RURAL TOURISM SERVICES UTILIZATION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC*

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Demand for touristic services with respect to different groups of tourists is crucial for planning the investments, marketing, and support from the authorities. There is a significant lack of exact data on rural tourism in the Czech Republic. The present study, based on a questionnaire survey, aims to provide a deeper insight into the tourists' profiles. The results cover the main tourists' characteristics and demonstrate the relation between socio-demographic characteristics and the services requested. The survey identifies three groups of tourists: independent tourists favouring shorter stays more times per year, traditional tourists preferring privacy and longer stays, and flexible active tourists.

rural tourism; segmentation of tourists; statistical analysis; Czech Republic; socio-demographic indicators

INTRODUCTION

Most often we designate the rural tourism as "tourism that takes place in the countryside" (L a n e, 1994). The segmentation of the rural tourism is high as regards both the services and activities, and the demand of the clients. The segments of the supply side (the offer) are quite often differentiated (e.g. P h i l l i p et al., 2010). The economic benefits of tourism include the diversification of the local industry base, higher employment rate, higher incomes, enlargement of the tax base, and business revenue growth (H j a l a n g e r, 1996). Moreover, the rural tourism is reflected as a sustainable form of tourism which allows native population to live in natural landscapes and host educated and responsible tourists (F o n s et al., 2011).

The tourism activities on farms have been recognized throughout Europe for more than 100 years (S h a r p l e y, V a s s, 2006). Up to a quarter of farms in Austria have been receiving tourists for nearly 100 years (H u m m e l b r u n n e r, M i g l b a u e r, 1994) and according to O p p e r m a n n (1996) the tradition of rural tourism in Germany goes back as far as 150 years. The tourism activity in rural areas has remarkably increased in all developed countries since the 70s (P e r a l e s, 2002) as one of the strategy of the diversification in agriculture (H r o n et al., 2007). In 1994, the European Commission initiated a programme which includes measures aimed at tourism development in rural districts. But the financial returns meet neither the politicians' nor the farmers' expectations (O E C D, 1994; H j a l a n g e r, 1996). For example,

according to S h a r p l e y, V a s s (2006), a significant number of farmers in south-west England are abandoning their tourism businesses. Negatively, there has been a tendency for businesses develop with little or no strategy addressing the issue of sustainability, either from environmental or marketing perspective (M i t c h e l l, H a l l, 2004).

It is clear that the success does not come without intensive and well-targeted activity of the providers. It is fundamental to make the management decision with respect to the needs of the consumer (K e i r l e, 2002). It is possible to segment the rural tourism sector by categories (e.g. farm tourism, green tourism, ecotourism) but it has no reason since it would not translate how the rural offer is perceived by the visitors (F r o c h o t, 2005). Understanding the variables that moderate and determine tourism satisfaction is extremely important in the existing highly competitive content (D e v e s a et al., 2010). Satisfaction is related to the "non-confirmatory experience", defined by the difference between the initial expectations and the actual results (M i l l á n, E s t e b a n, 2004). The investigation of the demand as well as the satisfaction of visitors is of crucial importance.

Due to the political regime the situation in the Czech Republic (CR) was quite different in the last half of the 20th century. The traditions which were similar to Germany or Austria were interrupted. Since 1990 the tourism in the countryside has been recovering again but the important relationships were previously cut for ever. Even though the tourist business in the Czech

countryside is rapidly growing, it has not reached the quality and quantity level of the neighbouring countries (J o h n s o n, 1995; H a l l, 1998; W i l l i a m s , B a l á ž, 2002; Š i m k o v á, 2007; Š k o d o v á P a r m o v á, D v o ř á k, 2009; K r e j č í, 2011). In the CR, there is generally lack of reliable exact data on the rural tourism. The Czech Statistical Office does not distinguish between various types of tourism and even the data on the number of providers are not available (S o u č k o v á, 2008). The rural tourism is only mentioned among the non-agriculture activities of rural units. The number of the rural units with leisure time activities was 684 in 2007 (C z e c h S t a t i s t i c a l O f f i c e, 2008; H u m l et al., 2011). Not all rural tourism businesses are a part of agriculture enterprise; therefore they are not covered by this statistics. Another data on rural tourism are hidden in the official statistics of tourism (C z e c h S t a t i s t i c a l O f f i c e, 2010). There are data on the whole tourist business in the CR in total, e.g. capacity of collective accommodation establishments by category, number of overnight stays in collective accommodation establishments, etc. But it is not possible to distinguish the share of rural tourism in these overviews. In fact, neither the state officers nor other institutions or entrepreneurs have reliable data on the number of economical subjects and people involved in rural tourism, the services offered, their location, quality, profitability, etc. The studies published on this topic are often general and dated, based on empirical data.

The purpose of this paper is to fill in the gap in the exact information on rural tourism in the CR. The study is a continuation of the authors' research in rural tourism activities (J i n d r o v á et al., 2010; D ö m e o v á, J i n d r o v á, 2011). Presenting the survey outcomes of domestic rural tourists' demand and satisfaction, it explores the following: the most important activities of tourists and related demand for services, satisfaction of tourists with accommodation and food, dependencies between the socio-demographic characteristics of the visitors and the demand for touristic services, possible segmentation of tourist groups. The results should be of interest to any institution (state, regional, local) or practitioner involved in rural tourism, agriculture or development of countryside.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The source of primary data and information is an inquiry survey. The inquiry form contains 25 questions concerned with: seeking and ordering accommodation, preferred transport, length of stay, frequency and type of holiday, carried activities, and demanded services. The following part deals with the evaluation of prices and services, preferences in the accommodation, and information on accompanying persons. The socio-demographic questions are embodied as well.

The last two questions present an open type inquiring about benefits and shortcomings of the holiday in the Czech countryside.

The pilot investigation based on personal contacts with the providers of the accommodation was made in 2011. Data from the pilot investigation were analyzed (56 filed-in forms, 2 were eliminated due to incompleteness) and consequently the inquiry form was modified. The field investigation started in the same year. The inquiry form was distributed via emails with appeal for filling. The on-line version was placed on www. rozventur.cz. The authors of this study also visited two meetings of the entrepreneurs in rural tourism services and distributed the questionnaire personally. There were altogether 320 filled-in questionnaires, 7 were eliminated for incompleteness, and 313 were used for further analysis.

The statistical analysis is based on a simple analysis of qualitative signs in frequency distribution tables, and qualitative signs in contingency tables. The chi-square test is used in order to prove the hypothesis on the signs independency. The Fisher's exact test is applied in the case when the requirements of the basic test on estimated frequencies are not met. The strength of dependency is measured by the Pearson's contingency coefficient (Cp) (Ř e z a n k o v á, 2007).

The correspondence analysis is used in large-scale tables for the identification and visualization of similar categories. This method is based on hidden internal dependencies for both nominal and ordinal variables. The goal is to reduce the multiple dimensional space of line and column profiles into lower dimensional space (often plane). The presumptions are the completeness of the data matrix and comparability of the objects. The solution is based on the matrix of standardized residues which are a product of some normalization method. The analysis of line profiles or the analysis of the column profiles can be used. The combination of these two procedures enables a mutual comparison of line and column category. Thus, this correspondence analysis is symmetric and enables to create a symmetric map (scatter chart) of lines and columns profiles (M e l o u n et al., 2005) The significance level for statistical tests is $\alpha = 0.05$. The statistical computations are made in SPSS software (Version 18, 2009).

RESULTS

The results are based on information stemming from 313 questionnaires which were correctly and fully in filled-in.

Socio-demographic structure of the respondents

Men constituted 42.5% and women 57.5% of the survey respondents. The most frequent age was 26–35 (34.2%) while other age categories were represented

evenly. The highest education was secondary school (53.0%), university (42.5%), and secondary apprentice school (4.2%), and elementary school (0.3%); 39.3% of the respondents are single, and 47.1% married, 12.3% divorced, and 1.3% widows/widowers. According to the economic activity, majority of the respondents were full time employees (67.4%), 10.2% made the retired, and 7.3% the students. Other categories are unimportant in proportion.

Demand for tourist services

The first question deals with the source of information on accommodation. The responders could choose more than one answer. The most frequent answer was the Internet (81.8%), which was followed by personal recommendation (55.6%); and only 16.0% of the visits were supported by a travel agency. Other sources are insignificant. Ordering and reservations of the stays were most frequently done using the Internet (56.5%), followed by telephone (32.1%), personal contact (8.4%), and post (2.6%).

The prevailing means of transport is a car (80.0%); bus (6.8%) and train (6.1%) are less frequent. More than a half of the respondents (57.9%) enjoy their holiday in the CR once a year, 13.9% less than once, and 28.1% more than once a year. The summer holiday (46.5% of the cases) dominated over the winter holiday (just 12.8%). The combination of both seasons is quite frequent – in 40.7%. The average duration of a stay is six days. The most frequent goal of the holiday is active relaxation (in 45.4%). The most frequent activities are hiking (66.1%), skiing (31.6%), biking (31.6%), water sports (20.4%), space procedures (14.0%), also ball games, tennis, and in-lines. The activity connected with agriculture was mentioned only in 4.5%. 36.4% of the tourists visit cultural and natural monuments, and only 16.3% of them are attracted by the possibility of passive recreation and calmness. The previous activities are often combined with meeting friends and then the holiday is a kind of a social event. Apart from accommodation, other required services were hiking and biking paths (56.9), swimming-pools (50.5%), a wide choice of catering facilities (39.0%), terrains for cross-country and down-hill skiing (18.2%), information centres (18.2%), other attractions and actions (18.2%), sporting goods rentals (9.3%). Children and sport playgrounds were important for 10.9% of the respondents; other mentioned cultural facilities as golf courses and wellness services.

Satisfaction assessment

Generally we can say that the majority of tourists are satisfied. The accommodation was satisfactory for 75.0% of the respondents (13.1% of them were very satisfied); 7.4% were rather unsatisfied, and only 0.3% were very unsatisfied (4.2% could not evaluate the accommodation). A little worse was the assessment of food; 67.8% of the respondents were satisfied (4.9% very satisfied), 17.9% were rather unsatisfied, and 2.0% very unsatisfied. For other services the percentage of satisfaction was little lower (63.5%); rather unsatisfied were 20.3%. The answers "I cannot judge" were more frequent because not all places provide a complete offer of other services. The most favourite accommodation is a room with own sanitary facilities (61.0%), the apartment is the best choice for 18.2%, the cabin was chosen in 5.8%, the place for tent or caravan in 5.8%, and 5.1% of the respondents do not care for the type of accommodation. The price for the accommodation is acceptable for 80.0% of visitors, too high for 11.0% of them, and the rest thinks that the prices are low or they refrained from the judgement. Half-board was the best for 39.1%, only breakfast for 24.0%, 6.7% required full board; no catering was preferred by 14.4%, and 15.7% of the respondents do not care for the form of catering. Many respondents plan to revisit the same place (80.8%), 5.8% clearly do not want to return, and 13.4% could not answer. The most frequent are holidays with partner (47.4%), with family (31.3%), and with friends (20.1%). Other possibilities, e.g. a member of an organized trip, are insignificant.

Generally, the most important benefits of the holiday in the Czech countryside were easy and cheap transport, low prices, and no language barriers, cultural and natural spots. The feeling of "being at home" was also considerable as people think that they should know their own country and that the Czech country is beautiful. The shortcomings were connected with a lower quality of services and high price which is not relevant to the level and quality of services. Other stated negative factors (as unsteady weather, polluted air, and no seaside) are not under control of the tourist services operators.

Two dimensional dependency analyses

In the following analysis we search for dependencies between the specific demands for tourist services and the socio-demographic characteristics of a tourist. Our hypothesis is that the main aspects of the holiday in the Czech countryside differ for persons depending on gender, age, education, and family status. We tested the relation with some logic presumption of dependency. Table 1 contains the results of the investigation of the relationship between the socio- demographic signs and the way of getting information on accommodation. We tested the traits of people who get the information via the Internet. The strongest dependency is the age which follows from the values of the Pearson's contingency coefficient (Cp). The Internet is used in 92% by the people aging 18–45. The medium dependency (Cp = 0.331) is found for the family status and education. This way of finding information is more frequent

Table 1. Searching the information on accommodation via the Internet

Sign	The dependency exists	p-value	Cp
Gender	yes	p < 0.001	0.194
Age	**yes**	**p < 0.001**	**0.407**
Education	yes	p < 0.001	0.222
Family status	yes	p < 0.001	0.331
With/without children	yes	p < 0.001	0.193
Economic status	yes	p < 0.001	0.250

Table 2. The way of ordering the accommodation

Sign	The dependency exists	p-value	Cp
Gender	no	p = 0.276	
Age	**yes**	**p = 0.002**	**0.272**
Education	**yes**	**p < 0.001**	**0.260**
Family status	no	p = 0.174	
With/without children	no	p = 0.150	
Economic status	no	p = 0.259	

Table 3. The length of stay

Sign	The dependency exists	p-value	Cp
Gender	no	p = 0.730	
Age	**yes**	**p < 0.001**	**0.341**
Education	**yes**	**p = 0.015**	**0.219**
Family status	**yes**	**p < 0.001**	**0.315**
With/without children	no	p = 0.410	
Economic status	no	p = 0.283	

Table 4. Contingency table: relation between the age of responders and the length of stay

Age	Stay length - intervals				
	3 days and less	4-7 days	7-10days	10days and more	Total
18-25	31.9%	59.6%	4.3%	4.3%	100.0%
26-35	26.2%	63.6%	7.5%	2.8%	100.0%
36-45	23.9%	60.9%	13.0%	2.2%	100.0%
46-59	24.6%	50.9%	14.0%	10.5%	100.0%
60 and more	21.4%	41.1%	8.9%	28.6%	100.0%
Total	25.6%	56.2%	9.3%	8.9%	100.0%

Table 5. Number of holidays per year

Sign	The dependency exists	p-value	Cp
Gender	yes	p = 0.021	0.158
Age	no	p = 0.656	
Education	no	p = 0.282	
Family status	no	p = 0.874	
With/without children	no	p = 0.137	
Economic status	no	p = 0.793	

Table 6. The term of holiday

Sign	The dependency exists	p-value	Cp
Gender	no	p = 0.538	
Age	yes	p < 0.001	0.301
Education	no	p = 0.051	
Family status	no	p = 0.137	
With/without children	no	p = 0.121	
Economic status	yes	p = 0.004	0.183

Table 7. The catering preferences

Sign	The dependency exists	p-value	Cp
Gender	yes	p < 0.001	0.229
Age	yes	p < 0.001	0.349
Education	yes	p < 0.001	0.326
Family status	yes	p = 0.002	0.274
With/without children	no	p = 0.146	
Economic status	no	p = 0.247	

Table 8. Accommodation price

Sign	The dependency exists	p-value	Cp
Gender	no	p = 0.079	
Age	yes	p = 0.371	
Education	yes	p < 0.001	0.303
Family status	yes	p = 0.024	0.213
With/without children	no	p = 0.270	
Economic status	yes	p = 0.048	0.157

for people with secondary school and university, singles (94%), and people without children. These results are in line with computer literacy of population. As to the gender differences, there are by about 15% more women but the dependency is weak. The way of booking the stay was reduced into several categories: phone, mail, personal visit, Internet, and other. There is only weaker dependency on the age and education (Table 2).

Table 3 shows the dependency proven for age, education, and family status. Short stays are preferred by young people (18–25 years). The most preferred visits for all age categories are from 4 to 7 days. The number of persons going for short trips is getting lower with the higher age. The longest stays (10 days and more) are popular with people over 60 (28.6%). This dependency is medium (Cp = 0.341). The family status makes differences especially in the shortest and the longest stays. The singles go for a shorter holiday more often; the families have a lower number of the longest stays (Table 3).

Persons with an apprentice school stayed most often for 4–7 days, but 28.4% of them prefer longer holiday. Respondents with a secondary school education prefer the stays of ten days and more only in 4.8%. Generally, the stays for 4–7 days are the most popular (Table 4). The frequency of holidays per year shows the only dependency – on gender (Cp = 0.158). The men go for a holiday several times per year in 34.6% and less than once a year in 8.7% (Table 5). The term of holiday (summer, winter, both) is associated with age (medium dependency Cp = 0.301) and economic activity (weak dependency Cp = 0.183) – see Table 6. The summer holiday is more attractive for older age categories: 46–59 (55.4%); 60 and more – 71.4%. The

combination of both is referred for younger people aging 18–25 (38.3%) and 26–35 (31.8%). The winter holiday or more holidays per year is more attractive for economically active people, other prefer the summer holiday.

The demands for catering are heterogeneous – see Table 7. Young people favour accommodation with breakfast or without any food services. With higher age the preferences of half-board rise. The respondents of 60 and above always call for some form of catering. The people with secondary or university education search for accommodation with breakfast (22.7%) or with half-board (37.1%). The people with lower education prefer full board or they do not care for the type of catering (35.7%). Half-board is also preferred by married people and by women. The assessment of price is dependent only on education, family status, and economic status (Table 8). People with secondary and university education find the price appropriate or even low; people with lower education rate the price more often as high. The economically active esteem the price as low; others as high or they are unable to judge.

Correspondence analysis

Multiple dimensional analyses of the monitored signs and types of accommodation have been made using the correspondence analysis. The aggregated correspondence analysis table shows that the first dimension covers 54% of the total information and the second dimension explains 27% of the information. These first two dimensions are able to interpret 81% of the data dispersion. From this analysis it follows that the column and line categories split into three

Fig. 1. Correspondence map of line and column profiles
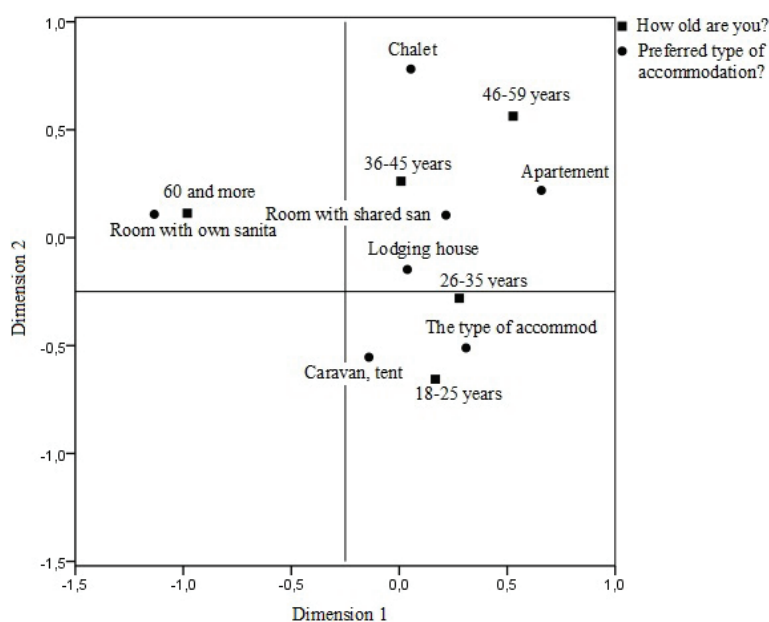
groups. A symmetric model depicts the correspondence map with graphical caption of the column and line categories (Fig. 1). The symmetrical model is more suitable because the column and line points are located equally and there are no congest places as may be the case in the asymmetrical model. The correspondence map shows the difference of the groups Age 60 and more and Accommodation in a room with own sanitary facility. Another remarkable group is Age 18-25 and Accommodation in a tent or caravan, followed by the group Type of accommodation is not important. The last category located in the upper right corner of the cluster is not so transparent. The differentiation into the above mentioned three groups seems to be logical. Young people do not care so much for the type of accommodation and they often chose the cheaper variant. The older age category prefers rooms with attached own sanitary facility which secures more privacy and comfort for them. The middle age generation is not unanimous. Their preferences depend more on the particular situation and persons travelling together.

DISCUSSION

The survey among the Czech tourists visiting the Czech countryside showed that the demand for tourist services is not homogenous. As the tourism in rural areas is an extremely diverse sector, also the tourists' needs and expectations are of a wide range (F r o c h o t, 2005). Some dependencies between the demands and the socio-demographic characteristics of the tourists have been found. Younger and more educated people prefer getting information and making reservation via Internet. Frequently they enjoy shorter holidays several times a year. Older people usually spend longer time at one place. This subdivision corresponds with the categories of "traditional" and "modern" tourists used by P e r a l e s (2002). According to this source, the traditional tourists are groups or families returning to the same destination, with a low level of expenses and a lack of interest towards the complementary services. The modern tourists, on the other hand, expect deeper and more profitable use of the landscaping, environmental, natural, and architectural resources. It has also become trendy to split the holidays over the year what was typical for economically active younger people in our research. Other authors divide the tourists into more than two segments. D a v e s a et al. (2010) distinguish four categories of tourists according to various type of motivation for holidays: tourists looking for tranquillity, rest, and contact with nature; cultural tourists; proximity, gastronomic and nature visitors; returning tourists. Four categories are used by F r o c h o t (2005) as well. In the total sample the representation was as follows: Actives 39%, Relaxers 13%, Gazers 35%, and Rurals 13%. We did not use the above-mentioned distribution,

however 80.8% of tourists from our sample returns to the same place, 45.4% prefer various activities, and only 4.7% are interested in agriculture. The rural tourism in the Czech Republic is highly concerned with independent tourists because only 16% use the services of travel agencies. The independent tourists are searching for unusual routes, desire to explore, seeking adventure, learning about new places (T s a u r et al., 2010). In our sample, the reasons for no need of travel agency services are among others the absence of the language barrier and a relatively short distance to holiday destinations.

Tourist profiles can be determined using their inclination towards certain choice of accommodation. According to P i n a , D e l f a (2006), there are generally three types of accommodation: large establishments possessing sport facilities and swimming pool which are especially attractive for those travelling with friends and seeking for sport activities. Medium-size capacities located at agricultural areas, open country or mountains are preferred by tourists relying on tourist guidebooks, rather with a lower income. Persons over 30 interested in cultural activities search for places with typical architecture located in the proximity of towns. In our survey, the differentiation by preferred types of accommodation made the most significant clustering of the respondents. We found three groups: young and independent tourists without families staying in tents and caravans, older tourists preferring explicitly rooms with own sanitary facilities, and the last group was represented by tourists who chose accommodation according to the type of stay and their fellow travellers.

The general satisfaction with the holiday was quite good. The most beneficiary were low prices, beautiful destinations, short distance from home, and natural and cultural monuments. Low quality of services and improper treatment are the negatives stated by the respondents. Even though there are some "general satisfiers" as treatment received, quality of gastronomy, opening hours, availability of services and tourist information, satisfaction highly depends on the motivation for the holidays (D e v e s a et al., 2010). The segmentation of tourists based on psychographic criteria may be more appropriate than that based on socio-economic or activity-choice data (F r o c h o t, 2005). Satisfaction is higher when the services obtained in reality meet the reason (i.e. motivation) and the ideas of the holidays. That is why the investigation of the tourists' demand should include the research of their motivation factors. The level of satisfaction is crucially important for the successful development and competitiveness of the tourist services provider. In the following research we are going to introduce the motivation factors. In particular, we are working on a new survey where the questions will include both psychographic and socio-demographic indicators and the motivation and satisfaction will be measured in

scales, so that the factor analysis (and/or other analyses) will be possible.

CONCLUSION

The more detailed analyses show that the tourists in the Czech countryside search most often for an active spending of their free time; the active holidays with hiking, skiing, and biking are the most popular. The tourists prefer places with swimming pools, play grounds, skiing terrains, gastronomic quality, and hiking and cycling paths with tourist marks. Other sport and cultural facilities are also notable but with lower percentage of interested persons. The average length of stay is one week; the number of tourists with more than one holiday per year is remarkable. The most frequent fellow travellers are partners, family, and friends. The tourists are independent, i.e. they do not need the support of any travel agency. Most of the tourists are quite satisfied with accommodation, food, and other services, and in more than 80% of cases they are ready to return. Some dependencies exist between the gender, age, education, economic activity, and family status. The Internet for finding information and making reservations is used by younger people, with higher education and without family (a little more frequently by women). The price is more acceptable for economically active people. Other discovered relationships led to the construction of three clusters of tourists.

The group of investigated rural tourists is not unique. Based on the accommodation preferred and the age three groups of tourists can be distinguished (see Fig. 1). The young and active tourists are satisfied with shorter stays in a modest places (tent, caravan), older traditional tourists coming for longer time accept prevailingly rooms with own sanitary facility, and flexible tourists of middle age are ready to get along various types of accommodation and services. The tourist profiles may be used for planning the investments and marketing tools. The services and facilities offered by the local entrepreneurs, local, regional or state authorities, must meet the concrete demand. Even though other characteristics of the tourists can be used (e.g. motivation), the socio-demographic data are the most easily obtainable, processed, and distributed. The support from the EU, the Czech state, and the regions should be properly allocated with respect to the demand of tourists and the capability of local companies to make the best of it. The side of supply must be in equilibrium with the side of demand. It is not reasonable to provide services for all groups of tourists in one place. The local small providers of tourist services should better target one group of tourists, try to get known it as well as possible, and adjust the services and marketing channels to this group. The target group of tourists depends to a high extent on the environment and natural conditions of the facility and this is the reason that the choice of the target group is often out of the control of the provider.

Further research is needed in this area. In particular, we are going to introduce the motivation factors. We are working on a new survey where the questions will include both psychographic and socio-demographic traits and the motivation and satisfaction will be measured in scales, so that the factor analysis and/or other analyses could be used. We hope that the following research will raise the urgent need for exact data on rural tourism and tourists in the Czech Republic and the official statistics will not ignore this branch neither on the state nor the regional levels.

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