

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND ITS REGIONALIZATION IN THE PREŠOV SELF-GOVERNING REGION

Radoslav KLAMÁR¹, Jana KOLESÁROVÁ²

1. Faculty of Physical Education, University of Rzeszow, Rzeszow, Poland

radoklamar@gmail.com

2. Department of Geography and Regional Development

University of Prešov in Prešov, Slovak Republic

jk.kolesarova@gmail.com

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Abstract:

The article pays attention to the tourism issues such as regionalization of tourism and evaluation of visitor numbers in the selected Prešov self-governing region. Regionalization was designed based on the set of selected indicators, which were developed within the conception called *Regionalization of tourism in the Slovak Republic*. Based on this conception, the Prešov self-governing region is divided into three tourist regions, which are made up of 12 districts. In the second part of the article, we evaluate the visitor numbers in the individual districts as well as in the whole tourist regions. For this purpose we analysed a set of basic indicators – the number of accommodation establishments, beds, visitors, and nights spent, the amount of earnings, the occupancy rates in accommodation establishments etc. Consequently, the trends in development of visitor numbers were also analysed and the factors causing significant differences in tourism development were examined in different parts of the analysed region.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism development and regeneration of physical and mental powers of the man are very important parts of life for every individual. Because of the hectic way of life in today's world, people are increasingly seeking an active relaxation in attractive and peaceful natural environment, which also offers basic services at the appropriate level. Regions offering packages of comprehensive tourism services are trying to succeed in the competitive markets fighting for visitors. This premise is even truer in the context of the current economic crisis and reduced consumption in this area.

Nowadays, tourism is internationally considered a significant industry with a strong impact on the state and regional economies. Tourism's economic function was highlighted and this industry acts as an activating agent of economy and as a development factor of regions. Based on possibilities and assumptions, which tourism has in our country, tourism could help improve the economic situation in several regions (Rosič, Klamár 2009).

In this paper, attention is paid to the Prešov self-governing region and its various sub-regions (districts) in terms of tourism development. Analysed self-governing region has especially suitable landscape potential for the development of various tourism activities in its western and northwestern part. Since the situation of the local economy is critical and the Prešov region is one of the most backward Slovak regions, tourism activities could become a catalyst for future regional economic growth.

METHODOLOGY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDIED AREA

Tourism is an industry that has experienced extremely rapid pace of development in the last two decades. Such progress was enabled especially by the growing impact of globalization, (e.g. by the removal of borders, free movement of people, accelerating information flow, and many other features of globalization). The rapid growth of tourism impact on the global economy is proven by the data which show much faster growth of this sector in comparison to the growth of gross domestic product. According to World Tourism Organization (WTO), while considering 3,5% GDP growth rate, the average tourism growth is 1.3 times faster than the growth of GDP (Borovsky, Smolkova, Niňajová, 2008).

The tourism share of GDP was 2.3% in the Slovak republic in 2011. In comparison with traditional destination countries such as Austria (7.5%), Malta (14%), Croatia (11%), Greece, Portugal, Spain (5-6%), listed current rate is relatively low in Slovakia, despite the tourism potential is high.

Slovakia is lagging behind in this field also in comparison with neighbouring countries such as the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. According to *The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2011*, competitiveness of the Slovak republic in the field of tourism is getting increasingly weaker. Also according to the *The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index 2011*, which is composed of three sub-indices (T & T Regulatory Framework, T & T business, environmental and infrastructure, T & T human, cultural and natural), the Slovak republic (4.35 points) achieved the 54th place (in 2009 - 49th) of 139 assessed countries. In comparison, the Czech Republic was in 32nd place in 2011 (4.71 points), Hungary in 38th place (4.54 points) and Poland in 49th place (4,38 points).

Significant disparities in tourism development can be observed not only at the international level between different countries, but also at the regional level. Regions with good localization assumptions and supporting infrastructure are becoming popular tourist destinations not only for domestic but also for foreign visitors. Thriving tourism activities serve as a generator of new job opportunities and encourage the development and economic bases of these regions.

Development of tourism depends on many factors of natural and socioeconomic nature. Combination of these factors creates a specific and unique conditions in each region, which has to be addressed individually. Also analysed Prešov self-governing region and its sub-regions (districts) have their own characteristics and peculiarities. Their regionalization and assessment of their potential are subject matter of the first part of this paper, which uses the methodology and outcomes of the conception called *Regionalization of tourism in the Slovak Republic* (2005). Here are characterised three tourist regions (Tatra tourist region, Šariš tourist region, and Tourist region of Upper Zemplín) located on the territory of the Prešov self-governing region. In the second part, we analyse and evaluate the development of tourism in these three regions and in their parts (districts). This analysis enabled us to define and specify examined issue more closely. For that purpose, we also used a set of selected indicators such as the number of accommodation establishments, the number and structure of visitors, the number of overnight stays, the amount of earnings, average price for accommodation etc.

Analysed territory of the Prešov self-governing region is located in the eastern part of the Slovak Republic. It borders the Žilina region to the west, Poland (Malopolska and Podkarpacka provinces) to the north, Ukraine (Zakarpattya region) to the east and the Košice region to the south.



Figure 1. Location of the Prešov self-governing region

Source: www.statistics.sk, 2012

The Prešov self-governing region is a higher territorial unit at the level of NUTS III. Its total area is 552,6 km² and it has 729,463 inhabitants (31st December 2011) (Even the district of Levoča is a part of the Prešov region, the listed numbers do not include data of Levoča district. In terms of tourism regionalization, Levoča district is a part of the Spiš tourist region, the territory of which is included in the Košice region). The Prešov region is divided into 12 districts. The names of these districts are identical to the names of cities that are also their administrative centres (Fig.1.). Within the whole region, there is only one large city - Prešov (91638 - 3rd largest in Slovakia). The others are cities and towns, which are much smaller in terms of their populations. These are Poprad (52,791 inhabitants), Kežmarok (16,843 inhabitants), Stará Ľubovňa (16,334 inhabitants), Bardejov (33,625 inhabitants), Svidník (11,602 inhabitants), Sabinov (12,715 inhabitants) Stropkov (10,905 inhabitants), Vranov n/T. (23,225 inhabitants), Medzilaborce (6781 inhabitants), Humenné (34,913 inhabitants), and Snina (20,701 inhabitants).

REGIONALIZATION OF TOURISM IN THE EASTERN SLOVAKIA

Regionalization of tourism in Prešov self-governing region is based on the conception called *Regionalization of tourism in the Slovak Republic* (2005). While defining tourism regions, the conception took into consideration following aspects: similar (natural and man-made) conditions for realization of tourism, geographic and natural boundaries, interrelated development – the definition of territorial boundaries from historical point of view, analogous functions of the area for tourism, a certain minimum area size, internal links in the region, acceptance of the local actors with a suggested definition of the region, and a common approach, infrastructure, and tourism offer. Availability of the statistics on tourism issues was also an important factor, and for this reason, the borders of tourism regions largely mirror the borders of districts.

The importance of each tourism region was evaluated based on the several criteria. First of all, it was the value of potential expressed in a figure. However, because the aggregated numerical value cannot express the true importance of the potential without a residue, this criterion was important, but not the only one. For the purpose of the more objective classification into categories, also the other factors were considered (*Regionalization of tourism in the Slovak Republic*, 2005):

- the quantity, size and importance of sub-regions in the area;
- intensity and results of tourism (share of long-term and short-term tourism);
- position of tourism in the regional economy of the region, its prosperity;
- numbers of visitors;
- competitiveness in the domestic and foreign markets;

- degree of attractiveness - level of landscape aesthetics, atmosphere, and image.

In each of regions, it was selected the specific forms of tourism and tourism activities, for which the regions have suitable conditions. Specific evaluation criteria were designed for each of the activities. To evaluate the activities and amenities, four levels of area appropriateness for the realisation of tourism activities were created:

- Basic potential – The suitability of an area for a certain activity can be recognized, however, it has achieved just a low level, which does not exceed the regional importance – 1 point
- Average potential – The suitability of an area for a certain activity is higher, it reaches an average level and is important from the supra-regional perspective - 2 points
- Good potential - suitability of an area for a certain activity is significant. It reaches the national level - 3 points
- High potential – The suitability of an area for a certain activity is very significant and comparable with the sites abroad - 4 points (Regionalization of tourism in the Slovak Republic, 2005).

The value of regional potential is expressed through a point value. Various tourism activities were evaluated on the basis of established criteria and classified into levels (1-4) according to quantitative and qualitative predispositions. It was evaluated a long-term (natural) as well as medium-term potential, while the characteristics such as the amenity for certain activities, number of visitors, scope of services, etc. were also considered. Consequently, the point value (score) for each of the activities was adjusted by a weighting value that reflects the importance of tourism activities in Slovakia. Achieved score was further edited by the influence of modifying factors (intensive agriculture, protection of water resources, air pollution, quality of environment, raw materials extraction, landfill, transport accessibility, a higher level of environmental protection, a higher level of historic preservation, proximity to settlements with a high population density), which can enhance or reduce overall potential. Weights were assigned to the values from 1 to 10.

Based on the above methodology, three tourist regions (Tatra tourist region, Šariš tourist region and the tourist region of Upper Zemplín) in the Prešov self-governing region were defined. Table 1 shows the potential of these regions according to the achieved scores for the selected tourism activities (1 - weights, 2 - value of potential, 3 - weighting potential, 4 - final value of the potential).

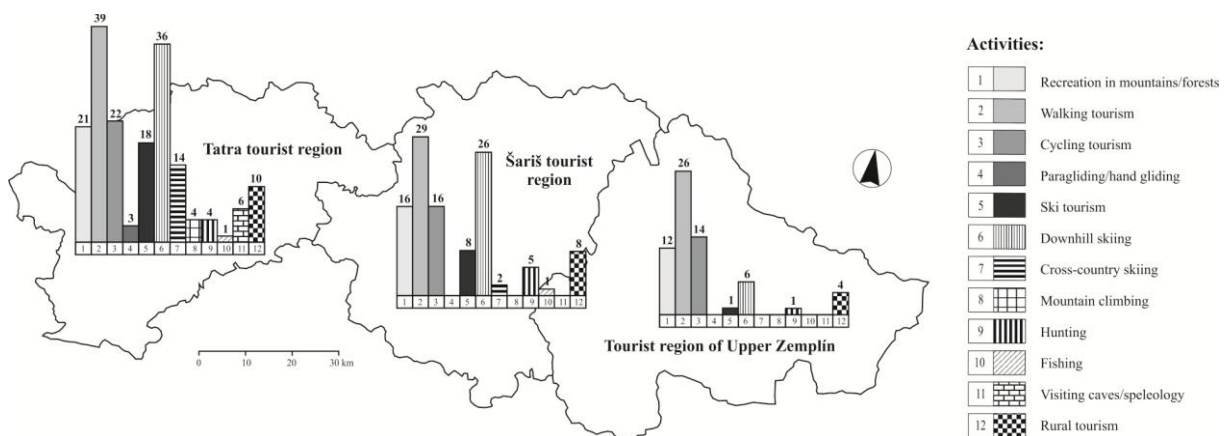


Figure 2. Final potential score for tourism activities in the tourist regions of Prešov self-governing region (Part 1)

Source: Regionalization of Tourism in the Slovak Republic, 2005, statistics.sk, 2012

Table 1. Potential score for tourism activities in the selected tourism regions

Activities Score (1-4)	Tatra tourist region				Šariš tourist region				Tourist region of Upper Zemplín			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Recreation in mountains/ forests	5	4	20	21	5	3	15	16	5	3	15	12
Walking tourism	10	4	40	39	10	3	30	29	10	3	30	26
Cycling tourism	6	4	24	22	6	3	18	16	6	2	18	14
Paragliding/ hang gliding	1	1	1	3	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Ski tourism	4	4	16	18	4	2	8	8	4	1	4	1
Downhill skiing	9	4	36	36	9	3	27	26	9	1	9	6
Cross-country skiing	3	4	12	14	3	1	3	2	3	-	-	-
Mountain climbing	1	2	2	4	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Hunting	1	1	1	4	1	1	1	5	1	1	1	1
Fishing	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-2
Visiting caves/speleology	1	2	2	6	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Rural tourism	3	3	9	10	3	2	6	8	3	2	6	4
Waterside recreation	10	1	10	9	10	1	10	8	10	3	30	25
Health tourism (spa, thermal water)	7	4	28	32	7	4	28	32	7	-	-	-
Water tourism	3	2	6	11	3	-	-	-	3	-	-	-
Water sports	3	2	6	7	3	-	-	-	3	3	9	4
Heritage tourism	10	4	40	46	10	4	40	46	10	2	20	21
Visiting museums and galleries	6	3	18	21	6	3	18	22	6	3	18	20
Events tourism	5	2	10	13	5	2	10	11	5	2	10	10
Cultural tourism (learning about local traditions)	4	2	8	12	4	1	4	6	4	1	4	4
Congress tourism	4	3	12	15	4	1	4	6	4	-	-	-
Business tourism	4	2	8	12	4	2	8	11	4	1	4	5
Other sports activities	5	2	10	10	5	2	10	7	5	1	5	-1
Accommodation possibilities	10	4	40	42	10	2	20	20	10	2	20	18
Tourism information centre	4	2	8	9	4	1	4	5	4	-	-	-

Source: Adapted from the document: Regionalization of tourism in the Slovak Republic, 2005

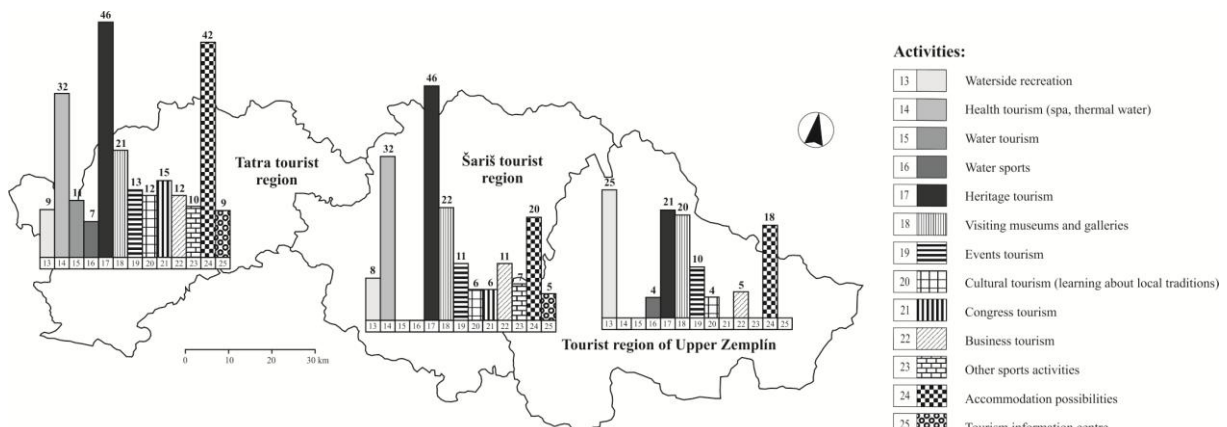


Figure 3. Final potential scores for tourism activities in the tourist regions of Prešov self-governing region (Part 2)

Source: Regionalization of Tourism in the Slovak Republic, 2005, statistics.sk, 2012

The following overview provides a brief description of the studied tourist regions in terms of their current situations, development prospects and needs. The information provided below is not complete calculations, but rather main features that form the overall character of the regions as tourist destinations.

TATRA TOURIST REGION

Based on the evaluation of the tourism regionalization, Tatra tourist region is considered to be of international importance. At the same time, it is also the most important region of all tourist regions in the studied area. The region is defined by the districts of Poprad, Kežmarok, and Stará Ľubovňa. From a medium-term viewpoint, the High Tatras are supposed to be tied with the Polish Tatras, Pieniny, another Polish area, and the Slovak spa town of Vyšné Ružbachy. From a long-term viewpoint, the joining of the High Tatras with the regions of Zamagurie and Poprad River Valley appears to be also prospective. Thus, the Tatra tourist region has a potential to create other prospective tourism centres in the territories of Kežmarok, Červený Kláštor, Spišská Stará Ves, Vyšné Ružbachy, and Stará Ľubovňa. In such case, it could be created a relatively large tourist region offering a wide range of attractions. The dominant local forms of tourism are summer and winter tourism in the mountains - various forms of ski sports, congress tourism, spa tourism with a healing function, cultural tourism, and rural tourism. The activities with the greatest long-term potential include the following: learning about cultural heritage, walking tourism, downhill skiing, recreation at the thermal water, recreation in the forest/mountain area, and ski tourism. Below are summarised areas located in the region, which are suitable for different forms of tourism based on the level of their potential:

- *Urban and cultural tourism*
 - Basic potential - Podolíneč
 - Average potential – Poprad – Spišská Sobota, Osturňa, Stará Ľubovňa, Jezersko,
 - Good potential – Kežmarok, Ždiar,
 - High potential – The town of Vysoké Tatry, Poprad
- *Spa and health tourism*
 - Basic potential – Gánovce, Stará Lesná, Veľký Slavkov, Plavnica, Nová Ľubovňa
 - Average potential – Malý Sulín, Červený Kláštor, Šarišský Štiavnik
 - Good potential – Vrbov, Poprad
 - High potential – Vyšné Ružbachy (Nižné Ružbachy, Ružbašská Míľava)
- *Winter tourism and winter sports*
 - Average potential – Vyšné Ružbachy, Nová Ľubovňa, Litmanová
 - Good potential – villages in the area of Zamagurie (Jezersko)
 - High potential – The town of Vysoké Tatry, Poprad, Ždiar
- *Summer tourism and water based tourism*
 - Basic potential – Veľký and Malý Sulín, Spišská Belá, Spišská Stará Ves
 - Average potential – the area of Ľubovnianska vrchovina
 - Good potential – villages in the area of Zamagurie, the area of Pieniny (rafting on the Dunajec river, Červený Kláštor)
 - High potential – The town of Vysoké Tatry, Poprad, Ždiar
- *Rural tourism and agrotourism*
 - Average potential – Liptovská Teplička
 - Good potential – the area of Pieniny (Červený Kláštor), the area of Ľubovnianska vrchovina
 - High potential – Spišská Magura region (Osturňa, Jezersko)

ŠARIŠ TOURIST REGION

Based on the evaluation of the tourism regionalization, Šariš region is considered to be of national importance. It consists of four districts - Bardejov, Prešov, Sabinov, and Svidník. From a medium-term viewpoint, it is supposed that certain sub-regions could be developed here. Specifically, prospective sub-regions could include the city of Prešov and its surrounding area (e.g. Zlatá baňa, Dubník opal mines, Sigord), Bardejov together with a close

spa town of Bardejovské kúpele (UNESCO heritage –international importance), winter ski resort Drienica Lysá and surrounding area of the town of Svidník (especially Dukla together with a group of wooden churches). In such case, it could be created a more compact tourist region offering a wide range of attractions. The crucial local forms of tourism include spa tourism with a healing function, cultural tourism, summer mountain/forest tourism, winter tourism, and shopping tourism. Activities with the highest long-term potential include sightseeing, healing spa stays, recreation in the forest/mountain area, walking, and winter holidays in the mountains - skiing. Nowadays, the region has a relatively low, though well utilized, accommodation capacities. This high utilization is achieved mainly thanks to the spa town of Bardejovské kúpele. Potentially a very good area seems to be the area of the town Lipany, where it can be developed a tourism based on the thermal groundwater (a new borehole was discovered there). The minimum use of historic sites of international importance is characteristic of this tourist region. Within the region, there are a number of areas suitable for different forms of tourism:

- *Urban and cultural tourism*
 - Basic potential – Svidník and its surrounding area, Dubník opal mines
 - Good potential – Bardejov
 - High potential – Prešov
- *Spa and health tourism*
 - Basic potential – Lipovce, Cigeľka, Šarišský Štiavnik
 - High potential – Spa town of Bardejovské kúpele,
- *Winter tourism and winter sports*
 - Basic potential – Zlatá Baňa, Makovica - Nižná Polianka, Šarbov
 - Average potential – Dubovica - Žliabky , Renčišov - Búče,
 - Good potential – Drienica - Lysá, Bardejov, Regetovka - Stebnicka Huta
- *Summer tourism and water based tourism*
 - Basic potential – the area of Čergov, Zlatá Baňa
 - Average potential – the area of Slanské vrchy and Búsov
- *Rural tourism and agrotourism*
 - Basic potential – Lačnov, Olejníkov, Šindliar, Lipovce, the area of Čergov (Stebnicka Huta, Regetovka, Nižná Polianka, Križe, Cigeľka, Hertník, Osikov, Raslavice, Zlaté), the area of Ľubovnianská vrchovina
 - Average potential – Renčišov, Lužany pri Topli, surrounding area of Svidník
 - Good potential – area of Slanské vrchy

THE TOURIST REGION OF UPPER ZEMPLÍN

Based on the evaluation of the tourism regionalization, the tourist region of Upper Zemplín is considered to be of national importance. It involves districts of Stropkov, Medzilaborce, Snina, Humenné, and Vranov n/ T. In the medium term, we assume that certain sub-regions will be developed here. Potentially, it could be developed a recreational area of the dam Domaša (national importance) and the region of Snina ponds and its close area of the Vihorlat Mountains. The main local forms of tourism include summer tourism – water based recreation, cultural tourism, summer mountain/forest tourism, and shopping tourism. These forms of tourism correspond with the following activities: water sports, recreation in the forest/mountain areas, walking, and sightseeing trips. Nowadays, this region is only slightly used for tourism. Although the number of local capacities is limited, it is also used only at the minimum level. Recreational area of the dam Domaša needs significant innovations in the field of facilities. In the close surrounding area, there are well preserved forests and quiet locations. Due to climate conditions and suitable terrain, it is possible to operate small and medium sized ski resorts here, which could also be attractive for Polish tourists. Although this

region is the most distant one from the key markets, it is possible to develop here a tourism which could attract tourists from other parts of Slovakia and close border regions. Important areas suitable for various forms of tourism include:

- *Urban and cultural tourism*
 - Basic potential – Humenné, Medzilaborce, Ulič, Nová Sedlica
 - Average potential – Svidník
- *Spa and Health tourism*
 - Basic potential – Vranov nad Topľou, surrounding area of the town Humenné
- *Winter tourism and winter sports*
 - Basic potential – Driečna, Petrovce, Zamutov, Borov, Parihuzovce, Chlmec
 - Average potential – Snina ponds, Danová - Vydraň
- *Summer tourism and water based tourism*
 - Basic potential – Nižný Hrušov, Kamienka, Kamenica n/C., Slovenská Volová
 - Average potential – regions of Vihorlat (Chlmec, Porúbka, Zemplínske Hámre) and Bukovské vrchy
 - Good potential – villages around the water dam Domaša, Snina ponds
- *Rural tourism and agrotourism*
 - Basic potential – surrounding area of Medzilaborce (Miková, Borov, Olka), Stropkov (Šandal, Havaj), Vranov n/T. (Zámuto, Banské, Juskova Voľa, Hermanovce), Nižná Sitnica, Kamienka, Kamenica n/C.

DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM AND NUMBER OF VISITORS IN THE DISTRICTS AND TOURIST REGIONS OF THE PREŠOV SELF-GOVERNING REGION

Generally, the number of visitors in the tourist regions is affected by several factors. The most important are services and facilities supporting tourism. Specific role is attributed to the accommodation establishments, which can keep the visitors in the area for a certain period of time. In this sense, accommodation establishment is any accommodation establishment, which regularly (or occasionally) provides temporary accommodation for visitors.

The evaluation of the number of visitors in the analysed Prešov region was based on the already mentioned document *Regionalization of tourism* and also on the documents coming from the district level authorities. At the regional level, there are three tourist regions - Tatra, Šariš and Upper Zemplín. These can be further divided into 12 sub-regions (districts) - Poprad, Kežmarok, and Spišská Nová Ves (Tatra tourist region), Prešov, Sabinov, Bardejov, and Svidník (Sariš tourist region), and Humenné Snina, Medzilaborce, Stropkov and Vranov n/T. (The tourist region of Upper Zemplín).

The total number of registered accommodation establishments was 529 in the Prešov region in 2011 (Table 2) (220 hotels, motels, and guesthouses, 49 hostels, 8 cottage settlements, 138 other collective accommodation establishments (campsites etc.) and 114 private tourist accommodation establishments). All these establishments account for 17.6% of the total accommodation capacities in the Slovak Republic. The highest share of accommodation establishments (68.4%) (Fig. 4) has the Tatra tourist region, which is the most attractive and also the most developed with quality services. The district of Poprad, which has 223 accommodation establishments, is the core district of this region. District of Kežmarok has the second strongest position within the Prešov region. The number of accommodation establishments in the district of Stará Ľubovňa, which is also located in the most important Tatra tourist region, is 42. Tourism activities in the district of Stará Ľubovňa are concentrated mainly in the area of Pieniny. The Šariš tourist region is at the second place in terms of the number of accommodation establishments as well as in terms of its importance within the Prešov self-governing region. It accounts for 17.4% of accommodation establishments. The third place is occupied by the tourist region of Upper Zemplín which

accounts for 14.2%. Within the Šariš region, the highest number of accommodation establishments is in the district of Prešov (41) (there is cultural tourism in the regional city of Prešov) and in the district of Bardejov (35) (there is a spa and health tourism in the spa town of Bardejovské kúpele). The situation in the region of Upper Zemplín is the worst one. A higher concentration of the accommodation establishments is only in the districts of Vranov n/T. and Stropkov thanks to the nearby water dam Domaša.

Generally, the number of visitors is also influenced by the number of accommodation establishments, their capacities, services and overall quality (Fig. 5). The numbers of visitors are significantly different in the individual regions of the Prešov self-governing region. Tatra region (78.7%) has the dominant position, but also the district of Poprad (the visitors of which account for 81,6% of Tatra region visitors) is one of the top destinations. In the second group, there are the districts of Kežmarok and Stará Ľubovňa located in the Tatra tourist region and Prešov and Sabinov located in the Šariš tourist region, where the number of visitors ranged from 32,000 to 55,000. In the other districts (and unfortunately also in the whole tourist region of Upper Zemplín), the number of visitors is very low (only 2,000-15,000). It is important to say that, in terms of the number of tourists in the Prešov region since 2003, there has been the decline from 662,000 visitors to the current 607,000 visitors. The impacts of the world economic crisis can be observed mainly in the Tatra tourist region. During the analysed period the crises caused decline in the number of visitors (mainly in the number of foreign visitors) by 64 000.

While analysing visitors by nationality, the domestic visitors accounts for 61,5% (395,000 tourists) in the Prešov Region and the rest (38,5%; 212,000 people) are foreign visitors. The west-east regional development gradient in terms of tourism activities was also confirmed in this case. The highest share of foreign visitors (36,7%) had the Tatra tourist region (the district of Poprad 39,6%), Šariš tourist region (28,1%) and the least prosperous tourist region of Upper Zemplín achieved only 23,2%. Generally, it can be said that the less prosperous the region is, the higher share of domestic visitors it has. It is mainly because the domestic visitors are also satisfied with a lower service quality. In the structure of foreign visitors, the top positions are occupied by the Czechs (73,000 visitors, 34,6%), Poles (35,000 visitors, 16,7%), Germans (16, 000 visitors, 7,5%), and Hungarians (12,000 visitors, 5.9 %). Visitors from Ukraine (12, 000 visitors, 5,8%) and Russia (8, 000 visitors, 3,6%) are in a special group because they are very solvent clients, who spend their holidays in the most expensive resorts in the Tatras. However, also within this group, it can be observed a noticeable decrease from 296, 000 visitors in 2003 to 212,000 in 2011. The biggest decline was observed in the number of tourists coming from the Czech Republic, Poland, and Russian speaking countries.

The numbers of visitors (especially of foreign visitors) have significant impact on the volume of earnings in accommodation establishments (Fig. 6). In 2011, earnings in accommodation establishments in Presov region achieved 38,7 million Euros, which represented 15,2% of the total earnings at the national level. Foreign visitors accounted for 40,1% (15,5 mil. €) and domestic for 59,9% (23,2 mil. €). Compared to 2003, there was a decrease in earnings by 3,7%, which was mainly associated with a lower number of tourists in the Tatra tourist region (in the district of Poprad, there was a decrease by 2,3 mil. €) and Šariš tourist region (In the district of Bardejov, there was a decrease by 1,6 mil. €). The only positive change was the increase in earnings by 0,9 mil. € in the district of Prešov, which was mainly associated with the short-term cultural tourism in Prešov. Generally, in terms of earning, the dominant position has Tatra tourist region with 32 mil.€ (83,2%), other regions accounted only for 13,0% (Šariš) and 3,8% (Upper Zemplín).

The average price for accommodation was 14,9 € in the analysed Prešov self-governing region. This price depends on the factors such as the occupancy and promotion. The highest

average price was in the Tatra tourist region (17.9 €). The average prices in the Šariš tourist region (13.0€) and in the region of Upper Zemplín (13.8 €) were comparable. The average prices in the Tatra region are higher because of the existing more luxurious hotels as well as a higher share of foreign visitors who pay higher prices. Similarly, the higher average prices are also in the district of Prešov (23.0 €), which is caused by the large difference between the price for domestic (19.4 €) and foreign (29.4 €) visitors. On the contrary, the lowest prices were identified in the least developed districts such as Svidník (6.5 €) and Medzilaborce (8.5 €). The district of Bardejov has a special position. Average price is only 9.5 € here, which is associated with the long-term stays in the spa. During the long-term stays in the spa, the price per night is lower compared to the short-term stay.

The above facts about length of stay were also reflected in other indicators, namely in the utilisation of accommodation capacities and average length of overnight stays (fig. 7). The best situation is in the already mentioned district of Bardejov, where the rate of accommodation occupancy is 38% (in a year) and the average length of overnight stays is 7.1 nights, which is mainly thanks to the healing spa stays. The other district with similar performance is only the district of Poprad, which is located in the Tatra tourist region. The accommodation occupancy rate is 36% but the average length of overnight stays is only 3.2 nights. In many other districts, the rate of accommodation occupancy is below the regional average (19.5%). Only two more districts: Stará Ľubovňa (25.4%) and Stropkov (25.4%) are above the average. Their accommodation occupancy rates significantly increase during the summer months thanks to the nearby Pieniny national park and water dam Domaša. Analysed indicators are summarised in the following Table 3.

Table 2. The main characteristics of accommodation establishments in the districts of Prešov self-governing region in 2011

	Number of accommodati on establishments	Number of beds	Total number of visitors	Domestic visitors	Foreign visitors	Average Number of nights spent	Average cost for accommodation (€)	Receipts for accommodation (€)	Rate of accommodation capacity utilisation (%)
Poprad	223	1289	390185	235441	154744	3,2	22,2	27310218	36,2
Kežmarok	97	2997	55103	39800	15303	2,8	19,6	3040687	17,6
Stará Ľubovňa	42	2559	33009	27546	5463	4,8	11,9	1893977	25,4
TATRA TOURIST REGION	362	6845	478297	302787	175510	3,6	17,9	32244882	26,4
Prešov	41	2405	49827	34042	15785	2,2	23,0	2544136	14,4
Sabinov	11	831	8445	5589	2856	2,7	12,9	296544	9,9
Bardejov	35	2018	32315	25481	6834	7,1	9,5	2168443	38,1
Svidník	5	424	2120	1529	591	2,6	6,5	35909	4,4
ŠARIŠ TOURIST REGION	92	5678	92707	66641	26066	3,7	13,0	5045032	16,7
Humenné	12	522	12904	9116	3788	2,3	22,9	671528	17,0
Medzilaborce	6	367	1685	1019	666	6,2	8,5	88177	9,2
Snina	11	415	5557	3821	1736	2,4	14,2	192427	6,7
Stropkov	20	725	1745	1404	341	2,9	12,0	60392	25,4
Vranov n/T.	26	858	14803	12807	1996	2,5	11,3	414127	19,2
TOURIST REGION OF UPPER ZEMPL.	75	2887	36694	28167	8527	3,3	13,8	1426651	15,5
TOTAL	529	15410	607698	397595	210103	3,5	14,9	38716565	19,5

Source: Cestovný ruch v Prešovskom kraji, Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, 2012

SUMMARY

Nowadays, tourism is one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world, which is mainly because of the multiplier effect and linkages with other economic sectors. Since the membership of the SR in the European Union (May 2004), new possibilities have opened up also for the development of tourism in our country. One of the greatest benefits was the use of support programs and structural EU funds in order to build infrastructure and create new products. Since the EU membership, Slovakia has also gained the possibility to access the latest information and professional experiences, to influence policy-making of EU tourism or to participate in various educational programs designed to assist member states in improving skill, gaining know-how in a tourism sector.

The enlargement of the EU with thirteen new countries (2004, 2007, 2013) significantly simplified border-crossing procedure and consequently supported tourism at the European level. Such steps undertaken helped also to the tourism sector in Slovakia. However, of course the liberalization of people's movement is related not only with the opening of new markets, but also with a growth of competitive environment.

In the recent years, however, the economic crisis has had the immediate impact on the worldwide tourism. In case of Slovakia, this impact is even more significant because of the drop in neighbouring currencies (especially the Hungarian Forint, the Polish Zloty and the Czech Koruna). As a result, the holidays in Slovakia became more expensive for tourists from traditional neighbouring tourist generating countries. However, despite the current economic problems, tourism as an endogenous factor can start up or at least stabilize development in the regions. Thanks to the combination of natural conditions, cultural heritage and supporting infrastructure, the unique ways for the development of tourism activities in individual regions are created.

In this paper, the attention was paid to the possibilities of tourism development and to the numbers of visitors in the districts of the Prešov self-governing region and in its tourist regions. Based on the regionalization of 2005, three tourist regions were defined (Tatra tourist region, Šariš tourist region and the tourist region of Upper Zemplín). It is important to say that, the individual tourism regions are differentiated and internally not homogeneous. The same situation is in their parts (districts). Based on the evaluation of indicators (performance of accommodation establishments and number of visitors) the development of tourism activities has significantly west-east gradient. The core (Tatra tourist region) is located in the western part and the significantly underdeveloped periphery (districts of the Upper Zemplín region) is located in the eastern part of the Prešov self-governing region.

The Tatra tourist region has the best conditions for the development of tourism and it offers great opportunities for the summer and winter mountain tourism in the several areas: Tatras, Pieniny, and Zamagurie. There are great conditions for various forms of ski sports, congress tourism, spa and healing tourism, cultural tourism, and also rural tourism. The attractiveness of the natural environment is raised by cultural heritage and good services. 68.4% of accommodation establishments of the Prešov self-governing region is located in this tourist region, which also receives 78.7% of the total number of visitors and earns 83.2% of the receipts from tourism. Regional accommodation utilisation rate achieves the highest value here (26.4%). The region is considered to be of international importance and has a strong potential for future development and greater cooperation with the Polish regions.

Šariš region lags badly behind the Tatra tourist region in terms of its preconditions, importance, and the number of visitors. The most promising activities include cultural tourism, spa tourism, recreation in the forest/mountain area, walking tourism, and winter tourism in the mountains - skiing. The core areas within the region are Prešov and its surrounding, Bardejov and the spa town of Bardejovské kúpele, and surrounding area of the Svidník together with Dukla and the group of wooden churches. It is a region with relatively

low accommodation capacities; however their occupancy rate is above average. All of these preconditions are reflected in the number of visitors, which accounts for 15.3% (93 000 visitors in 2011) of the total number of visitors in the Prešov self-governing region. Almost the same was the share of earnings (13.0%). However, in this region, it can be already observed a greater geographic as well as social peripherality. The dominant were domestic visitors (71.9%), whose economic background and purchasing power is considerably reduced.

The tourist region of Upper Zemplín is considered to be the most backward region not only in terms of tourism, but also in terms of the economy. The region lacks a significant economic centre generating economic wealth as the basis for the consumption of services in tourism. At the same time, it represents not only the periphery of the Prešov region, but also of the whole Slovak republic. Accommodation establishments serve mainly to the less affluent domestic clients (76.8%). Their total earnings were only 1.4 million € (3.8% of the total earnings of the Prešov region from tourism). The accommodation establishments utilisation rate was 15.5%, while in the district of Medzilaborce it was only 9% and in the district of Snina 7%. In general, it can be observed a strong seasonality in this region; tourism orientation is especially to the summer season.

In conclusion, we can summarize that not only the appropriate localization assumptions (i.e. attractive natural environment, cultural and historical potential) but also well-developed services and infrastructure are very important for the development of tourism. However, all of these preconditions can be found at the satisfactory level only in the most developed Tatra tourist region, which has an international reputation. In the Šariš region, it will be necessary to support the development outside the core areas of Presov and Bardejov. It will be also important to connect this region with the Tourist region of Upper Zemplín, since there are good opportunities for summer tourism and recreation at the water dam Domaša and for walking tourism in the forest/ mountain areas of Vihorlat and Bukovské vrchy. In the future, the common component for both of these regions might be a wooden sacral architecture represented by the wooden churches, some of which are already on the UNESCO list of cultural and natural heritage. The major problems include insufficient accommodation capacity, its poor conditions and rather poor transport accessibility, which probably will not be resolved in the near future.

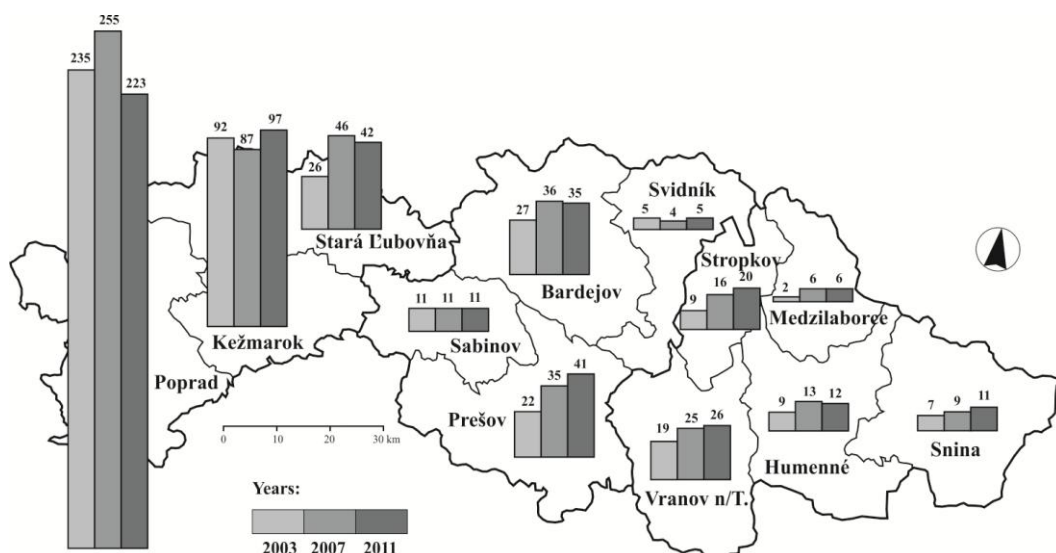


Figure 4. Number of accommodation establishments in the districts of Prešov self-governing region in 2003-2011

Source: Regionalization of Tourism in the Slovak Republic, 2005, statistics.sk, 2012

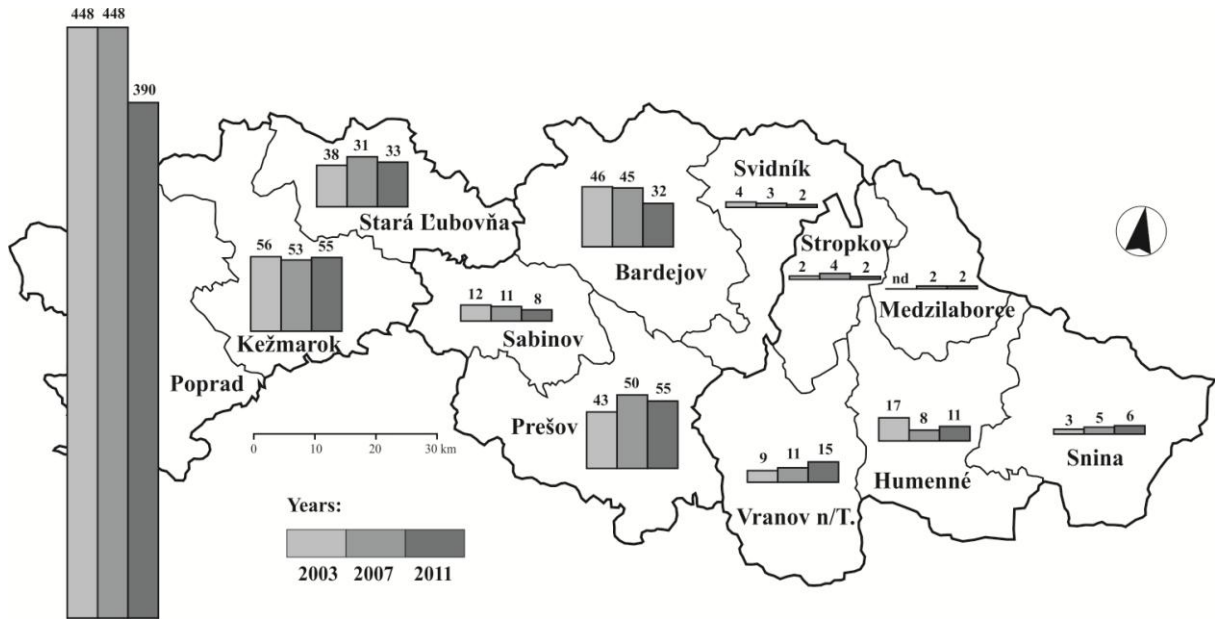


Figure 5. Number of visitors (in thousands) in accommodation establishments in the districts of Prešov self-governing region in 2003-2011

Source: Regionalization of Tourism in the Slovak Republic, 2005, statistics.sk, 2012

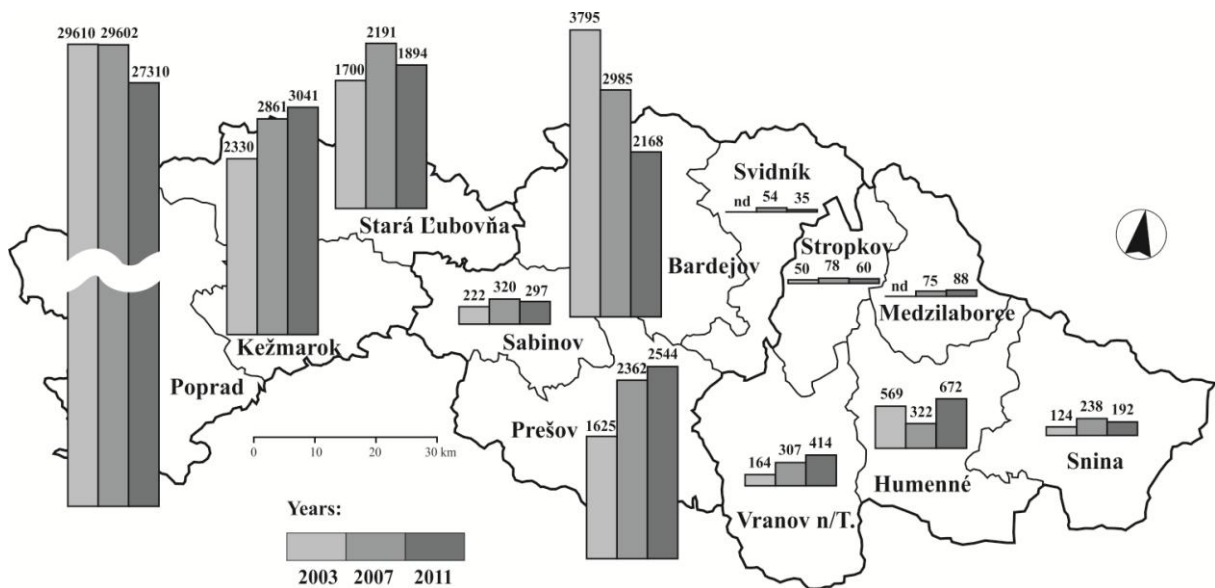


Figure 6. Amount of earnings (in thousands of Euros) in accommodation establishments in the districts of Prešov self-governing region in 2003-2011

Source: Regionalization of Tourism in the Slovak Republic, 2005, statistics.sk, 2012

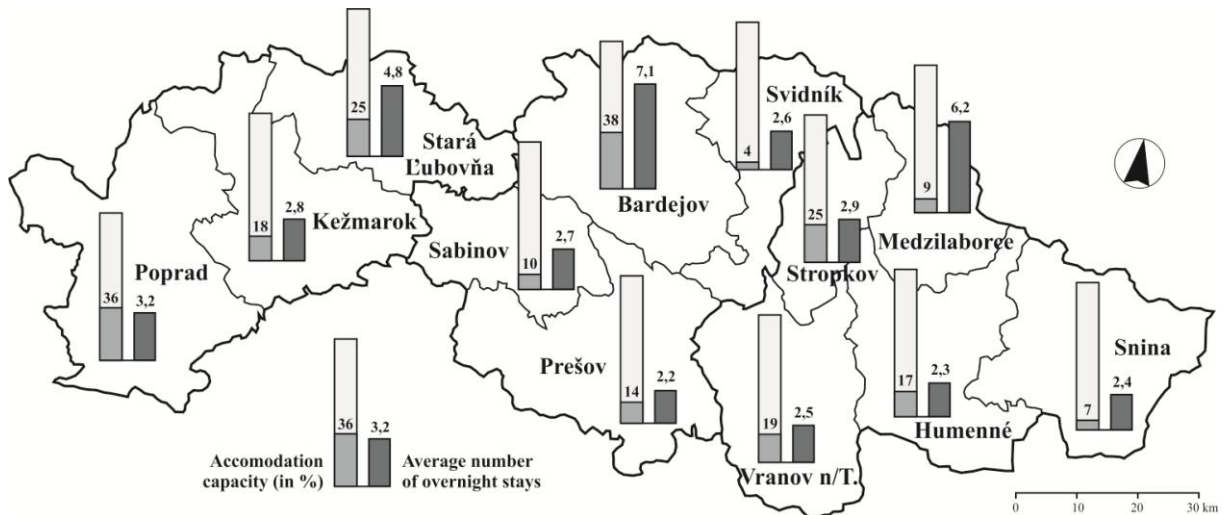


Figure 7. The rate of accommodation capacity utilisation (in %) and average number of overnight stays in the districts of Prešov self-governing region in 2003-2011

Source: Regionalization of Tourism in the Slovak Republic, 2005, statistics.sk, 2012

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