total	159	100	100	x

Source: Own processing

as exceptional factor that can use the region to be more competitive, more attractive and to be worth to visit it more than one time and send as much time there as possible. The other reason may be that women are more employed in this service sphere and that could be the reason why they also treat it as important. In case that they have no tourist, employment possibility decreases.

#### Conclusion

Tourism possibilities play an important role in directing the future of the region. Selected priorities within the self-governing region must be reflected, for example, into individual projects. The main role of regional managers within the Presov self-governing region is to contribute in the most effective way to raising awareness about Presov self-governing region among not only domestic, but also foreign public. It can be achieved only by using the right and effective marketing and communication tools. Tourism has been an accelerator of several Slovak regions development. Based on the given results, we can conclude that among significant tourism indicators are primarily tourism effects on the balance of payments, employment development as well as its positive impact on economic and social development of regions. Due to its dynamics, low import demand and a high proportion of direct labour in this sector, tourism is one of the key tools for employment increasing and regions developing, barely suitable for industry or agriculture. The most significant contribution of tourism to state economy is its foreign exchange effect. Regional and local associations of tourism, which activities in the areas are irreplaceable, have so far had little impact on the tourism development. Without their activities, tourism development does not follow common objectives; it lacks coordination of operational problems, creation of common products, local and regional marketing and needed performance of non-profit organisations. Within the Slovak Republic, tourism is strongly influenced by territorial conditions, which are independent from existing and proposed administrative divi-

sions of Slovakia. There are significantly different conditions between particular regions, due to which great attention should be paid to regional aspects when developing tourism.

In the context of continuous process of globalisation, new trends, changes in the social sphere and the dynamic development of territory/region, suitable for tourism, are frequently being applied. Therefore, it is important to continuously examine the process of globalisation, analyse its consequences, and react to globalisation trends in tourism by using competitive elements aimed at the maintenance of sustainable development of tourism in all regional spheres.

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