

Tourism and the visit rate in the tourism regions in Eastern Slovakia from the point of selected indicators

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Abstract. The submitted paper deals with the problem of tourism development and the visit rate in the selected region of Eastern Slovakia consisting of six specified tourism regions. The individual regions are briefly presented from the perspective of their potential for the development of selected tourist activities subsequently, based upon basic statistic information, the development and the structure of their accommodation facilities, beds, visitors, earnings, etc. are analysed while at the same time the most significant problems and disparities are pointed to. In the conclusion the possibilities of the development in the form of holiday models and their location within the evaluated territory of Eastern Slovakia are proposed.

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1. Introduction

The current flustered lifestyle is closely connected with the question of adequate physical and mental regeneration of people. There are more possibilities of spending free time, however one of the active possibilities is tourism and its activities.

The important and prime one for tourists is the recreational-health function which is one of the important forms of purposeful spending free time. Its status increases proportionally with people participation in tourism on one hand and the degradation of quality of environment on the other hand. Apart from this function, tourism is characterised by the cultural-educational function along with the development of science and technology and by the science-informational function (Mariot, 1973).

Kurek and Mika (2008) point to the following tourism functions: (a) relaxation (vacation) function – associated with physical and mental regeneration; (b) health function – associated with health condition improvement (e.g. spa treatment stays); (c) pedagogic function – associated with the influence of character and human personality development (of a tourist) in connection with travelling; (d) economic function – associated with the fact that travelling, apart from the other things is an important factor of economic regional development; (e) educational function (e.g. cognitive, training) – associated with knowing the world through one's own experience; (f) ecological function – resulting from natural heritage preservation for the purposes of tourism development (e.g. national parks) and ecological education of tourists; (g) political function – associated with the creation of positive image of a country abroad; (h) city-forming function – resulting from the process of tourism urbanisation and city development; (i) ethnic function – associated with the social impact of incoming people (emigrants or their descendants) in a mother country.

Przeclawski (1996) declares that tourism comprises positive functions related to a tourist if: (a) it provides comfortable travelling and stay; (b) creates conditions for relaxation, amusement and health improvement; (c) facilitates the learning process; (d) educates to perceive beauty; (e) enables to participate in cultural experience; (f) enables to better know world and oneself; (g) gives the opportunity for self-reflection; (h) gives the feeling of liberty

and freedom when acting in compliance with one's own persuasion.

As the above mentioned author (Przeclawski, 1996) further states in relation to the people living in the regions visited, tourism fulfils positive functions if: (a) it helps to improve life quality conditions of such people; (b) helps the economic development of such regions; (c) enables interpersonal relationships and further education to develop; (d) helps the right education and social behaviour of the young in the regions visited and eliminates pathologic occurrences.

Petrů (2007) mentions in a similar vein that tourism as a multi-sectional economic activity has the following functions in society: economic, recreational-medical, cultural-educational, informational, pedagogic.

Tourism therefore has a sectional character and it may be the catalyser of regional development. According to the possibilities and potential that Slovakia has in connection with tourism, just this type of industry could help to improve the economic situation in many regions. The region of Eastern Slovakia, on which the paper is focused could develop its economic base on the grounds of the potential of a country and very favourable conditions for tourism development the base of which is substantially underdeveloped in comparison with the other Slovak regions.

2. Materials and research methods: the object of study, research material and description of the studied area

Tourism is one of the most important industries in the world economy with significant dynamics of development. It is the important aspect in employment, too. It markedly impacts the world economy, social behaviour, natural environment, culture, etc. (Kurek, 2008). Lijewski et al. (2008) mention that tourism is a spreading sphere of human activity, a form of spending free time and a part of national economy the most linked with geographical environment.

Tourism is a sector with especially fast development rate. This is mainly possible due to the influence of globalisation – eliminating borders, the

possibility of free movement of persons, accelerating information flow and many other features of globalisation. The fast growing influence of tourism is testified by much faster segment growth compared to the gross domestic product. According to the information of the World Tourism Organisation (WTO), tourism grows in average 1.3 times faster than GDP growing by 3.5% (Borovský et al., 2008).

The importance of tourism has been continually growing, however its demonstration significantly differentiates in particular regions. In some areas with favourable location factors and developed services such development brings job opportunities and in the ones with low-quality infrastructure it mainly brings stagnation and sometimes disappointment. Being an economy segment, it is closely linked with geographical environment and its potential.

Evaluate preconditions for tourism and its potential to the full extent is a relatively difficult task because there are many influencing factors of natural and socio-economic nature. Natural environment in the interaction with man and his activity creates a unique combination of preconditions in each region which is consequently reflected in tourism and its activities. From this point of view, the research and evaluation in the submitted paper is divided into two basic parts. In the first one, the attention is paid to the presentation of the tourism regions in Eastern Slovakia from the point of their preconditions and potential, using the information and preconditions given in the document titled *Regionalization of Tourism of the Slovak Republic* (2005).

In the given regionalisation, the importance of particular tourism regions has been evaluated according to various criteria. In the first place it was the value of potential expressed in numbers. But as the total numerical expression cannot show the real importance of such potential without the rest, the criterion was important but not the only one. To provide an objective rating, other factors had their influence, too (Regionalization of Tourism of the Slovak Republic, 2005): (a) multitude, size and importance of sub regions in the territory; (b) tourism intensity and its results (share of stays, long-stay and short-stay tourism); (c) the position of tourism in the regional economy, its prosperity; (d) visit rate structure; (e) competitiveness on domestic and for-

eign market; (f) degree of attractiveness – aestheticity of country, atmosphere, image.

In each of the regions the specific forms and tourism activities have been defined for which a certain region had required conditions. For each of the activity, individual evaluation criteria have been defined. To evaluate the majority of activities and facilities, four levels – degrees of regional appropriateness to perform certain tourist activities have been created: (a) basic degree of potential – territorial appropriateness for a given activity may be evident but it reaches low level and does not get beyond regional importance – evaluation in points – 1; (b) average degree of potential – territorial appropriateness for a given activity is increased, it reaches average level and is important from the superregional point of view – evaluation in points – 2; (c) good degree of potential – territorial appropriateness for a certain activity is important on the national level – evaluation in points – 3; (d) high degree of potential – territorial appropriateness for a certain activity is very important and comparable with foreign localities – evaluation in points – 4 (Regionalization of Tourism of the Slovak Republic, 2005).

The value of regional potential has been expressed by point evaluation. Individual tourism activities based on the criteria given which were classified according to quantitative and qualitative suppositions into degrees (1-4) have been evaluated. Long-term (natural) and middle-term potential have been evaluated while facilities for a certain activity, visit rate and the extent of services etc. have been observed. Consequently, point values for each activity have been adjusted using weighted values which show the importance of individual activities within tourism in Slovakia. The values achieved have been then adjusted by the influence of modifying factors (intensive agriculture, water sources protection, air pollution, environment quality, raw materials exploitation, waste dumps, transport accessibility, higher level of nature protection, and higher level of monuments care and proximity of habitations with high concentration of inhabitants) that may enhance or weaken the potential. The weights have been assigned the values from 1 to 10.

The big advantage of this tourism regionalisation is the fact that the borders of the tourism regions are concurrent with the borders of districts.

The Statistics Office of the Slovak Republic publishes all the available statistic information related to tourism on the level of individual districts. If it was not so it would be necessary to evaluate tourism on the level of municipalities. This type of information is not provided by Slovak statistics.

Based on this regionalisation, 6 tourism regions have been defined in the abovementioned territory of Eastern Slovakia, namely the regions of the Tatras, Spiš, Šariš, Košice, Horný Zemplín and Dolný Zemplín (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Localisation of tourism regions in Eastern Slovakia

Source: Regionalizácia cestovného ruchu SR, 2005

The evaluated territory of tourism regions in Eastern Slovakia is located in the east part of the Slovak Republic, on the west it is bordered by the Žilina and Banská Bystrica District, to the north it is bordered by Poland (Małopolskie and Podkarpackie Duchy), to the east by Ukraine (the Zakarpattia Region) and to the south by Hungary (the Észak-Magyarország Region).

Table 1 shows the potential of selected regions according to particular activities and their point eval-

uation (1 – weights, 2 – potential value, 3 – weighted potential value, 4 – final potential value).

The following summary briefly presents the characteristics of the individual regions from the perspective of their current condition, development possibilities and some needs. The information is only a basic excursus aiming to present basic features that create the character of a region as a tourist destination.

Table 1. Point values of the potential for individual tourism activities according to tourism regions

Activity	[1]				[2]				[3]				[4]				[5]				[6]			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Stay in the mountain/forest environments	5	4	20	21	5	4	20	17	5	3	15	16	10	3	30	26	5	3	15	12	5	2	10	7
Hiking tourism	10	4	40	39	10	4	40	36	10	3	30	29	10	3	30	28	10	3	30	26	10	2	15	20
Cycling tourism	6	4	24	22	6	3	18	13	6	3	18	16	6	3	18	15	6	2	18	14	6	3	18	12
Paragliding/hang gliding	1	1	1	3	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	1	4	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Skiing tourism	4	4	16	18	4	3	12	13	4	2	8	8	4	2	8	8	4	1	4	1	4	1	4	2
Downhill skiing	9	4	36	36	9	3	27	26	9	3	27	26	9	2	18	20	9	1	9	6	9	1	9	8
Cross-country skiing	3	4	12	14	3	1	3	1	3	1	3	2	3	1	3	1	3	-	-	-	3	-	-	-
Climbing	1	2	2	4	1	1	1	2	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Hunting	1	1	1	4	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	5	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Fishing	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-2	1	1	1	1
Cave visits/speleology	1	2	2	6	1	2	2	5	1	-	-	-	1	2	2	8	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Rural tourism	3	3	9	10	3	3	9	7	3	2	6	8	3	2	6	4	3	2	6	4	3	2	6	3
Stays by the water	10	1	10	9	10	1	10	6	10	1	10	8	10	3	30	26	10	3	30	25	10	4	40	34
Stays by the thermal springs/in spas	7	4	28	32	7	-	-	-	7	4	28	32	7	1	7	9	7	-	-	-	7	1	7	6
Water tourism	3	2	6	11	3	1	3	5	3	-	-	-	3	1	3	7	3	-	-	-	3	1	3	3
Water sports	3	2	6	7	3	2	6	2	3	-	-	-	3	3	9	8	3	3	9	4	3	4	12	8
Sightseeing	10	4	40	46	10	4	40	42	10	4	40	46	10	4	40	46	10	2	20	21	10	2	2	22
Museum and galleries visits	6	3	18	21	3	2	12	13	6	3	18	22	6	3	18	20	6	3	18	20	6	1	6	7
Events participation	5	2	10	13	2	5	10	9	5	2	10	11	5	3	15	17	5	2	10	10	5	1	5	6
Knowing local traditions	4	2	8	12	4	1	4	4	4	1	4	6	4	1	4	5	4	1	4	4	4	1	4	6
Congress tourism	4	3	12	15	4	-	-	-	4	1	4	6	4	3	12	14	4	-	-	-	4	-	-	-
Business tourism	4	2	8	12	4	2	8	10	4	2	8	11	4	4	16	20	4	1	4	5	4	1	4	5
Other sports activities	5	2	10	10	5	1	5	0	5	2	10	7	5	3	15	11	5	1	5	1	5	1	5	1
Accommodation possibilities	10	4	40	42	10	2	20	18	10	2	20	20	10	3	30	31	10	2	20	18	10	2	20	18
Tourist-information centres	4	2	8	9	4	1	4	5	4	1	4	5	4	1	4	6	4	1	4	4	4	1	4	4

Explanations: The Region of the Tatras [1], The Region of Spiš [2], The Region of Šariš [3], The Region of Košice [4], The Region of Horný Zemplín [5], The Region of Dolný Zemplín [6]

Symbol (-) means that a certain activity in the tourism region does not occur or occurs negligibly

Source: Amended according to Regionalizácia cestovného ruchu v Slovenskej republike, 2005

The region of the Tatras (85,968 inhab.) is, based on the evaluation in the tourism regionalisation, of international importance and it is the most important compared to the other tourism regions within the monitored territory. It is defined by the following district: Poprad (52,791 inhab.), Kežmarok (16,843 inhab.) and Stará Ľubovňa (16,334 inhab.). Within the medium-term period of time, the High Tatras are to be linked with the Polish Tatras, the Pieniny and further linked with Poland and Vyšné Ružbachy Spa. Within the long-term period of time, the connection with Zamagurie and the valley of the river Poprad is

prospective. The region of the Tatras has potential to create other tourism centres with facilities, namely Kežmarok, Červený Kláštor, Spišská Stará Ves, Vyšné Ružbachy and Stará Ľubovňa. As for tourism forms, the prevailing ones are summer stays in the mountains, winter stays in the mountains – various forms of ski sports, congress tourism, spa tourism with therapeutic function, sightseeing tourism and rural tourism. The attractions having the highest long-term potential are culture heritage sightseeing, hiking, downhill skiing, thermal water therapy, stays in the mountains and ski tourism.

The Region of Spiš (58,915 inhab.) is, based on the evaluation in the tourism regionalisation, of international importance. It consists of the regions of Levoča (14,796 inhab.), Spišská Nová Ves (37,948 inhab.) and Gelnica (6,171 inhab.). Excellent natural conditions of the Slovak Paradise and the unique concentration of cultural sites located in the attractive countryside predetermines the region for its further development. For the moment, there are insufficient infrastructure facilities relating accommodation etc., though. There are also visible social problems relating inadaptable citizens, mainly the Romani. The main tourism forms are summer stays in the mountains, sightseeing tourism and rural tourism. The following developing tourist activities such as learning about culture heritage, stays in the forest/mountains, hiking, cycle tourism and stays in the countryside are linked with the above-mentioned forms.

The Region of Šariš (149,580 inhab.) is, from the point of tourism, of national importance. It consists of four districts: Bardejov (33,625 inhab.), Prešov (91,638 inhab.), Sabinov (12,715 inhab.) and Svidník (11,602 inhab.). In the middle-term horizon, certain sub-regions are supposed to develop there, such as the city of Prešov and its environs (for example: Zlatá Baňa, Dubník Opal Mines, Sigord), Bardejov together with Bardejov Spa (both UNESCO sites), the winter ski resort Drienica – Lysá, the surrounding area of Svidník spreading to Dukla together with wooden churches nearby. This would be the way of creating a more compact tourism region offering a variety of attractions. The determining tourism forms are spa tourism with its therapeutic function, sightseeing tourism, summer stays in the forest/mountains, winter stays and shopping tourism. The attractions of the highest long-term potential are culture heritage sightseeing, stays in spa, stays in the forest/mountains including hiking and winter stays in the mountains – skiing. Currently, the region has relatively small even though extraordinarily used capacities especially thanks to Bardejov Spa. A very suitable area as for its potential seems to be the area of the town of Lipany where the tourism based on thermal mineral water from a new-found well is supposed to start developing. The historical sights of international importance are little used within the tourism region.

The Region of Košice (353,571 inhab.) is, based on the evaluation in the tourism regionalisation, of national importance. It consists of 4 districts within the territory of Košice city (234,237 inhab.) and the Košice-surrounding area district (119,334 inhab.). For the moment, the region is mainly created only by the city of Košice. Business tourism – mainly business travel is dominant in the city despite the fact that city itself is sufficiently attractive as a tourist destination – but this is just a small possibility. The start of some tourism activities is set for the year of 2013 when the city of Košice will be the ‘European capital of culture’ which naturally brings increasing numbers of cultural and art activities and events in the city. Very short average length of stays is the result of prevailing business stays. Attractive localities in the surrounding are now more frequently used for recreation by people living in Košice and the region than by tourists. Despite low-developed ‘holiday’ tourism, the city of Košice and its surroundings are qualified to be established as a standard tourist destination in a relatively short future period of time. As for tourism, sightseeing tourism, summer stays by the water and in the forest, business and shopping tourism prevail. As for activities with the highest long-term potential, there are culture heritage sightseeing, stays by the water, stays in the forest/mountains – hiking and downhill skiing.

The region of Horný Zemplín (96,525 inhab.) is of supra-regional importance. Within the monitored region, it consists of the following districts: Stropkov (10,905 inhab.), Medzilaborce (6,781 inhab.), Snina (20,701 inhab.), Humenné (34,913 inhab.) and Vranov n/T. (23,225 inhab.). In the middle term horizon, some sub-regions such as the recreational area around the water reservoir Domaša, the area of Snina Ponds and neighbouring parts of Vihorlat are supposed to develop. The dominant forms of tourism are summer stay tourism by the water, sightseeing tourism, summer stay tourism in the forest/mountains and shopping tourism. This structure is connected with activities such as stays in the forest/mountains and hiking, sightseeing stays or tours and sightseeing tourism and water sports. In present, the region is minimally used for tourism. Even capacities, limited by their extent, are used very little. The water reservoir called Domaša needs extensive modernisation as for its facilities. Furthermore, it is possible to use unspoilt

forest areas and quiet localities. According to the climatic conditions, it is possible to run small and middle-sized ski resorts in suitable areas the resorts of which might be attractive after having strengthened contacts with Poland. In this region, despite it being the most remote from crucial markets, it is possible to develop tourism that could attract tourists from other parts of Slovakia and the neighbouring countries.

The Region of Dolný Zemplín (69,366 inhab.) has regional and supra-regional importance. It consists of the following districts: Trebišov (23,152 inhab.), Michalovce (39,940 inhab.) and Sobrance (6,274 inhab.). At present, almost the whole tourism in the region is focused on the water reservoir called Zemplínska Šírava. Its currently not very good condition also influences the overall level of tourism. As for its performance, the region shows lower shares in comparison with its share in accommodation capacity. The future competitive position and the market share may be significantly influenced by modernisation and finishing the construction of Zemplínska Šírava (including a thermal pool resort), the development of the Tokaj Area as a prospective wine-producing region, the restoration of former spa called Sobrance, the reconstruction of selected historical sites and their engagement in tourism. As for tourism forms, summer stay tourism by the water, sightseeing and shopping tourism prevail. The activities of the highest potential for development are mainly water sports and stays by the water.

Based on the tourism regionalisation presented in Eastern Slovakia, the second part of the paper analyses and evaluates the development of tourism in this part of the country during the period from 2003 to 2011 based on the set of selected indicators such as the number of tourist accommodation establishments, number of beds in accommodation establishments and their structure, number and structure of tourists, number of stays, earnings, etc.

3. The development of visit rate and tourism in the tourism regions in Eastern Slovakia

A very important group of preconditions are realisation preconditions that basically indicate what

the facilities for tourism in the region are and using such facilities tourism in the country is realised. In the group, there are communication preconditions, (texture and structure of communication network, traffic accessibility) and the material-technical basis for tourism (accommodation, catering, entertainment, transport facilities and services). The centre of such material-technical basis is made by accommodation facilities that can keep a visitor in the area (Rosič, Klamár, 2009).

A tourist accommodation facility is a facility that regularly (or occasionally) provides temporary accommodation for visitors. Individual cottages, log houses or tents belonging to a provider in a cottage settlement and a camp site are not considered to be an accommodation facility but only a cottage settlement and a camp site as whole.

In the region of Eastern Slovakia, there was the total number of 823 accommodation facilities by the end of 2011 which was the increase by 25.3% from the beginning of the monitored period of time (year 2003). The majority of accommodation facilities are concentrated in the most attractive region from the point of tourism – the region of the Tatras with the number of 362 (43.9% of the total number in Eastern Slovakia). During the period 2003-2011 (Table 2), the highest increase in the number of accommodation facilities was recorded in the region of Košice (by 72.4%), in the region of Horný Zemplín (by 70.5%), in the region of Spiš (by 60.5%) and in the region of Šariš (by 53.3%). Moreover, there was stagnation or a slight increase in the region of the Tatras (by 2.5%) and the region of Dolný Zemplín (by 12.7%) (Fig.2).

The presented quantification of accommodation facilities is closely connected with the number of beds in establishments (Fig. 3). In the accommodation establishments, there were 15,076 rooms with 40,305 beds available for guests. This capacity for the purposes of tourism presents 21.7% of the total accommodation capacity in the Slovak Republic. The region of the Tatras with 18,452 beds had a dominant position (47.8%), with a big difference it was followed by the region of Šariš (14.1%), Košice (13.3%) while the shares of the other regions were under the level of 10%. During the monitored period there was the increase of 14.1% in the number of beds which happened thanks to the regions of Košice, Spiš and Šariš (Table 3).

Table 2. The number of accommodation facilities in tourism regions in Eastern Slovakia (2003-2011)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
The Region of the Tatras	353	344	323	332	388	414	405	385	362
The Region of Spiš	71	90	94	98	133	146	134	123	114
The Region of Šariš	60	68	67	70	86	93	92	95	92
The Region of Košice	58	62	72	73	94	99	98	99	100
The Region of Horný Zemplín	44	46	46	43	69	81	77	77	75
The Region of Dolný Zemplín	71	68	68	58	73	76	74	80	80

Source: Cestovný ruch v Prešovskom kraji 2003-2011, Cestovný ruch v Košickom kraji 2003-2011, 2012, www.statistics.sk, 2012

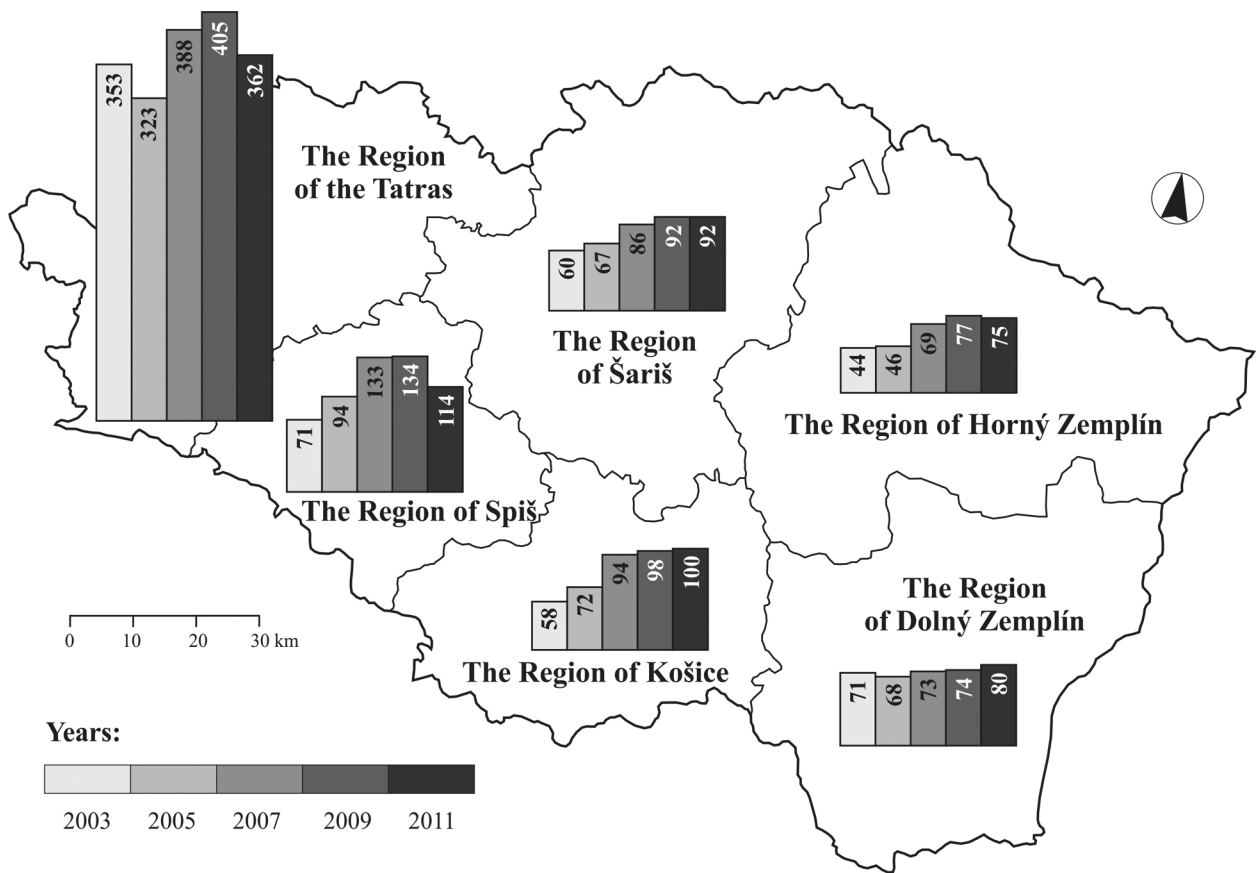


Fig. 2. The number of accommodation facilities in the tourism regions in Eastern Slovakia in the period of 2003-2011

Source: Regionalizácia cestovného ruchu SR, 2005, www.statistics.sk, 2012

Table 3. The number of beds in tourism regions in Eastern Slovakia (2003-2011)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
The Region of the Tatras	18,321	17,371	17,362	17,735	19,743	19,581	19,354	18,591	18,452
The Region of Spiš	2,943	3,797	3,990	3,963	4,516	5,040	4,691	4,294	3,977
The Region of Šariš	4,924	4,782	4,550	5,365	5,749	6,110	5,906	5,796	5,678
The Region of Košice	3,076	3,122	3,507	3,710	4,384	4,777	5,340	5,237	5,345
The Region of Horný Zemplín	2,337	2,240	2,174	2,073	3,271	3,507	3,096	3,119	2,887
The Region of Dolný Zemplín	3,737	3,447	3,543	3,315	3,721	3,700	3,375	3,856	3,966

Source: Cestovný ruch v Prešovskom kraji 2003-2011, Cestovný ruch v Košickom kraji 2003-2011, 2012, www.statistics.sk, 2012

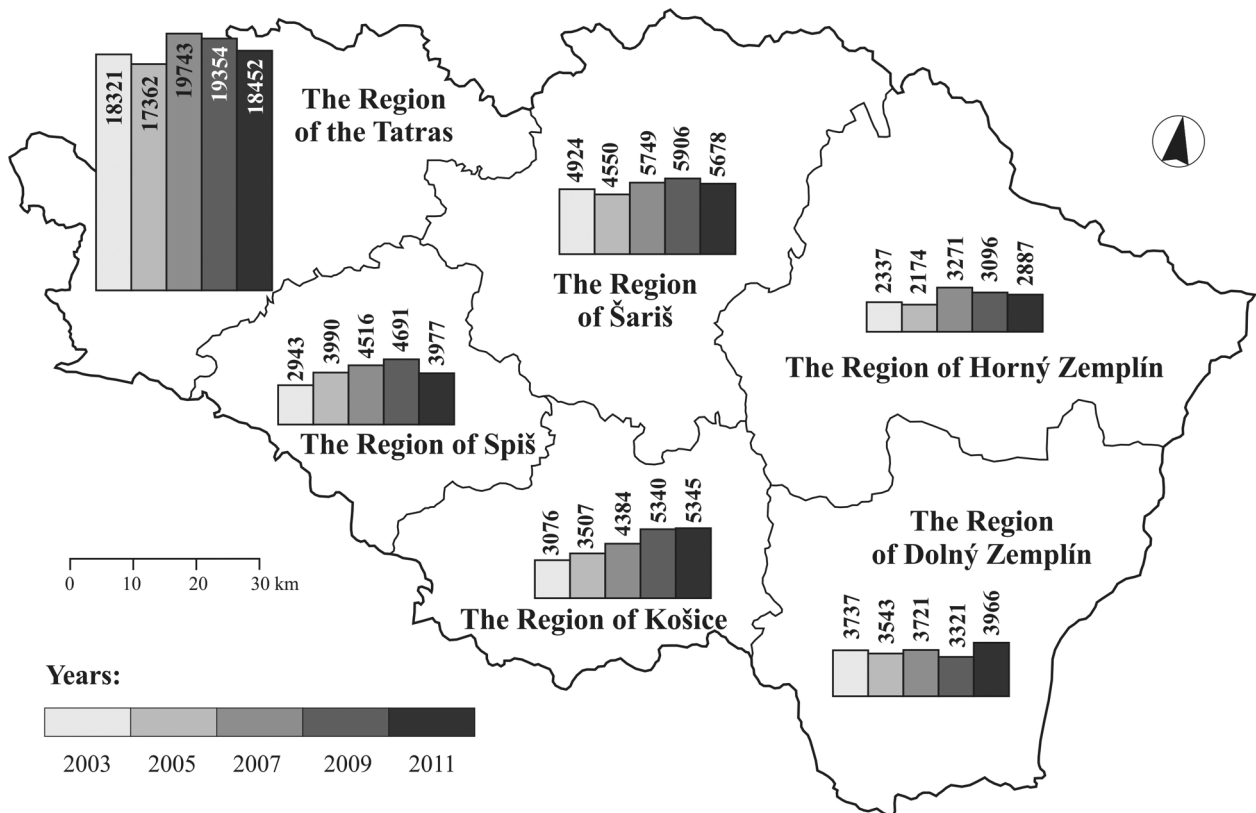


Fig. 3. The number of beds in the accommodation facilities in the tourism regions in Eastern Slovakia in the period of 2003-2011

Source: Regionalizácia cestovného ruchu SR, 2005, www.statistics.sk, 2012

In the structure of accommodation facilities in the monitored area in 2011, hotels, motels and guest houses with the number of 324 (39.4%) had the biggest share, they were followed by other bulk hostels (camp sites etc.) with the number of 219 (26.6%), accommodation provided in private houses and those not mentioned with the number of 219 (26.6%), tourist hostels with the number of 52 (6.3%) and 9 cottage settlements (1,1% share). The lower level of provided services was registered in a relatively significant decrease in the share of tourist hostels (from 2003 by 11.8%) and cottage settlements by 4.0%. On the contrary, there was an increase registered relating hotels, motels and guest houses (by 18.7%) and as for the category of other bulk hostels (by 15.7%).

The structure of accommodation facilities with the highest share represented by hotels, motels and guest houses has been reflected in the structure of beds, too. In this case, the abovementioned category with the 55.3% share significantly dominates. The

highest share of hotels, motels and guest houses is in the most attractive and the most visited region of the Tatras (67.4%), in four regions it is within the range from 46 to 52%, while the region of Horný Zemplín has a significantly negative position (only 20.2%). This region is characterized by a relatively low quality of accommodation facilities which has been reflected in the higher share of other bulk hostels (as much as 34.3%). Within the region of Eastern Slovakia, the other categories of accommodation facilities had lower shares than, for example, other bulk hostels (18.2%) and accommodation provided in private houses and those that are not mentioned (15.4%).

The visit rate depended on accommodation possibilities, the level of provided services and the attractiveness of individual regions (Fig. 4). In 2011, the region of Eastern Slovakia provided accommodation for 887,447 visitors and that was 24.9% of the total number of guests in accommodation facilities in Slovakia. Thanks to the region of the High

Tatras, the region of the Tatras had the biggest share (53.9%) compared to the total visit rate in Eastern Slovakia. Having a significantly smaller share, the region was followed by the region of Košice (17.3%) while the smallest shares were recorded in the region of Horný Zemplín (4.1%) and Dolný Zemplín (5.7%). From the point of view of the development of the visit rate in the period 2003-2011, there

was a decrease by 6.3%. The most significant drop was recorded in the region of Dolný Zemplín (by 13.6%), Šariš (11.4%), Spiš (10.7%) and the Tatras (10.5%). Moreover, there was an increase recorded only in the region of Košice (12.5%) and Horný Zemplín (15.6%), where considering its low visit rate, the increase was only by 5 thousand visitors (Table 4).

Table 4. The number of visitors in tourism regions in Eastern Slovakia (2003-2011)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
The Region of the Tatras	534,502	467,939	479,637	498,214	539,352	552,012	434,533	457,072	478,297
The Region of Spiš	83,830	97,391	88,917	111,978	85,236	119,946	76,664	99,400	75,309
The Region of Šariš	105,121	90,964	102,193	95,687	113,395	100,672	100,086	63,836	92,707
The Region of Košice	137,393	133,257	146,732	148,547	155,037	165,662	137,019	154,358	153,731
The Region of Horný Zemplín	31,655	28,832	25,178	21,776	29,850	43,893	38,391	43,925	36,694
The Region of Dolný Zemplín	59,203	45,150	47,251	49,736	66,379	72,305	63,633	51,804	50,709

Source: Cestovný ruch v Prešovskom kraji 2003-2011, Cestovný ruch v Košickom kraji 2003-2011, 2012, www.statistics.sk, 2012

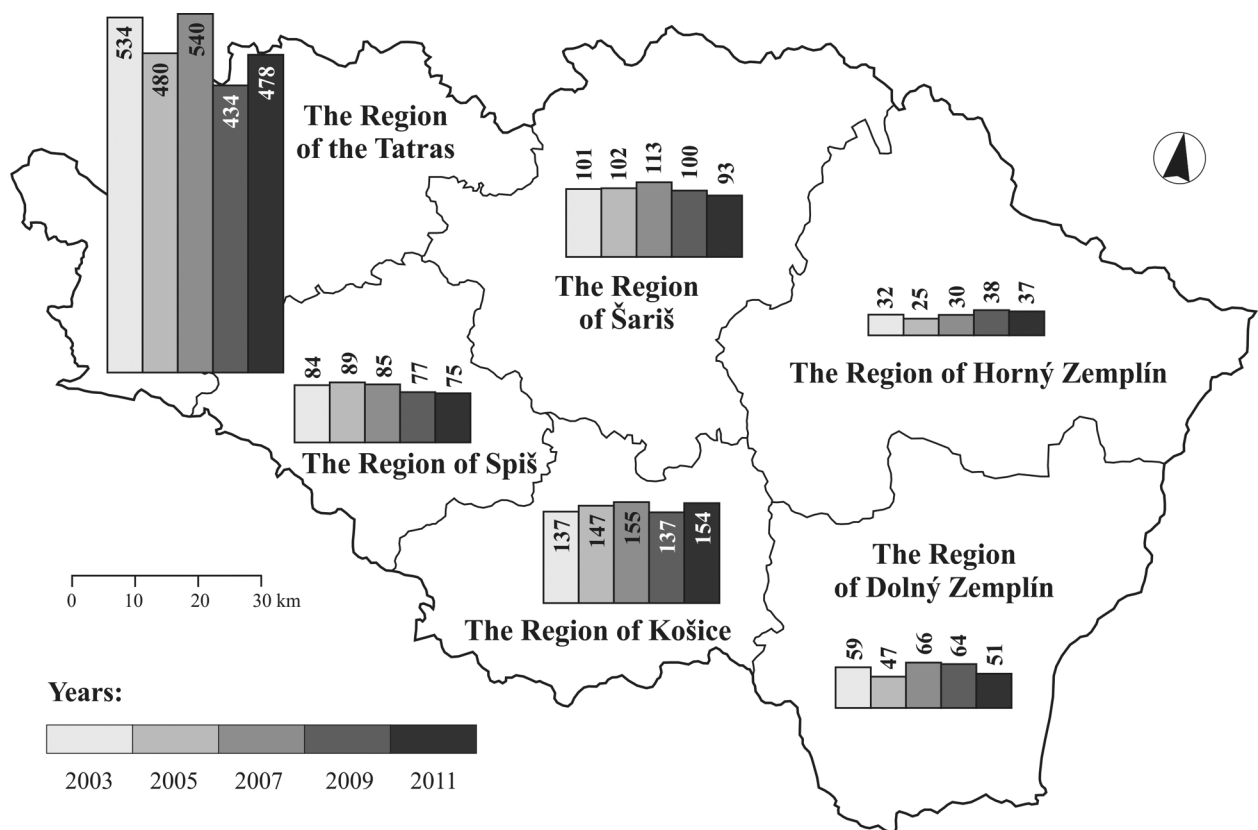


Fig. 4. The number of visitors (thousands) in the accommodation facilities in the tourism regions in Eastern Slovakia in the period of 2003-2011

Source: Regionalizácia cestovného ruchu SR, 2005, www.statistics.sk, 2012

From the point of view of dividing visitors into domestic and foreign ones, the Slovak's share on the visit rate of accommodation facilities in Eastern Slovakia was 65.4% (580 thousands) and foreigners' 34.6% which represented 307 thousands of visitors (cf. Fig. 6 – internal ringlet in cartodiagrams). The biggest shares of foreign visitors are traditionally in the most developed regions from the point of tourism – the region of the Tatras (36.7%), Spiš (38.8%) and Košice (38.3%). The foreign visitors markedly prefer accommodation in the category of hotels, motels and guest houses representing the share of 68.8%. The hotels, motels and guest houses of the highest quality are those in the region of the Tatras representing the share of 85.6%, in the region of Košice (83.7%) and Šariš (70.2%). The other categories such as other bulk hostels (14.1%) and accommodation provided in private houses (12.0%) were far less preferred. Domestic clients are mostly recorded in the least developed tourist regions (Dolný Zemplín – 82.3% and Horný Zemplín – 76.8%). Also in this case, accommodation provided by hotels, motels and guest houses is significantly dominant, representing the share of 60.8% while the highest values are again represented by the following regions: Tatras (75.2%), Šariš (69.0%), Košice

61.8% and Horný Zemplín (as much as 71.3%). Likewise as for foreign tourists, other bulk hostels represent relatively a higher share (20.6%). Both categories recorded lack of interest in cottage settlements (cca up to 2%) and tourist hostels (up to 7%).

The indicator of the number of overnight stays in accommodation facilities depends on the number of visitors (Fig. 5). In the region of Eastern Slovakia, there were 2,604 mil. overnight stays in 2011. The highest share was represented by the regions of the Tatras (59.3%), Šariš (14.1%) and Košice (11.8%) (Table 5). The underdevelopment of the eastern part of the monitored region has become evident even in this indicator where the region of Horný Zemplín had only 3.6% share in the total number of overnight stays and the region of Dolná Zemplín only 4.7% share. There are relatively unfavourable results also as for the development of the number of overnight stays that has decreased by 25.4% from 2003. The regions of the most significant decrease were the regions of Dolný Zemplín (by 41.6%), the Tatras (29.7% which is, speaking in absolute numbers, as many as 652 thousands of overnight stays), Spiš (28.9%) and Šariš (26.5%). A slight increase was recorded only in the region of Košice – by 22.1%.

Table 5. The number of overnight stays in tourism regions in Eastern Slovakia (2003-2011)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
The Region of the Tatras	2,196,969	1,818,532	1,671,333	1,722,578	1,798,025	1,821,042	1,496,252	1,516,547	1,545,327
The Region of Spiš	501,159	426,321	394,112	440,055	449,933	472,072	378,261	373,544	367,653
The Region of Šariš	232,240	244,676	246,222	252,675	237,723	251,525	187,372	153,132	165,401
The Region of Košice	252,732	247,355	269,855	276,940	288,702	348,928	280,322	313,640	308,579
The Region of Horný Zemplín	99,498	84,665	72,892	71,194	73,491	114,990	105,377	110,884	94,934
The Region of Dolný Zemplín	206,880	142,335	149,086	125,247	162,627	175,089	162,551	128,991	122,355

Source: Cestovný ruch v Prešovskom kraji 2003-2011, Cestovný ruch v Košickom kraji 2003-2011, 2012, www.statistics.sk, 2012

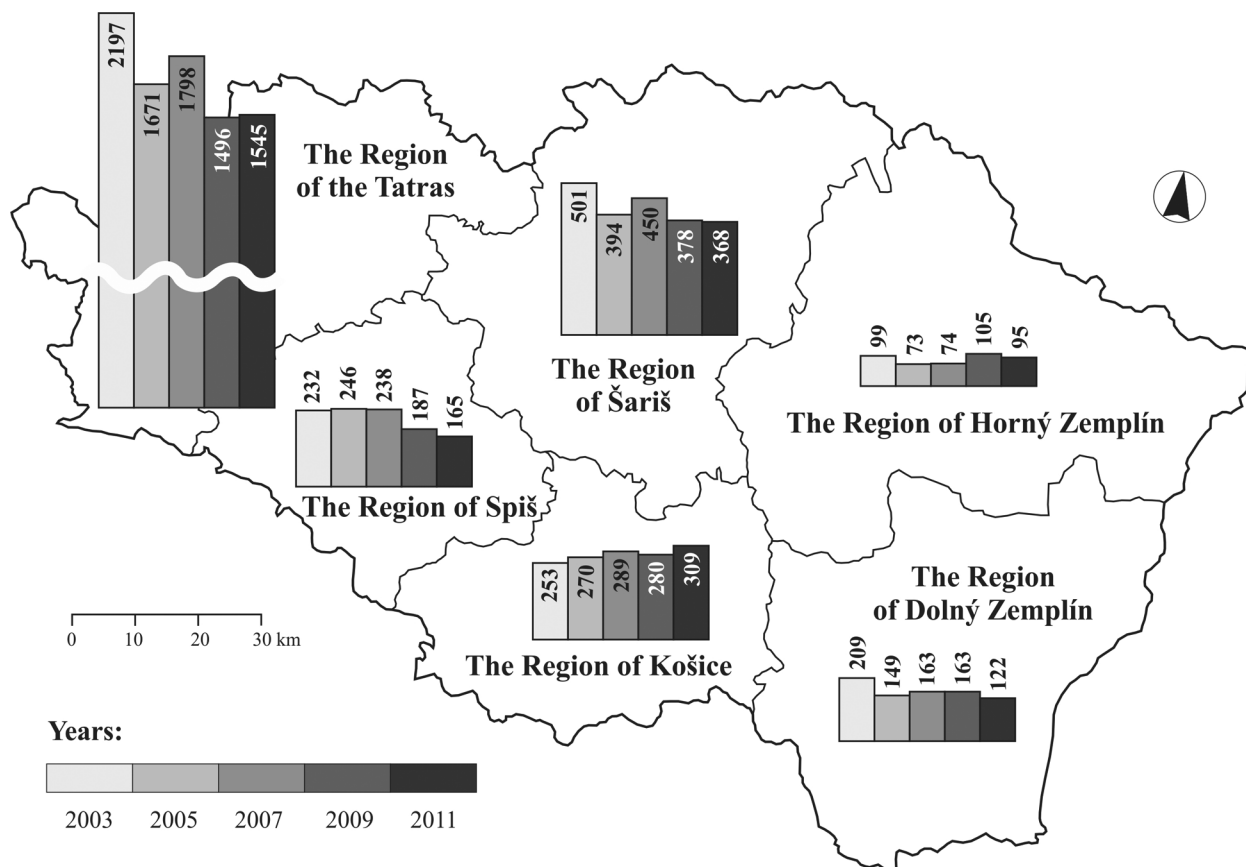


Fig. 5. The number of overnight stays (thousands) in the accommodation facilities in the tourism regions in Eastern Slovakia in the period of 2003-2011

Source: Regionalizácia cestovného ruchu SR, 2005, www.statistics.sk, 2012

The number of overnight stays in the tourist accommodation facilities depends on the number and quality of accommodation facilities as well as on the average length of stay. Unfortunately, even this indicator recorded a decrease in the period from 2003 to 2011. While in the year of 2003, the average length of stay in the region of Eastern Slovakia was 3.4 nights, eight years later the number decreased to 2.7. The highest value in the year of 2011 was in the region of Šariš – 4.0 nights, but the decrease in 2013 (4.9 nights) was as much as by 18.7%. A relatively high value of the indicator in this region is mainly caused by the presence of long-term therapeutic stays in Bardejov Spa which is of international importance (here, the average number of overnight stays is 7.1 nights). It is followed by the region of the Tatras – 3.2 nights (decrease from 4.1), Horný Zemplín 2.6 nights (decrease from 3.1), Dolný Zemplín 2.4 nights (decrease from 3.5), Spiš 2.2 (decrease from 2.8) and Košice which as the only one record-

ed the increase from 1.8 nights in 2003 up to 2.0 nights in 2011.

The problem is also the occupancy of accommodation facilities in tourism. The occupancy of capacity is the number of real overnight tourist stays compared to the number of beds available within a monitored period. Eastern Slovakia is, with its 14.7% share of accommodation capacity occupancy, deep under the level of the Slovak Republic (21.7%). The state is the result of the continuous decrease from the level of 22.0% in 2003. Significant differences in the occupancy of accommodation facilities are also on the regional level. Whereas in the interesting and developed tourist regions such as the region of the Tatras (26.4%), the numbers are over the Slovak average and in the others leastwise comparable (Košice – 18.2% and Šariš – 16.7%), in the middle-developed regions in the east of the monitored territory they are significantly lower (the Horný Zemplín – 11.1% and Dol-

ný Zemplín – 5.4%). The most important will be the improvement of services quality in already established facilities together with the offer of new attractions interesting for visitors. Another important aspect is seasonality. It is important to support visiting during a whole year. Seasonal resorts will have to start new activities to attract visitors also in the periods of the year when they are visited significantly less.

Last but not least is the indicator of earnings for accommodation (Fig. 6 external ring in cartodiagrams). The earnings following from tourist accommodation are earnings including VAT for visitors' stays (domestic and foreign), earnings for placing a tent, a motor vehicle, caravan, for connecting to electricity etc. Then there are earnings for services related to accommodation (for example washing and cleaning clothes, using a bathroom etc.).

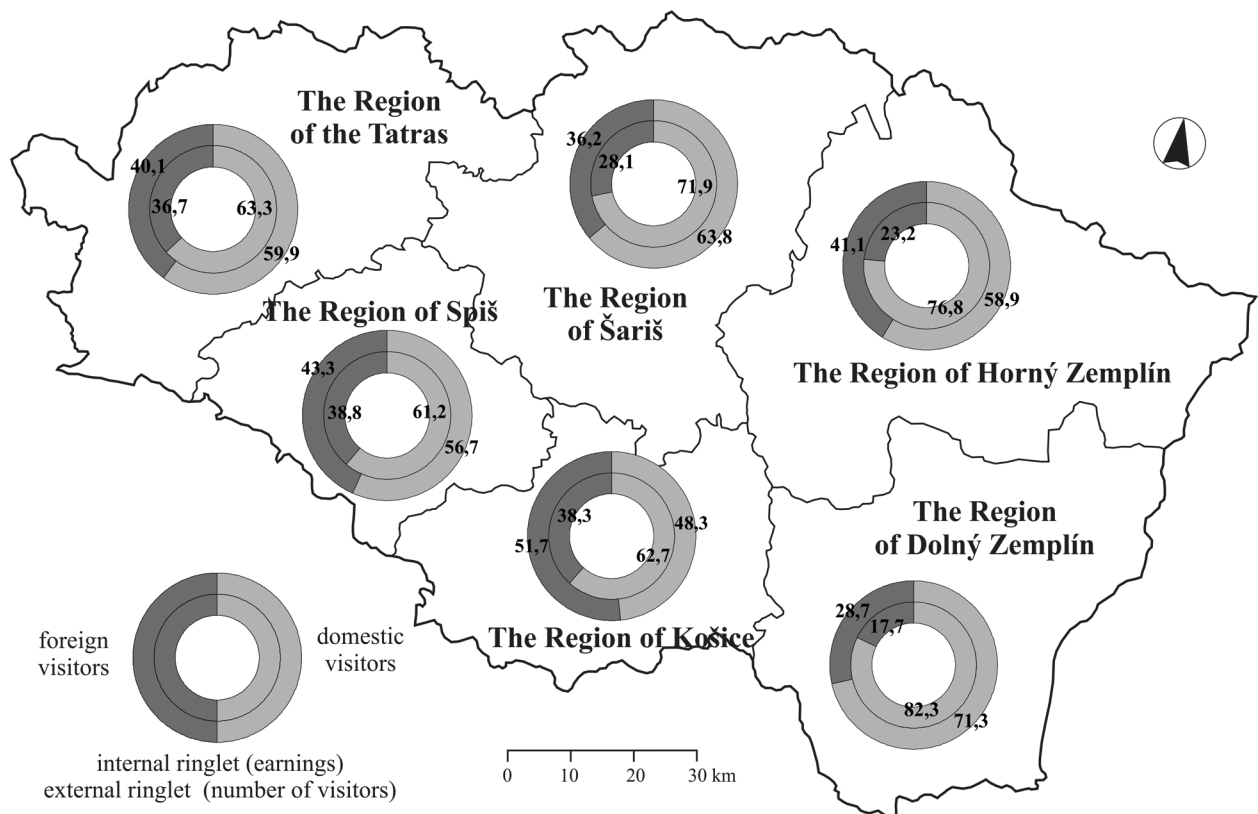


Fig. 6. The structure of visitors and earnings from tourism (in %) in the tourism regions in Eastern Slovakia in 2011

Source: Regionalizácia cestovného ruchu SR, 2005, www.statistics.sk, 2012

In 2011 the volume of earnings in the monitored region reached the amount of 53.99 mil. € which is 22.00% share in the all-Slovakia total amount. Domestic tourists spent as much as 31.36 mil. € (58.1%) and foreign clients spent 22.63 mil. € (41.9%). On the whole, it is possible to see a slight increase in earnings (by 6.9%) that was achieved by different development as for the number of domestic and foreign visitors. While the number of do-

mestic visitors significantly increased (by 31.3%), as for foreigners there was the decrease by 14.1%. Considering earnings, the region of the Tatras has a dominant position (59.7%) and with a big difference it is followed by the region of Košice (20.4%) and Šariš (9.3%) and then there are regions of a small share in earnings: the region of Spiš (4.8%), Dolný Zemplín (3.0%) and Horný Zemplín (2.6%) (Table 6).

Table 6. Earnings (€) from tourism in tourism regions in Eastern Slovakia (2003-2011)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
The Region of the Tatras	33,641,439	29,528,646	27,209,188	3,159,054	34,653,688	37,149,339	29,426,844	32,686,870	32,244,882
The Region of Spiš	2,288,721	2,259,908	3,000,100	3,048,595	3,097,159	3,496,348	2,639,892	2,421,631	2,616,903
The Region of Šariš	5,694,749	4,985,394	4,794,662	5,290,977	5,722,266	6,666,367	5,312,486	5,156,130	5,045,032
The Region of Košice	6,064,297	6,963,055	7,721,304	7,928,998	8,888,203	10,305,682	8,533,461	10,488,155	11,027,260
The Region of Horný Zemplín	907,057	1,010,422	703,213	710,084	1,020,149	1,683,297	1,504,362	1,496,278	1,426,651
The Region of Dolný Zemplín	1,891,522	1,749,020	2,416,351	2,081,557	2,302,795	2,682,301	2,340,636	1,935,136	1,635,838

Source: Cestovný ruch v Prešovskom kraji 2003-2011, Cestovný ruch v Košickom kraji 2003-2011, 2012, www.statistics.sk, 2012

Based upon the evaluation of the selected tourism regions and considering specified indicators it is possible to say that the territory of Eastern Slovakia is from the point of tourism development significantly differentiated while the importance, position and orientation of particular tourism regions differ. *The region of the Tatras* has a dominant position considering all the indicators such as the number of tourist facilities (43.9% of the total number of Eastern Slovakia), the number of beds (47.8%), the number of visitors (53.9%), the number of overnight stays (59.3%) and the amount of earnings (59.7%). The region of the Tatras is mainly being developed thanks to the attractive natural environment in the High Tatras (high-elevation glacial relief) with developing supporting tourism infrastructure and good accessibility and thanks to the Pieniny sub-region (klippen and karst relief) in the north of the territory. Together with the Polish side, it is possible to create an important tourism centre of international importance in this border area. The negative impact in the tourism development was caused in 2009 by the world economic crisis and to a certain extent also measures adopted on the Polish side to support domestic tourism in the form of a bonus for spending a holiday in the home country. It was also apparent in the decrease in foreign tourism in the region from the number of 257 thousands in 2003 to 175 thousands in 2011. The majority of visitors in the region of the Tatras in 2011 came from the Czech Republic – 62.5 thousands (35.6%), Poland – 30.3 thousands (17.3%) and Germany – 12.7 thousands (7.2%). Importantly, it is necessary to draw attention to the clients from Ukraine – 9.9 thousands (5.7%) and Russia – 5.1 thousands (2.9%) as they are especially financially able clients who bring the tourism facilities owners more money. A good image of the region is provided by advertising abroad. It is possible to mention the Belgian magazine called *Wintersport Gids* where the High Tatras were compared to the resorts in the Alps and were recommended as easily accessible, safe and open for free riders.

The region of Šariš is, from the point of tourism, one of the most developed regions. Considering the number of beds and the number of overnight stays it comes second following the region of the Tatras and as for the number of visitors and earnings it is on the third place following the region of the Tatras

and Košice. The region of Šariš is, from the point of tourism, inwardly divided into two dominant areas. The first one is the area of the regional capital, Prešov (91 thousands people) with its surroundings (localities such as Zlatá Baňa, Dubník Opal Mines, Sigord) focused on sightseeing tourism. This area is visited by 50 thousand people every year, mainly the domestic ones (68.3%). The second area has a completely different character and is represented by the city of Bardejov with its UNESCO sites (the historic centre of the town together with the complex of buildings creating the Jewish suburbia) and Bardejov Spa which is of international importance. Dominant tourism forms are spa tourism with the therapeutic function and sightseeing. The yearly visit rate is 32 thousands visitors (domestic 78.8%). The particularity of the area is the highest average length of overnight stays from all the regions of Eastern Slovakia amounting to 7.1 nights (8.3 nights in 2003) and the occupancy of accommodation capacity as much as 38.1% (the average of Eastern Slovakia – 14.7%) which is expressly caused by long spa stays (7 and more days).

The region of Spiš has a good position as for tourism thanks to the number of accommodation facilities – 114 (the second place following the region of the Tatras) but the premises are smaller which was caused by the smaller number of beds, visitors and overnight stays (all on the fourth place). The basis of the region is made by two areas. The first one is a smaller town, Levoča (15 thousands people) with the historical medieval centre registered in the UNESCO list having the visit rate of 11 thousands visitors. Sightseeing prevails as well as pilgrimage tourism (Basilica minor on Mariánska Mount nearby Levoča). The second area is the Slovak Paradise representing the attractive plain karst oriented to summer and winter tourism. In the north-east of the Slovak Paradise, there is one of the largest castle complexes in the Middle Europe – as for its surface – called the Spiš Castle, registered in the UNESCO list and nearby there is a historical church residence called Spišská kapitula. The visit rate of the second was in 2011 on the level of cca 63 thousand visitors. The problem of the Spiš Castle is the high number of inadapted Romani people as well as a generally bad economic situation people are in.

A relatively different tourism region from all is the *region of Košice* focused on the city of Košice

(234 thousands inhabitants). Short business tourism, business trips and to a certain extent also sightseeing prevail which is showed in the shortest average length of overnight stays within Eastern Slovakia (2.0 nights). Lately, Košice has significantly presented itself outwards which is proved by more positive news such as the presentation of the city in the BBC radio in a greatly viewed programme entitled 'Where in the world is Andy' during which the speaker presents important world destinations. Also the British daily Guardian ranked Košice as one of the top selected world cities that are convenient for business travel for a reasonable price. This way, the city found itself in the lucrative company of the cities such as Barcelona, New York, Dubai, Istanbul or Greek Sparta. The important international advertising caused the organisation (together with the capital Bratislava) of the Ice Hockey World Championship in 2011 and great hopes are invested in the year of 2013 when Košice is to be the 'European Capital of Culture'. These activities as well as the development in the last decade in the region of Košice have helped to increase not only the number of accommodation facilities and beds but mainly the number of visitors and the amount of earnings despite the economic crisis.

The least developed part of the monitored region is its eastern part where there are the *regions of Horný Zemplín* and *Dolný Zemplín* and this clearly show all the evaluating indicators. In the regions, the less attractive natural environment of the flysch or partly volcanic zone. The impacts together with the worse economic situation of people and insufficient traffic accessibility and services contribute to the situation, too. Whereas in the past the tourist basis in the region of Dolný Zemplín was the water reservoir Zemplínska Šírava and summer stays by the water were of supranational importance, after having problems with the quality of water and its unsuitable condition, it recorded attenuation. In the region of Horný Zemplín, the water reservoir called Domaša is the main attraction apart from the others and there is good quality and clean water suitable for summer stays by the water but on the other hand, the problem is in the quality of accommodation facilities and their number as well as the markedly decreasing water-level in the reservoir which is caused by flood prevention (in summer, which is the high season, the water-level

is very low and this is the reason for complaints made by tourists as well as accommodation facilities owners). As in the other tourism regions, there is an increase in the number of accommodation facilities and beds which it is possible to link with the improved recordings from the side of owners as well as with the sale of accommodation facilities to private hands and their division or transformation. In some regions, the process caused a decrease in accommodation capacity because such private establishments, after their transformation, do not have to provide accommodation for visitors and thereby they are out of such statistic recordings.

4. Conclusion

The development of tourism significantly contributes to the development of many countries. While in 2011 the share of tourism in total GDP was 2.3% (1.55 billion €) in neighbouring Austria it was as much as 7.5%. Slovakia lags behind not only when compared with the best ones but as well when compared with its neighbours. According to *The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2011*, Slovakia is more and more competitive as for tourism. According to The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index mentioned in this report consisting of three sub-indexes (T&T Regulatory framework, T&T business, environmental and structure, T&T human, cultural and natural), the position of the Slovak Republic having the value of 4.35 is on the 54th place (in 2009 – 49th place) from the total of 139 evaluated states. Just to compare, the Czech Republic was in 2011 on 32nd place (4.71), Hungary on 38th place (4.54) and Poland on 49th place (4.38).

The reasons for the situation are not the result of the current situation only, but the result of the overall development especially in the last decade. The determining influence that started significantly to form and influence the development of tourism in Slovakia and its regions has been the accession to the EU in 2004. Advantages associated with the membership in the EU have occurred immediately in certain spheres. A great economic advantage of the accession was the utilisation of supporting programmes and structural funds of the EU to construct infrastructure and to create new products.

Since the accession, Slovakia also has the opportunity to get the latest information and experience, to cooperate in creating documents, to participate in various educational programmes to help Member States to raise expertise and gain know-how in selected domains or to influence the politics of tourism in EU. Apart from that the membership plays an important role when promoting Slovakia abroad and it enhances its position in the international tourism market. For a long time, the accession to the EU meant an extraordinary propagation for Slovakia which was, in the case of a country with propagation on a low level, highly beneficial.

The 2004 enlargement of the EU by 10 new members and the consequent enlargement of the Schengen Area significantly facilitated crossing borders and this has enhanced tourism on the European level and eventually helped Slovakia, too. Compared to the year 2000, the number of tourists coming to Slovakia from Great Britain has increased by 80%, from Italy by 78%, from Austria by 51% and Holland by 44%. Totally, more than 185% people came from Baltic countries and 200% more people came from Scandinavia.

We shall not omit the fact that liberalising movement of persons relates not only the opening of new markets but the increase in competitiveness, too. Apart from the development of human resources and raising the quality of provided services the important role of tourism is also the preservation of the Slovak national identity (and its regions) as one of the basic elements of competitiveness.

The accession of Slovakia in the EU and the economic and legislative advantages as well as marketing activities associated with it, have contributed to significant arrivals of foreigners in Slovakia and the development of tourism in the following period of years 2005 and 2006 recorded increased dynamics. The year 2008 was culminating as the highest numbers were recorded when considering monitored tourism indicators in Slovakia and in the evaluated region (e.g. total number of visitors, number of stays and earnings from tourism). In the last five years the world tourism has been influenced by economic crisis and so is influenced the Slovak arrival tourism and the use of EURO currency in Slovakia and the downfall of currencies in neighbouring countries especially Hungarian forint, Polish zloty and Czech crown whereby a holiday in Slova-

kia became significantly more expensive especially for the tourists from traditional source countries. In the last year (2013) there have been the first indications of economic situation stabilisation which is shown in the increased arrival of Czech and Polish tourists. Those make the base for the Slovak visit rate (circa 110 thousands visitors – 50% of all visitors).

In future it will be necessary to actively solve the problem of crucial passportization of tourism establishments in Slovak regions. Not all the facilities report their operation (as it is not obligatory) to the local self-governing authorities by reason of the obligation to pay local taxes and so they operate unofficially. The important step in the sphere was the measurement in 2012 taken by the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development which started allocating donations for municipalities and micro regions with more than 50 thousands overnight stays recorded. The activity and the pressure of local self-governing authorities have increased in order to reach detailed recording of tourism establishments and their activities.

The abovementioned facts clearly show that in Slovakia it is necessary to pay more attention to the development of tourism but not only on the national level but on the regional one as well. According to the analysis given in *Marketing Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Years 2010-2013* (2009), it will be necessary to support mainly four prospective holiday models: balneal therapies, mountain sports and relax, folklore and history, relax in the nature.

Balneal therapies – this holiday model is one of the most prospective in connection with the trend of ageing population but its total potential is relatively small at present. Stays are markedly longer and visitors' expenditures higher in total. The future of the model does not rest only in balneal therapies themselves, which will remain the basic supposition, but the differential factor will be luxury, relaxation, uniqueness and alternative methods of therapy. People suffering from various diseases regardless of age and people following the trend of caring about their health, mainly the ones over the age of 36, will be the target groups. In Eastern Slovakia, the areas of the biggest potential are the area of Bardejov Spa in the region of Šariš, Ružbachy Spa in the region of the Tatras and the spa in Soľnica in the region of Dolný Zemplín that need

reconstruction to larger extent and some necessary investments.

Mountain sports and relax – this is the result of generally recognised summer and winter hiking in Slovak regions. The unique supposition for development is the combination of mountains and thermal springs. This active holiday model grows in connection with the development of sport, ecological tourism and consequently rest and relaxation in wellness centres. The typical destinations are the High Tatras in the region of the Tatras, the Slovak Paradise in the region of Spiš and the Vihorlat Mountains on the borders of the regions of Horný and Dolný Zemplín.

Culture, folklore and history – to a large extent, this model comprises two typical areas, city and culture tourism. In the first case, the observed stays are the shorter ones and this is why it is necessary to focus on extending the offer and to retain a tourist by the combination of city attractions together with visiting surrounding attractions such as folklore and historical sights. This holiday model is in compliance with the current trend of the increase in educational and culture tourism. The core areas of the model will mainly be the notable historic city centres such as in Košice in the region of Košice, the Spiš Castle, the Spiš Kapitula and Levoča in the region of Spiš and the wooden sacral architecture (wooden churches) in the north of the regions of Šariš and Horný Zemplín.

Relaxing in the nature – to a significant extent, this model is attractive for domestic tourists. It is also fully in compliance with future trends such as sport holidays, ecotourism and domestic tourism. The main source of the potential of this model is diversity and interesting landscape physiognomy of the country. Wandering in the mountains, walks in protected natural territories, diversity of flora and fauna – they all can be used for a number of products (from the ones oriented to adventure to the ones oriented to complete relaxation). The model is attractive for a big target group. For this model, areas are not as expressly defined as in the previous ones but the basis is made of rural environment providing untouched nature, attractive scenery and natural attractions.

Gúčík and Petřík (2012) declare, in the future the current trends in tourism will be expanded by the increase in interest in comfort and security of

tourists, orientation of stays to relax, wellness and spa. Short-term stays will be dominant as well as individually organized holidays focused on culture, art and history (increased interest in Central and Eastern Europe). The important thing will be tourists' satisfaction reflected in repeated arrivals as well as the increased interest in more personal approach when providing services (small family businesses) and in short specialisation of service providers in a product for a selected target group of visitors.

To sum up, it is necessary to mention that on one hand the potential of regions and localisation suppositions for tourism are important but on the other hand services and necessary facilities are essential as they are advantageous for the regions. They define which of them will develop and to the contrary which of them will fight with the low number of tourists, occupancy of accommodation facilities as well as their total profitability. It is up to the representatives of individual regions and those working on the national level to make use of such opportunity for development and whether the support of tourism development remains just a declaration or it will be supported by legislation, programming and institutions.

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