
RECREATION POTENTIAL OF HORNÉ KYSUCE MICRO-REGION

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ABSTRACT

Currently, it is possible to follow many discussions about the recreation and potential for recreation. Potential for recreation is a complex of capacities and features of an area or object which are important to provide opportunities to rest and activities in many spheres (culture, sport, art). My paper is about the Horné Kysuce Region which has very good prospects to achieve growth in terms of recreation and tourism. It is a region which is specific because of its location in a mountainous area and its particular history of settlements. Dispersed settlements gave to the landscape a typical shape. Long-time human life in the symbiotic relationship with nature created an attractive landscape with its own identity. The main aim of this paper is to describe the potential for recreation in the Horné Kysuce micro-region formed by eleven villages, and to demonstrate the region has a lot to offer to the visitors and is highly competitive.

Key words: potential for recreation, dispersed settlement. Horné Kysuce region, SWOT analysis..

INTRODUCTION

It has been a long time ago when men realized they can not do their work activities constantly, without rest. Physical functions limit them and, moreover, the spiritual essence of the human being is very important, too. Whether it is physical or intellectual work, sooner or later one will come to the moment, when he can not continue any more. He starts to be nervous and tired, his personal or professional life stagnates and he experiences physical and spiritual decline. This fact may lead to the burnout syndrome which is a serious problem nowadays. Currently, a lot of people are under a strong pressure because of many duties, expectations and fears about the future. It is very important to find time for oneself - time, when one can "switch off" and forget about everyday troubles and obligations; time when he can do his hobbies and cultivate his personality in many aspects. Of course, recreation is not only about the regeneration of physical and mental strength. It has become kind of a lifestyle for one's leisure time. Besides rest, there is a wide space for exploring new things which, consequently, broadens the scope of general knowledge and satisfies the demand for creative aspects of human personality. Last but not least, recreation has become an issue of prestige and a reflection of one's living standard.

Fortunately, Slovak republic is a country which has a big natural wealth and rich diversity. The country has all the natural aspects except for the sea - from extensive lowlands to high mountains, from tranquil streams to wild mountain torrents. Cultural wealth is also rich and it is evenly

distributed in the whole country. Therefore, Slovak republic has a great potential to be an attractive country with a lot to offer to the visitors. The Kysuce ethnographical region is one of Slovak regions with a relatively untouched nature and a very specific history. The North-western part of the Kysuce region - Horné Kysuce Micro - region is the main focus of the presented paper.

The Horné Kysuce region is formed by eleven villages of the Čadca district which are grouped in a microregional association. The region is situated between Javorníky Mountains, Turzovská vrchovina highlands and Moravsko-sliezske Beskydy Mountains. The first look at the map says this is a marginalized area (both from the point of view of its location at the borders of our country as well as concerning the interest of the society). We can observe the marginality within the region of Kysuce itself, as the Southern part between Čadca and Žilina is more developed in terms of tourism and industry, while the Northern part is poorer and less developed.

Dispersed settlement is a specific feature of this area. The villages belong to the Javorníky-Beskydy area of the dispersed settlements and to the Kysuce subdivision (Huba, 1990). Plesník (1974) defines the term "dispersed settlement" as a separately standing dispersed houses or small groups of houses we can find in some mountainous areas. Typical name of the dispersed settlements in the Kysuce region is "kopanica". "Kopanica" is a hamlet formed by a group of several settlements which are sporadically situated in different shapes of the relief (Fekete, 1947). According to Mesároš (1966), "kopanica" is defined as a separately standing dispersed farmer's hamlet in some mountainous territories of Slovakia.

Dispersed settlement in Slovakia originated in the period of early or very early colonization (16th - 19th century) on the forested hills originally as shepherd's hamlets. Shepherding was later substituted by agricultural activity. This form of settlement was influenced by two important factors. The first one was the effort to gain land. New arable land was acquired by deracination of the existing forests. Another factor was economic and communicational. Using land with low fertility, it was necessary to cultivate large areas in order to obtain the necessary amount of products. Since the deforested areas lied in hilly terrains a long way off the village, to walk all the way every day was very time and effort-consuming. That is why the inhabitants of "kopanice", so called "kopaničiari", used to build their houses at the newly acquired lands (PLESŇÍK, 1974).

The main goal of the research was to assess the potential for recreation of the Horné Kysuce region. We examined the level of public services and evaluated factors which are attractive for visitors. The research includes evaluation of the potential for recreation carried out by means of a SWOT analysis of the respective villages.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In our research, we studied the quality of the micro-region at present and focused on the evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses we consider to be important for attracting visitors to the region. By indentifying the current situation we aimed to gain a complex view of the region. We proceeded in these stages:

1. Field research and photographic documentation. In this stage, we visited the micro-region itself. We visited every village of the micro-regional association (their municipal offices) and collected information needed for the main part of our research - the evaluation of the recreation potential of the villages and the region as whole. Taking photographic documentation was an integral part of this stage of the research. During the field research, we tried to view the region from the perspective of a visitor - tourist.

2. Survey of public services, listing of the accommodation facilities in the micro-region. This stage was incorporated into our research on the basis of an agreement with the administrative board of the Horné Kysuce micro-region. Horné Kysuce micro-region had no own list of accommodation facilities. Our listing thus consisted in detection of various types of accommodation facilities in every village and the number of beds in each facility. We also focused on the evaluation of retail and public services in the villages.

3. SWOT analysis. This stage is the core part of the research. We elaborated SWOT analysis for every village of the micro-region. We evaluated strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats. When evaluating, we focused on those particular aspects perceived as important for recreation and visitors.

4. Synthesis of research findings. Firstly, we evaluated the natural environment of the villages. We came to the conclusion that every village in the Horné Kysuce region is situated in an attractive natural environment. We divided villages in two categories - *very attractive natural environment* and *attractive natural environment*. We defined very attractive natural environment as an area with untouched nature, with forests and many smaller valleys being typical for this type of area. In this category, there are mostly villages with extensive cadastral areas and so-called "terminal" villages, i.e. villages virtually circled by hills or mountains where visitors can not cross and continue to another village but have to go back. In our opinion, this is a strong point since such villages create the impression of "intimacy" which is a factor that makes them more attractive. The second category - *attractive natural environment* - is on one hand attractive for visitors but, on the other hand, such settlements have no connection with the environment, in contrast with the first category villages, and are more oriented on "themselves" (less dispersed settlements, centralized look, etc.). Furthermore, we evaluated retail services as well as various public services in the respective villages. We focused on the complex impression of a village and assessed it from the tourist's point of view. In this stage, we also examined the promotion of villages and their web sites, mainly in terms of the information they provide for potential visitors of the region.

5. Interpretation of research findings. In this stage, we classified the villages to three levels of development based on the results of the SWOT analysis. Subsequently, we created a map in the geographical information system Quantum GIS. We differentiated the villages into categories by colours - villages with an offensive strategy, villages with a defensive strategy and villages with a strategy of cooperation (Picture no.1). In these categories, we compared the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats as well as their mutual relations.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

SWOT analyses of the respective villages give us a view on the position of these villages in terms of tourism development. We can divide the villages into three categories based on the identified results reflected in the analysis:

1. Villages with a high level of tourism development, offensive strategy

In this category there are villages with a strong position in tourism of the region. They started to be well-known within their own region and outside because their character and services can attract visitors. They either have more strengths than weaknesses or these two categories are balanced which is a sign that such a village has a balanced internal environment. Many strengths (attractive location, high numbers of “kopanice”, retail services) exceed the weaknesses and if such a village is able to capitalize on the opportunities, it will be on a good way to become an important tourist destination. Considering its strengths, such village is able to make use of every opportunity, i.e. to use the offensive strategy. The villages belonging to this category: Makov, Turzovka, Korňa and Raková.

2. Villages with a defensive strategy

This category includes villages that have more strengths than weaknesses or they are balanced; but weaknesses or threats (poorly developed services, no attractions, no focal point in the village) have high impact on their development. In each village there is an element that strongly decreases the possibility of tourism development. However, such a village is able to defend itself thanks to its strengths. This category includes villages: Klokočov, Staškov, Zákopčie.

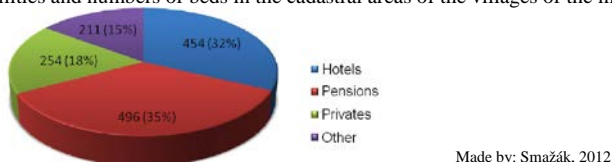
3. Villages with the strategy of cooperation

Villages in this category have a big recreation potential especially in terms of natural capacity. They are at the beginning of the process of tourism development since realization prerequisites for such development have not been created there. Therefore, at this stage, it is very important for them to cooperate with other villages of the region. Villages in this category: Vysoká nad Kysucou, Dlhá nad Kysucou, Podvysoká and Olešná.

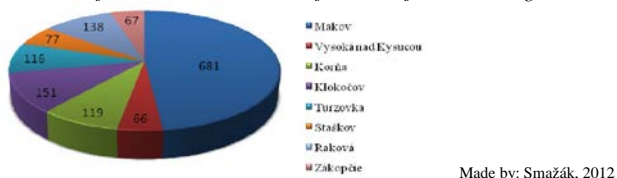


Picture 1 Division of the villages based on the SWOT analysis

The process of listing of accommodation facilities of the Horné Kysuce micro-region was an important part of our research. Its objective was to identify the accommodation capacity of the micro-region in terms of the number of beds available to the tourists. There are accommodation facilities in every village of the region except for Olešná village, Dlhá nad Kysucou village and Podvysoká village. We came to the conclusion that the total accommodation capacity of the micro-region is 1.415 beds (1.1.2012). In the graphs below, there are numbers of beds in accommodation facilities and numbers of beds in the cadastral areas of the villages of the micro-region.



Graph 1 Number of beds in accommodation facilities of the micro-region



Graph 2 Number of beds in the villages of the micro-region

CONCLUSIONS

Although it could seem contradictory at first sight, we consider the current level of tourism development in the Horné Kysuce region to be adequate. We suggest developing both private accommodation and small “homely type” accommodation services. Furthermore, we believe it is very important to avoid supporting big tourism centers since it might potentially lead to the loss of calm yet mysterious atmosphere typical for the Horné Kysuce region, which is the reason why visitors come there. Right there, in Horné Kysuce, they can experience untouched nature in combination with an attractive vernacular architecture.

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