

SEGMENTATION OF RURAL TOURISTS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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Abstract

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The aim of this article is to determine the features that characterize the domestic rural tourists in the Czech Republic and separate them into groups. In order to fulfill this goal, an inquiry survey and statistical analysis of obtained data were realized. The results verified our hypothesis that the demand is different for different type of tourists and we were able to define 3 types of tourists: traditional, active, and passive. The passive tourists search mainly for tranquillity and rest, in our research mainly older people preferring longer stays. The traditional tourists favour visiting of natural and cultural landmarks. The active tourists are interesting in various types of activities, mainly in sports and social events. They are younger and they like shorter more frequent vacations. Based on our findings, we deduced some general recommendation to the rural tourism operators. The passive and traditional tourists are claiming for undamaged nature, calm and authentic environment, respectively existence of natural or cultural monuments. These external conditions can hardly be crucially changed to improve the touristic business. The active tourists can be attracted by additional services even in places with less favourable conditions. The providers without favourable natural condition can improve fruitfulness of their business by offering active spending of leisure time.

diversification of agriculture, rural tourism, tourists' segmentation, questionnaire survey

Farm-based tourism is known in Europe for more than 150 years. More recently, in the last 30 years, its development is remarkably more intensive. The EU and the member states support this type of tourism because it is considered an integral element of the revitalisation of countryside and an effective mean of addressing the socio-economic problems of rural areas (OECD, 1994; Sharpley and Vass, 2006).

The tourism business is often a result of diversification from another of the rural industries (farming or equine business) because the farmers are facing the uncertain future of agriculture production and many other problems (Garrod *et al.*, 2006). The goal of the diversification of agriculture is a sustainable development of the rural areas and creation of new working places (Škodová Parnová a Dvořák, 2009). This strategy is applied when the further development in the framework of current activities is not possible (Hron *et al.*, 2007).

The recent development of rural tourism in the Czech Republic (CR) is an opportunity for the development of structurally depressed regions which have usually attractive natural conditions. The tourism intervene the wide space for partnership and diversification in countryside, especially in the services (Seják *et al.*, 2007).

The most common non agricultural activities in the CR (39.1%), are trade, transport, construction and energy production (included in the category "Other" in Tab. I), the second rank is occupied by processing of agricultural products (18.8%), and on the third position is the tourism (13.0%) (Huml *et al.*, 2011).

ČSU (2008) states than there were 684 agriculture enterprises with touristic activities in the CR in 2007 – see Tab. I.

I: *Non agricultural activities for rural development in 2007 (ČSÚ, 2008)*

	Number of rural units	Number of persons
RU without non agricultural activities	33 645	X
RU carry out the only non agricultural activity	4 366	X
RU carry out several non agricultural activities	386	X
Tourism, accommodation and other activities for leisure time	684	1 515
Handicraft	372	842
Processing of farm product	988	2 794
Wood processing	490	1 554
Aquaculture	47	148
Renewable energy production	45	69
Contractual work	668	1 070
Other	1 963	4 846

Source: ČSÚ, 2007

The number of object which is in the official statistic shows remarkable increase:

165 objects in 2003, 263 in 2005 and 684 in 2007(ČSÚ, 2004, 2006, 2008).

We suppose that the similar increasing trend have the non agricultural subjects involved in rural tourism.

The data of the ČSÚ do not cover all subjects of rural tourism because. The Tab. I is only an overview of the agricultural units. The number of non agricultural units providing rural tourism services is not found in any statistics for the CR and that is why we can only estimate the total number of objects and the development of the number.

The development of rural tourism is predicted by many authors with regard to the decline of interests in mass tourism destinations (Sharpley and Vass, 2006; Frochot, 2005).

The financial results often do not measure up with the expectations of the politicians and the farmers (Hjalander, 1996).

The most important for any kind of business is the correspondence between the demand and the supply. Rural tourism is highly dependent on the natural conditions but there may be a number of other challenges (Sharpley and Vass, 2006):

- **Location:** Not all rural areas are equally attractive to tourists. The provision of accommodation facilities does not guarantee the demand; the total product package must be attractive.
- **Investment:** Diversification may require significant investments beyond the means of the business owner or greater then justified by potential returns.
- **Marketing:** Individual farmers normally possess neither the skills nor the sources for effective marketing.
- **Quality:** The quality of products and services must meet the tourists' demand and expectations.

The diversification of rural tourism has been widely explored and this led to differentiation of concepts such as: farm tourism, green tourism, outdoors, ecotourism or nature/wildlife tourism.

While there is a possibility to segment this tourism sector by categories of products, this would be of limited interest since it would not translate how the rural offer is perceived by visitors (Frochot, 2005).

Knowledge of the defining characteristics of the demand help governments, tourism agencies and individual tourism operators to plan marketing campaigns and to make effective investment decisions (Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997).

The Czech official statistic has not yet distinguished rural tourism as a specific form of tourism and, indeed, it does not make a difference between various forms of rural tourism.

The diversification of tourists is another kind of investigation which also does not appear in the CR official data. Even though these information can be crucial in many aspects both for the government, regional authorities and the involved entrepreneurs.

The purpose of this paper is to address the gap in information sources. The investigation is focused on domestic rural tourists. The partial goals of this paper are:

- to determine tourists' profiles which incline towards certain type of rural tourism,
- to describe the specific groups of rural tourists using factors from literature and from own inquiry survey,
- to deduce some general recommendation to the rural tourism operators in CR.

The investigation follows the inquiry survey focused on rural tourism providers (Dömeová and Jindrová, 2011; Jindrová *et al.*, 2010).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The segments of tourist are not uniform. The segments' characteristics are different for different countries and authors. That is why we formulate our own segments. These segments are based on literature sources and information from own inquiry investigation.

We define three groups of tourists according to their motivation:

Type A: passive tourists seeking mainly for relaxation, tranquility, contact with nature, escape from everyday life, contacts with local people and with rural environment.

Type B: traditional tourist visiting natural and cultural monuments and local cultural events, getting to know new places.

Type C: active tourists interested in sport activities and adventures, social contacts, stay in nature, outdoor activities.

The responders of the inquiry survey were Czech citizen, visitors to rural tourism destinations in the CR. The inquiry form contains 25 questions concerned with way of finding the information on services and booking accommodation, means of transport, length of stay, frequency and type of the holiday, the demanded activities and services, and the usual fellow travellers. The second part contains evaluation of services, preferences in accommodation, satisfaction with prices. The following two questions are open type and ask for specification of benefits and negatives of a holiday in the Czech countryside. The last part aimed at collecting general information on visitors', i.e. socio-demographic information.

The question form was distributed on-line via e-mails asking for fulfilling. 320 filled question forms were collected; 7 of them were filled only partly and they were removed from further analysis.

The statistical proceeding of the data from the survey is based on a simple analysis and search for dependencies in contingency tables. The correspondence analysis is applied for more expended contingency tables. It enables classification of objects and transparent visualization. The correspondence analysis represents a graphical method of depiction of hidden internal dependencies between variables. (Řezanková, 2007)

The goal of the analysis is to make the segmentation of tourists according to the motivation typology, to analyze and define indices which are typical for different segments (types A, B, C).

The statistical hypothesis are tested on the importance level $\alpha = 0.05$. The intensity of dependency is measured by Pearson's contingency coefficient (Cp). The statistical calculations have been made using the software SPSS, version 18.

RESULTS

It follows for the inquiry survey, that visitors 47.3% are active tourists, 36.4% are traditional tourists and the lowest group are the passive tourists – 16.3%. In the following text we will focus on the relations between the type of tourists and their demands. Our hypothesis supposes that the demand is different for different type of tourists. Before the analysis we re-codified and merged some variables. The calculation of relations and their intensity is made in a contingency table.

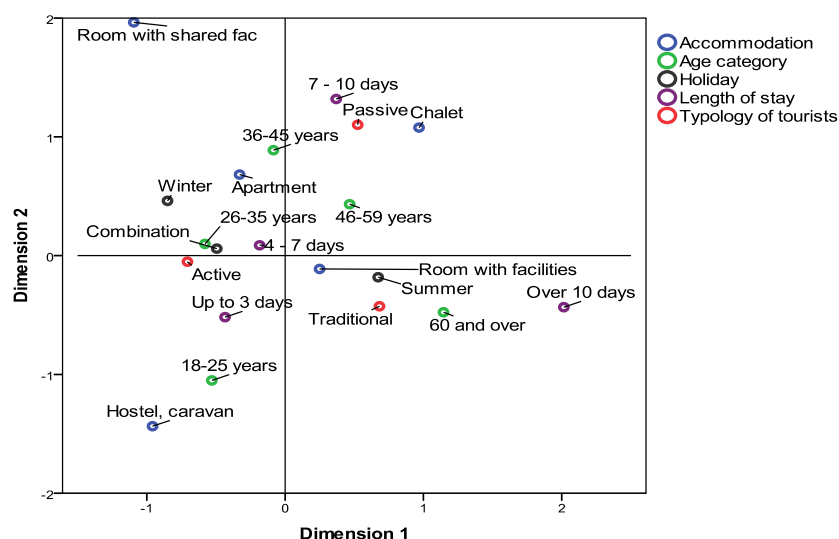
The aggregate table (Tab II.) shows that the most intensive dependency is proved for the type of holiday and the length of stay.

The variable *booking method* has been removed from the following multi dimensional, more detailed

II: Proved relations between the demand and the type of tourists

Variable	p-value	Cp
Type of holiday	$p < 0,001$	0.33
Length of stay	$p < 0,001$	0.33
Accommodation	$p < 0,001$	0.32
Age	$p < 0,001$	0.28
Booking method	$p = 0,034$	0.23

Source: Own questionnaire survey and authors' calculations



1: Correspondence map

Source: Own questionnaire survey and authors' calculations

III: Typical properties of tourists from group A and B

	Passive tourists A	Traditional tourists B	Active tourists C
Type of holiday	Summer	Summer	Combination of summer and winter
Length of stay	Over 10 days	7–10 days	Less than 7 days
Age	60 and over	46–59	Less than 45
Accommodation	Room with facilities	Chalet	Apartment

Source: Own questionnaire survey and authors' calculations

analysis because more than 56% of respondents make they order through the Internet and there is no differentiation between the types of tourists. This finding is founded by the high value of significance ($p = 0.034$) and the low value of the dependency intensity ($C_p = 0.23$).

The correspondence analysis is able to classify the objects and characterize their specifics. It follows from the Tab. II that the first dimension captures about 40% of the total information. The information on variables and the second dimension describes 29% of information. The first two dimensions describe 69% of data dispersion. It is possible to derive the segmentation of the line and column categories of particular variables from the correspondence map (Fig. 1).

The **passive tourists** are predominantly older people seeking for relaxation, privacy, good treatment, and convenience. They stay longer but not care for additional activities, their budget is often limited.

The **traditional tourists** stay about one week, they prefer private accommodation in chalets. The typical values of variables are in the Tab. III.

The last type of tourists C: **active tourists** do not show a special cluster in the correspondence map. According the Fig. 1 these tourists prefer combination of summer and winter holiday, short stays (under 7 days) and their age is less than 45 years.

DISCUSSION

Perales (2002) distinguishes two types of tourists: traditional and modern. The traditional are described like groups showing absolute loyalty to the chosen destination, a low level of expenses and a lack of interest towards the supply of complementary services. The modern tourists, on the other hand, expect to make a much deeper and profitable use of landscaping, environmental, natural and architectural resources. They are usually between 25 and 45 years old, with high socio-cultural level, medium high purchasing power, and urban area living. This segment displays a proactive attitude towards enjoying typical rural activities, including labours, and landscape viewing.

These two segments do not exactly correspond with the segments discovered in our investigation. The traditional tourists are our passive tourists and the modern tourists have both the features of active and traditional in our segmentation.

More segments can be made out by detailed study of motivation factors. Devesa *et al.* (2010) mentions following groups:

1. Passive tourists looking for tranquillity, rest and contact with nature
2. Cultural visitors
3. Proximity, gastronomic and natural visitors
4. Return visitors.

The characteristic of the passive group is the same as in our research. The return visitors are approximately the same as traditional visitors by Perales (2002) and we can add them to the passive group. The cultural visitors are corresponding with our category of traditional tourists and the third group is similar to our active tourists.

Frochot (2005) defines also 4 groups:

The Actives: visitors who have a general interest all types of activities (frequently in sports), usually younger people with medium income, often with families.

The Relaxers: seeking relaxation, take shorter holiday more times, with a slight preference to camping but with low preference to self-catering.

The Gazers: particularly enjoy driving around the countryside, short walks, picnic and nature study.

The Rurals: interested in the rural dimension of the holiday, older visitors and the lower income classes, slightly longer holiday, high visiting rate of historic sites.

The Relaxers are different from our passive tourists; the Gazers and are not typical in the Czech conditions. The Rurals are included in our groups of passive and traditional.

Pina *et al.* (2005) distinguishes the tourists into 4 groups according to the preferred type of accommodation. By our research the type of accommodation is crucially important and can be used for tourist segmentation.

The segmentation is possible to make also according to the emotional aspects of destination choice behaviour.

The tourism motivation revolves around the concepts of "pull" and "push" factors. The latter factors for a vacation are socio-psychological motives, the former, motives aroused by the destination that do not come from tourists themselves. The push motives have been useful for explaining the desire to go on a vacation, while pull motives have usefully explained the choice of destination. The tourist services providers should know the factors as fantasy, feelings,

and entertainment because they determine the behaviour of the customers and their decision making. (Goossen, 2000) The satisfaction with the services is also important and the providers should know it (Bigné and Andreu, 2004).

The knowledge of the customers consists of knowledge of many factors. We based our research more on socio-economic factors and directly expressed demand for services. The study of motivation we take as an inspiration and aim for our further work.

CONCLUSIONS

It follows from the inquiry survey, that the group of domestic tourists to the Czech countryside is not unified. We found three segments of tourists: traditional, passive and active. The demand and priorities are different for each segment. Using the results from our survey and from the statistical analyses, it was possible to describe the main features of each group. These descriptions were based on the preferred type of holiday (summer, winter, both), type of accommodation, length of stay and age of customers.

The providers of touristic services should evaluate the natural, social and cultural environment of their destination first. The groups A and B call for

well preserved nature (with natural and cultural monuments), typical countryside communities, the landscape and villages without disturbing elements. If the provider finds that the conditions and environment are not satisfactory he can hardly change them. But he can focus on the group C that is searching for additional services, sports, adventure, and entertainment. An expansion of additional services (e.g. sport facilities, social events, horse riding, gastronomic specialities, etc.) may attract certain type of tourists to come and spend their vacations even in a place which does not possess exceptionally suitable surroundings for tourism.

Our segments correspond with some of those in literature but in no case they are totally identical. We see the reason in different situation and tradition in other countries and we propose to modify the tourists' segmentation to the certain country or territory.

It is important to learn also about the internal factors as the motivation and satisfaction of the tourists. This knowledge can inspire tourism providers as to find ways of improving their services and thus maximizing satisfaction (both tourists and providers).

SUMMARY

Rural tourism understood as all tourist services provided in the countryside has its segments as eco-tourism, agro-tourism, and others. The tourists preferring holiday in the countryside can be segmented as well. The knowledge of tourists' groups is helpful for the tourist operators. According to the local conditions and the prevailing type of tourists they can adjust their services and marketing tools, and plan possible changes in their business. There is no specific information on rural tourism in the official statistics of the CR.

In this study we searched for the characteristic of the domestic rural tourist in the CR and their possible segmentation. Our investigation was based on an inquiry investigation and statistical analysis of obtained data. We defined three segments of tourists:

Type A: passive tourists seeking mainly for relaxation, tranquility, contact with nature, escape from everyday life, contacts with local people and with rural environment.

Type B: traditional tourist visiting natural and cultural monuments, and local cultural events, getting to know new places.

Type C: active tourists interested in sport activities and an adventure, social contacts, stays in nature, outdoor activities.

We classified all responders into these groups. The biggest group was the "active" 47.3%. The most important features for classification were: type of holiday (summer, winter, both), length of stay, age, type of accommodation.

The providers of the rural tourism services can attract the attention of the groups A and B only if their environment is suitable. If the external conditions are not good enough it is possible to address the "active" tourists by offering some additional services.

It is important for the providers to know which group of tourist is the most likely to visit their place and what are the main characteristics of the group.

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