
František Petrovič

Professor
The Department of Ecology and Environmental Sciences
Faculty of Natural Sciences
University in Nitra

Hana Bieliková

Doctoral Student
The Department of Ecology and Environmental Sciences
Faculty of Natural Sciences
University in Nitra

Lenka Bolešová

Doctoral Student
The Department of Ecology and Environmental Sciences
Faculty of Natural Sciences
University in Nitra

The Potential of Environmentally Sustainable Tourism in Area with Dispersed Settlement - Nova Bana Region (Slovakia)

The socio-economical phenomenon of dispersed settlement in Slovakia offers great potential for the development of the tourism. Unspoiled nature and preserved customs and habits of native inhabitants demand soft forms of tourism. The aim of this article is to outline the potential of environmentally sustainable tourism in areas with dispersed settlement, on the example of the Nova Bana region. This region, located in the middle of Slovakia, is characterized by its rich mining history and beautiful natural sites. Results showed that most of the visitors would prefer more significant development of sustainable forms of tourism contrary to residents what may be caused by insufficient knowledge of sustainable tourism.

Keywords: Dispersed settlement, sustainable tourism, sustainable development

František Petrovič

The Department of Ecology and Environmental Sciences
Faculty of Natural Sciences
University in Nitra
e-mail: frantisek.petrovic@ukf.sk

František Petrovič is a professor working at the Department of Ecology and Environmental Sciences of The Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra. His interest is set mostly on historical landscape structures, ecology, remote sensing and geoinformatics.

Hana Bieliková

The Department of Ecology and Environmental Sciences
Faculty of Natural Sciences
University in Nitra
e:mail: bielikova.hana@gmail.com

Hana Bielikova is a doctoral student at the CPU in Nitra with main focus on environmentally sustainable tourism in areas that are unique for their dispersed settlement (particularly Nova Bana region), as well as on historical landscape structures.

Lenka Bolesová

The Department of Ecology and Environmental Sciences
Faculty of Natural Sciences
University in Nitra
e:mail: lenka.bolesova@ukf.sk

Lenka Bolesova is a doctoral student who is mainly focused on the study area of the soil composition and contamination in high mountain areas which is one of the markers pointing to the former utilization of the land and also to its conditions nowadays

Introduction

Nowadays, no one is surprised by fast and ever growing globalization that affects everyday lives. Globalization is known as a process of growing international integration in economics, politics, culture, communication even in the environment. It brings not just positive trends such as lower transport costs, but also negative effects. Globalization is more often connected to the extinction of local traditions and regional differences. The direct consequence of the globalization is modern consumer society that is responsible for environment deterioration and ignores the scarcity of natural resources (Young, 2006).

In the last few decades, there have been many documents considering globalization trends and sustainable development among tourism, and they all warn that tourism has been great part of the consumer society. At the same time, they emphasize that properly designed and managed tourism could support all dimensions of sustainable development and even help with the development of different regions by creating new vacancies, as well as business opportunities. Tourism as an economic priority could, together with using anthropogenic and natural potential, rapidly reduce already existing regional disparities and so tourism could contribute to growing potential of economically weak regions that are characterized by high unemployment rate, low wages, as well as by immigration of young people (Matthews, 2000).

With reducing regional disparities also relates to stimulation and development of small and middle entrepreneurship, tourism, also supports the creation of new productions, as well as diversification of new economic activities (Otrubova, 1991).

The development of the tourism also has its negative effects that are projected not just in natural, but also socio – economic part of the society. They are displayed in mass tourism that causes, for example, the rise in prices of land or real estate markets. Among the negative effects could also be counted the fact, that many objects of tourism are built in the most attractive parts of nature and can be the reason of the destruction of ecosystems and

disturbing the ecological stability of nature. Many visitors, not respecting the capacity of the attractive area have an impact on all landscape structures and also on esthetical, hygienic but also socio – psychical sphere. It often results in losing the genius loci because of not respecting traditional architectonical styles, as well as using inappropriate building material. At last but not least, there is growing problem with waste and devastation of the environment. (Rohac, Meyer, 2002). These are all reasons why environmentally sustainable development of the tourism is more and more important. It requires using natural, cultural, historical and other sources by today's society with future generation in mind. The aim of the environmentally sustainable tourism is to protect and preserve regional resources that are positive benefits to economic growth and welfare of local inhabitants or visitors (Butler, 2006).

There are more and more forms of sustainable tourism, and the rural tourism is one of them. It is unarguable that rural tourism, just like any other form of environmentally sustainable tourism, could bring welfare to the regions that have some specific cultural, natural or social appeal. It could be understood as a strategy for improving economical and social life of mostly remote, marginal areas that are beyond caring (Mahmoudi, Haghsetan, Maleki, 2011). Areas with dispersed settlement in Slovakia are marginal areas to which is not paid proper attention. These areas are unique for their preserved and unspoiled nature as well as for the social habits and traditions. Dispersed settlement is considered to be one of the few well – preserved cultural – historical landscape structures in Slovakia. It reflects socio – economical activity that was influenced by specific natural and historical conditions. It originated from colonization waves in Slovakia, and its genesis was territorially and timely very variable (Huba, 1989). Dispersed settlement in Slovakia has few different names, but in this study term, “stale” is used. “Stale” represents dispersed settlement that was established on an agricultural basis. They were created in areas with complicated access to gain new

land. It is mostly thanks to the hard access to these areas that nowadays there is unspoiled nature.

Only a few authors placed their interest on areas with dispersed settlement. Barnes, Robinson (1940, In Petrovič, 2005) focused on the cartographical illustration of rural dispersed settlement. Norling (1960, In Petrovič, 2005) compared urban and rural settlement in north Sweden and found out that dispersed settlement vanishes due to the adverse climatic and economic conditions.

Nowadays there are five areas with dispersed settlement in Slovakia. However, there hasn't been done the complex analysis of dispersed settlement since 1961. Only partial analysis of certain areas or villages was done (Huba, 1989; Petrovič, 2005).

Study area and methods

The area with dispersed settlement called Nova Bana “stal” region (NBSR) is located in a volcanic mountain range on the interface of the west and middle part of Slovakia. NBSR covers an area of 31 373 ha and 14 municipalities. This study is focusing on three of them, namely Nova Bana, Velka Lehota and Mala Lehota. All of these municipalities belong to Zarnovica district that is the west part of the Banska Bystrica regional municipality. Dispersed settlement in micro region Nova Bana dates back to 14th century and was influenced mainly by mining, coal mining and pasturing, later as a result of socio – economic changes was dispersed settlement connected with agriculture. The source of subsistence of many families in the area of Velka Lehota and Mala Lehota was created by coal mining and to it related wood cutting.



Figure 1 Map of NBSR, Slovakia

To analyze and recognize the social and economic position of the area to recognize the capabilities and limitation for development of environmentally sustainable tourism, the external and internal assessment affecting the development process were used. Internal and external factor analysis with SWOT matrix were used to extract the development strategies. To reach the goal, the properties of the area were described, then internal and external factors were assessed, and strategies of tourism development in the area were proposed with SWOT matrix. The analysis is completed with the results of the survey that was filled by residents, visitors and key players of the area. A total number of 265 (n = 256) surveys were filled out, throughout the year 2014.

Nova Bana “stal” region

NBSR has many touristic attractions that could bring visitors to this area. One of them is its climate. The weather in NBSR is mild in spring and autumn, pleasantly cold in winter with quite a few snowfalls and warm in summer. This results into an offer of visitor activities such as cross – country skiing or swimming in lakes. In this area there are two small ski resorts visited mostly by locals and people from neighboring areas and regions. One of the ski resorts takes care of cross-country skiing trails that offer visitors day long activities in the unspoiled nature. In the summer visitors can use natural lake with camping to cool themselves during hot summer days. The area also offers inline skating trail suitable mostly

for families with children. Concerning the technical base of tourism, area does not have many accommodation facilities. There are six hotels/pensions in the area (only in Nova Bana). Other than that, there are only houses used as secondary living, as well as houses for rent. Table 1 shows the housing and secondary housing situation in the area.

The area is rich in natural, cultural and historical attractions that are prevailing conditions for the development of the tourism. NBSR belongs to areas with very well developed, mostly traditionally used biotopes of hay meadows. Significant are also meadows of wind flowers. The andesitic stone sea is another natural attraction that could bring new visitors to the area. To cultural attractions also belongs Pipe – fest held annually in Mala Lehota. It is a very traditional event, and its part is traditional Slovak slaughtering. The dispersed settlement by itself is considered to be historical attractions.

Results

To assess the external and internal factors that affect the development of tourism in the area, the index of these factors was determined. The most important factors are environmental, tourism, economic and socio - cultural factors. Internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats) are listed in Table 2. SWOT matrix out of the internal and external factors together with main strategies for the development of tourism in the area is listed in Table 3. After assessing the internal and external factors strategies were determined and are also shown in Table 3. As the basis for the strategies, weaknesses and strengths were used to remove the limitations and to easier implement tourism development. Two of the strategies are to expand natural and historical tourism in cooperation with locals. Survey shows that cooperation is a big problem among the community of these areas. More than 83% of respondents think that the development of tourism in the area stagnates because of no cooperation between policymakers and locals. It can also be caused by the fact that many locals do not have the access to the internet and

nowadays sometimes the only way how to get informed about municipal issues is through the internet. Survey also showed that locals are unwilling to accept those forms of tourism that would harm the unspoiled nature, 76% of respondents expressed their desire to develop soft forms of tourism such as cycle tourism or agro-tourism. 53% of respondents stated that cycle trails were the primary reason for the visiting of the area. Focusing on building more natural trails with educational value would attract more visitors and would satisfy ever-growing need for more educational ways of tourism. The educational character of tourism is one of the requirements of environmentally sustainable tourism development. It is common in this area that visitors (mostly those staying in cottages) help locals with their everyday duties around the manor. Consequently, more than 64% respondents stated that helping locals is educative mostly for their kids who would otherwise not have a chance to experience historical aspects of agriculture.

Conclusion

Unique dispersed settlement and unspoiled nature make the areas that are known for it very attractive for the development of tourism. The area with dispersed settlement around Nova Bana is rich in natural, cultural and historical attractions of tourism. To preserve the natural and historical value of this area, soft forms of tourism should be chosen. It is also important to take into consideration all of the internal and external factors that enter the decision-making process. Areas with the dispersed settlement are unique also for their inhabitants and their traditions maintaining. Therefore, policymakers local authorities should take their voices more into account.

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Table 1 Housing situation in NBSR in 2001

Housing situation	Empty houses	Houses with permanent inhabitants	Cottages	Summary
Mala Lehota	77	334	120	531
VelkaLehota	54	398	57	509
Nova Bana	36	262	94	392

Source: Internal documents of municipalities

Table 2 Internal and external factors

Factors	Internal factors		External factors	
	<i>Strength</i>	<i>Weakness</i>	<i>Opportunity</i>	<i>Threat</i>
Environmental	hay meadows wind flowers Pohronsky inovec range Adnesitic stone sea no steep incline in the area	less water sources	Developing agriculture and gardening evolution of pasture lands fruitful trees planting	destroyin the forest
Tourism	all year comfort climate ski amenities for families with children nice natural views historical attractions (dispersed settlement)	lack of tourism infrastructure the absence of tourism planning giving less information about attractions	local residents providing tourism historical tourism planning Being the target region in central Slovakia	no cooperation between stakeholders and heads of municipalities
Economical	many objects that could be used for recreation easy access to villages	lack of human resources lack of asphalt roads to access "stale" low employment opportunity low income	opportunity for more agricultural activities opportunity for making a living out of tourism	increasing unemployment migration of young labor
Socio - cultural	native cultural traditions local coherence	unwillingness to preserve some traditions	opportunity to preserve local traditions	not respecting traditional architecture immigration to cities
Political		absence of enough supervision on natural resources usage	cooperative management with locals	lack of knowledge of government programmes by locals

Table 3 SWOT matrix

Internal factors External factors	<i>Strength</i>	<i>Weakness</i>
		beautiful fauna and flora historical and landscape attractions local coherence easily accessible
<i>Opportunity</i>	SO strategy	WO strategy
developing agriculture and gardening evolution of pasture lands Historical tourism planning local residents providing tourism	expand the nature tourism (geotourism) expand the historical tourism in cooperation with locals (introducing traditions) more natural trails	development of the infrastructure for different kinds of tourism more information about touristic attractions jobs for young adults
<i>Threats</i>	ST strategy	WT strategy
no cooperation between stakeholders and heads of municipalities migration of young labor not respecting traditional architecture	informing the locals about the political life in more accessible way engaging young people into a "touristic life" greater control of respecting municipal plan	planning the tourism based on recreational attractions