

ANALYZING POTENTIALS OF RURAL TOURISM IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC*

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Rural tourism plays an important role in regional and rural development in the Czech Republic. This article aims at identifying potentials of rural tourism in the Czech Republic; especially it focuses on LAU I regions. There can be recognized potentials of tourist locations on three levels, primary potentials represented by natural conditions and natural heritage, secondary potential covered by tourist infrastructure, and tertiary potential represented by institutional sector. This paper focuses mainly on primary and secondary potentials. The analysis is based on clustering, especially k-means clustering, of Czech regions in the respect of potentials and attractiveness for rural tourism. Results from this paper can be used by local authorities in their strategic development of rural areas and tourism.

rural regions; tourism; cluster analysis; primary potentials; secondary potentials

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has long been considered as an affective catalyst of rural development. Rural tourism takes many different forms and is pursued for different reasons, such as regeneration following agro-industrial collapse or diversification of remote marginal areas. In the Czech Republic the attention given to rural areas increased towards the end of the 1990s. The importance of developing rural areas has intensified with the accession processes of the Czech Republic to the European Union. Although tourism development made initially only a small part of supported areas, with cycle tracks being the main type of investment, it has initiated putting greater emphasis on rural development and its support. Moreover, tourism belongs to one of very important industries in the Czech Republic. According to the Czech Statistical Office, in 2007 the incomes from tourism made 6,618,1 mil. USD, the expenses made 3,643 mil. USD that represents positive balance. In the same year there were recognized over 12 mil. of accommodated tourists, from which the half is represented by residents. The majority of foreigners came from Germany (over 1,5 mil. tourists). Tourists stay in the Czech Republic for 3.2 nights on average. The highest number of overnight per person made Russian tourists (5.6 overnight).

Tourism

Tourism is the world's fastest growing industry and the World Tourist Organization expects that the tourism will be the world's largest industry by 2020. According to the World Tourist Organization's statistics (2006), in the year 2005 international tourism sustained the sharp upturn that

began in 2004 in spite of the various tragic events it had to contend. Globally, international tourists spent 2 billion USD every day on tourism and hospitality related activities. This is expected to increase up to 5 billion USD per day by 2020. (World Tourism Organisation, 2008a)

Tourism has an important role to play in the economic development of free market economies. Tourism is a generator of foreign exchange earnings and makes a direct contribution to the balance of payment. Tourism can create and sustain jobs in the economy through direct and indirect employment resulting from visitors expenditure in the economy, the multiplier effect in tourism is more significant than in other industries. (World Tourism Organisation, 2008b)

Rurality

The origins of rural tourism (according to the World Tourism Organisation, 2008b) can be traced to the rapid industrialization and urbanization of Western societies in the 19th century. Improvements in transport, increased wealth and free time have enabled visits by urban dwellers to the countryside. Seen in general terms, the era is very favorable for rural tourism as a relatively very modern form of tourism. At the beginning of the 80's, tourism was explained in the terms of "escape theory" (Tcholeev, Vodenská, 2008). Also Šimková (2008) interpreted tourism as a major movement of escape from daily life, which was felt to be an unfriendly environment. In the last decades, rural tourism has spread to all countries. Bina (2008) explained this as a part of an increasing farm diversification to solve the crisis of the agricultural sector.

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The main attractive feature of rural tourism and its basic identification characteristic lies in its “rurality” (A g o s t i n i, 2008). The definition of rural areas is a much discussed issue. The roots of this discussion can be found as back as in the 19th century when first mentioned in 1929 Sokorin and Zimmerman in their “Principals of Rural Sociology” (cit. T c h o l e e v, V o d e n s k a, 2008). The notion of rural is difficult to define. Defining rural and rurality, is not only important for people in the cities and the country but also for planner and policy makers. According to Š i m k o v á (2008), there are no universally accepted technical terms for what constitutes rural and urban in international terms. There exist several ways to identify rurality. H á j e k (2005) concludes that there exist three aspects that predominate in the broad debate on the concept of rurality:

- Population density and the size of settlement
- Utilization of the land primary for agriculture and forestry
- Traditional structure of society and aspects of identity.

After the accession to the European Union, for defining rurality there are used indicators that are commonly used by the OECD and Eurostat in the Czech Republic.

- Population density.km⁻², which for rural villages was decreased from max. 150 inhabitant.km⁻² (OECD) to the level used by Eurostat, which is 100.km⁻²
- Number of inhabitants living in villages with population of less than 100 people.km⁻² (see Š i m k o v á, 2008).

According to Frankenberg rurality (cit. H á j e k, 2005), or experiencing of rural areas as a motivation for rural tourism, consists in the following characteristics:

- Rural areas are characterized by low population densities and small settlements that are quite far apart
- These are areas where less than 10–20% of the area is built-up
- These areas, characterized by features such as little division of labor cohesion of society, non-cosmopolitan society, simple economy or one person fulfills several social roles.

Rural tourism

According to S t ř í b r n á (cit. Š i m k o v á, 2008), rural tourism relates to low population, open space and locations with less than 10 000 inhabitants. P o u r o v á (cit. Š i m k o v á, 2008) defines rural tourism as the tourism evolving both outside recreation and tourism centers, outside urban areas.

Rural tourism is engaged by tourists seeking rural peace: it is away from the mainstream, away from areas of intensive tourism activity. It is engaged by visitors who wish to interact with the rural environment and the host community, in a meaningful and authentic way (according to the World Tourism Organisation, 2008a).

H á j e k (2005) characterized rural tourism by the following features connected with the concept of rurality:

- It is located in a rural environment.
- It is functionally rural, built on special features of the rural world (open space, contact with nature).
- It is rural in its scale (small settlements).
- It is traditional in its character.
- It is sustainable in the sense that its development should preserve the special rural character of the given area and should not destroy, but should rather stabilize local development. Rural tourism must be seen as a potential instrument for protection of nature and the landscape together with the development of human needs.
- It is necessarily composed of a great many products that enable assimilation of the overall image of the rural environment, economy and history.

H á j e k (2005) also declared that the development of rural tourism offers potential solutions to many of the problems that are rural areas facing to, such as economic growth, diversification and stabilization of employment, socio-cultural development, maintenance of public services, revitalization of local crafts, customs and culture, protection and improvement of both natural and built environment and infrastructure.

Rural tourism becomes very popular especially in the economically developed countries. It is its economically and socially positive impact, which allows farmers to gain additional financial sources and create new job positions for local people. In fact, it is a very positive and ecological form of tourism. Š i m k o v á (2008) noted that decentralization of accommodation allows visitors to spread all over the region and provides good opportunities for individual activities. Very often such activities are specialized, followed by other cultural additional programmes. This allows improvement of the quality and attractiveness of such service, or stabilization of the targeted group. Such additional programmes include horse riding, cycling-tourism, hunting or fishing. All these just fill the gaps in local services which would not be otherwise provided. H a l l (2005) concluded that rural tourism can be taken to mean farm tourism or agri-tourism, moreover it can include also campsites, lodges, safari drivers, adventure sports, walking trails, heritage sites, musical events. Rural tourism includes any tourist activity taking place in rural area.

Potentials of tourism

The term “tourism potential” is widely used in the tourism literature but attempts for its scientific definition are scarce. T c h o l e e v and V o d e n s k a (2008) defined tourism potential in generally as the ability of an area to form a complete tourism product and develop an economically vital tourism. It is not necessary for this ability to be displayed or realized at the present moment but it must exist, according to the knowledge of contemporaneous tourism.

Mariot (1971) defines potential of countryside as a term for ability of countryside for complex evaluation of conditions for tourism. Bína (2002) takes potential as a result of evaluation of wide complex of location factors and presumption for further development.

Theoretical approaches to evaluation tourist potentials

Tourist potential has been measured in several ways in the past. Various authors such as Mariot (1969), Bína (2002), Novotná (2003) or Kopšo et al. (1992) deal with the dilemma of tourist potentials. Their approaches are very similar in some point, nevertheless in other points their concepts vary.

Mariot (1969) focuses especially on evaluation of qualitative potentials, which determine the feasibility of countryside for tourism. On the base of empirical observation can be then point out the main indicators that determine the potentials of countryside. Mariot (1969) stated as the indicators with main significances following: topography, hydrology, fauna, flora, culture and historical background, infrastructure. On the base of the methodology proposed by Mariot, which consists of three main phases, the evaluation of potential resulted in the cartographer, which indicates the regions according to their functional condition. The Mariot's can be indicated as structural and functional. As the initiator of the functional approached is considered by many authors e.g. H. Poser, who defined three core groups of indicators that influence tourism: basic (natural and demographical), supporting (such as increasing number of inhabitants in the considered region, increasing infrastructure, promotion), obstructing (political conflicts, financial crisis, climate problems). From this presumption authors concluded that the conditions are connected with the location or there are realized out of the location. From this point of view the condition can be divided into three core groups: location, selective and conditions of realization. Among condition of location belong natural and cultural and historical conditions. Among selective one can rank those that come out from the initiative of inhabitants. The conditions of realization are called those that enable the existence of tourism, such as infrastructure of tourism

Kopšo et al. (1992) points out two approaches for evaluation of tourist potential. One of them can be indicated as genetic. The other approach can be indicated as functional. The genetic approach respects the origin of stated conditions. They agree that there is a connection between quality of surrounding and the development of tourism. From this point of view there can be distinguished natural conditions, among them climate, hydrology, then cultural and historical conditions such as architecture, museums, and social conditions, that all those human made (such as inhabitants, municipalities). The authors argue about the priorities of conditions, however in general it could be said that all those conditions are connected and influence each other.

Bína (2002) defines two main types of conditions. One of them is location factor (natural and cultural attrac-

tivities). The others are realization conditions (transport, and tourist infrastructure). The conditions evaluated by scale methods, each indicator is measured by proper weight, which is derived by expert judgment.

According to Tcholeev and Vodenská (2008), the place having tourism potential must:

- Have tourism resources allowing the attraction of considerable amount of tourist flows, securing a short term or medium term economically effective development of tourism.
- Be situated relatively close to important centers of forming and distributing tourism demand.

Tourism potentials can be conventionally viewed as primary, secondary or tertiary:

- **Primary potentials** present all natural and social attractions in the region. Among natural attractions are climate, hydrology, morphology, various kinds of plant and animal species, environment. Among social attractions are architecture, historical buildings, museums, cultural events, sport events, local cuisine, local traditions, habits, and folklore.
- **Secondary potentials** present factors, which launch incomes and employment. These factors also help to diversify rural landscape and make the location more attractive both for tourist and for residents. Among these factors are accessibility of the location, possibilities of accommodation, boarding. Driving up secondary potentials is dependent on human abilities, concretely on management of destination and its ability of strategic and local planning.
- **Tertiary potentials** represent the ability of local authorities of organization, development and stabilization of the location. It depends on cooperation of authorities on local, national and international level (see Bína, 2008).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The aim of the paper is to identify potentials of rural tourism in the Czech Republic. The paper focuses especially on primary and secondary potentials in the LAU I region. The tertiary potentials are not the object of mentioned analysis, because they are comprehended as the quality using of primary and secondary potentials. These potentials, which are especially created by managers in local organizations, can be easily changed. The aim of this analysis is to declare the long period potential of the LAU I region for rural tourism.

The variables in primary and also in secondary group of potentials were declared by sociologic research based on questionnaire. Questions in mentioned questionnaire were composed as closed system of points in scale from 0 to 10. The informants were asked to evaluate importance of proposed potentials of rural tourism. 10 points was declared as the maximum of points profit for each variable. Mentioned investigation was executed in the whole area of the Czech Republic. The problem of guarantee of sam-

Table 1. Three groups of regions clustered on the base of primary potential for rural tourism

Group A	Group B	Group C
Blansko	České Budějovice	Jindřichův Hradec
Břeclav	Český Krumlov	Písek
Hodonín	Prachatice	Strakonice
Znojmo	Trutnov	Tábor
Jičín	Liberec	Brno-venkov
Náchod	Frýdek-Místek	Vyškov
Česká Lípa	Nový Jičín	Cheb
Semily	Olomouc	Karlovy Vary
Bruntál	Děčín	Sokolov
Opava	Zlín	Hradec Králové
Jeseník		Rychnov nad Kněžnou
Přerov		Jablonec nad Nisou
Šumperk		Karviná
Chrudim		Ostrava
Domažlice		Prostějov
Klatovy		Pardubice
Kroměříž		Svitavy
Uherské Hradiště		Ústí nad Orlicí
Vsetín		Plzeň-jih
		Plzeň-sever
		Rokycany
		Tachov
		Benešov
		Beroun
		Kladno
		Kolín
		Kutná Hora
		Mělník
		Mladá Boleslav
		Nymburk
		Praha-východ
		Praha-západ
		Příbram
		Rakovník
		Chomutov
		Litoměřice
		Louny
		Most
		Teplice
		Ústí nad Labem
		Havlíčkův Brod
		Jihlava
		Pelhřimov
		Třebíč
		Žďár nad Sázavou

Table 2. Three groups of regions clustered on the base of secondary potential for rural tourism

Group A	Group B	Group C
Blansko	Český Krumlov	České Budějovice
Břeclav	Cheb	Jindřichův Hradec
Hodonín	Karlovy Vary	Písek
Vyškov	Trutnov	Prachatice
Sokolov	Jablonec nad Nisou	Strakonice
Náchod	Semily	Tábor
Česká Lípa		Brno-venkov
Liberec		Znojmo
Frýdek-Místek		Hradec Králové
Karviná		Jičín
Nový Jičín		Rychnov nad Kněžnou
Ostrava		Bruntál
Jeseník		Opava
Prostějov		Olomouc
Přerov		Šumperk
Rokycany		Chrudim
Kladno		Pardubice
Mladá Boleslav		Svitavy
Praha-východ		Ústí nad Orlicí
Praha-západ		Domažlice
Příbram		Klatovy
Děčín		Plzeň-jih
Chomutov		Plzeň-sever
Most		Tachov
Teplice		Benešov
Ústí nad Labem		Beroun
Kroměříž		Kolín
Uherské Hradiště		Kutná Hora
Vsetín		Mělník
Zlín		Nymburk
		Rakovník
		Litoměřice
		Louny
		Havlíčkův Brod
		Jihlava
		Pelhřimov
		Třebíč
		Žďár nad Sázavou

ple representative was solved by the location of research. The answers were collected in local information centers and 20 000 informants answered the mentioned questionnaire.

The results of the questionnaire were used not only for definition of variables in both groups of potential but also as the base for assignment of the statistical weight for the potentials. To all potentials were assigned the appropriate weights according to the results of questionnaire.

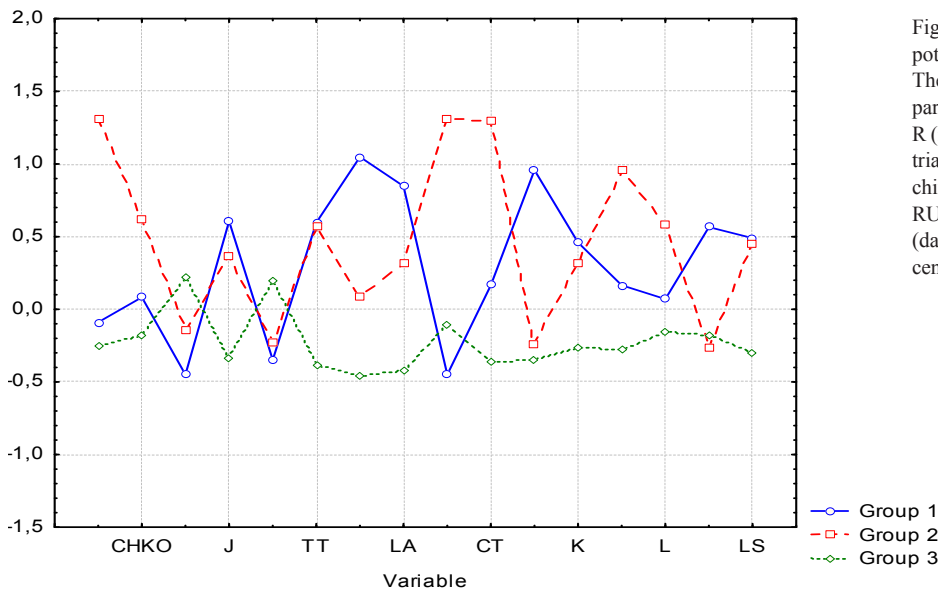


Fig. 1. Averages of all clusters (primary potentials)
The full description of axis: NP (natural parks), CHKO (natural protected areas), R (rivers), J (cave), P (ponds), TT (pedestrian paths), C (castles), LA (popular architecture), Z (zoos), CT (cyclo-ways), RU (ruins), K (swimming pools), D (dams), L (spas), M (museums), LS (ski centers)

From evaluated potentials was made a cluster analysis, in order to see clearly the situation in the Czech Republic.

The basic hypothesis was that there are some similarities in primary potentials of rural tourism among regions, within which Czech regions can be categorized into “touristable”, “touristic medium attractive”, and “distouristable”.

“Touristable” regions offer a lot of tourist attraction. There is a beautiful environment represented by national parks and natural protected areas in this research. The rivers running through these regions can be used for sailing. Visitors can do hiking there, because there are lots of pedestrian paths or cycling on cyclo-ways. The regions dispose of castles or ruins attractive for visiting. There are also a lot of possibilities for relaxing, for example spas, dams, ponds, stalks.

“Distouristable” regions are not able to offer beautiful nature or historical places. These regions are situated in industrial areas, where the countryside was destroyed by mining. There is also a lack of cyclo-ways or pedestrian paths and other tourist attraction have not been established there yet.

“Touristic medium attractive” regions represent a category between the two extreme groups described above.

In the secondary potentials point of view a hypothesis that there exist some similarities in rural tourism secondary potentials between Czech regions can be also created. According to this hypothesis the regions can be categorized into “touristic friendly”, “touristic medium friendly”, “touristic unfriendly” regions.

“Touristic friendly” region is equipped with a lot of roads and possibilities of accommodation.

“Touristic medium friendly” region has a lower number of good roads and less hotels, pensions and other type of accommodation.

“Touristic unfriendly” region has not a good condition of roads and accommodation possibilities.

Among regions analyzed in this paper were included all LAU I regions in the Czech Republic except of three LAU I regions (Pilsen-city, Brno-city and Prague) that are considered as primary urban.

For the acknowledging of these hypotheses, the K-means cluster analysis was used. This analysis, which was firstly used by Tryon in the year 1939, is an exploratory data analysis tool for solving classification problems. It sorts objects into groups, so that the degree of association is strong between members of the same cluster and weak between members of different clusters. This analysis can use different methods of clustering, like tree clustering, block clustering, or k-means clustering.

In this paper the k-means clustering is used. The k-means algorithm is used for clustering n objects based on attributes into k partitions, $k < n$. It is similar to the expectation-maximization algorithm for mixtures of Gaussians in that they both attempt to find the centers of natural clusters in the data. It assumes that the object attributes form a vector space. The objective tries to minimize total intra-cluster variance, or, the squared error function:

$$V = \sum_{i=1}^k \sum_{x_j \in S_i} (x_j - \mu_i)^2$$

where are k clusters S_i , $i = 1, 2, \dots, k$ and μ_i is the centroid or mean point of all the points $x_j \in S_i$ (see Hendel, 2006)

Data used in these cluster analyses came from various resources such as Czech Statistical Office, Local Authorities, and other databases.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The similarities in primary potentials of rural tourism

The informants of mentioned questionnaire chosen the following primary potentials as most important in their resolution to visit the areas: natural parks, natural reserves,

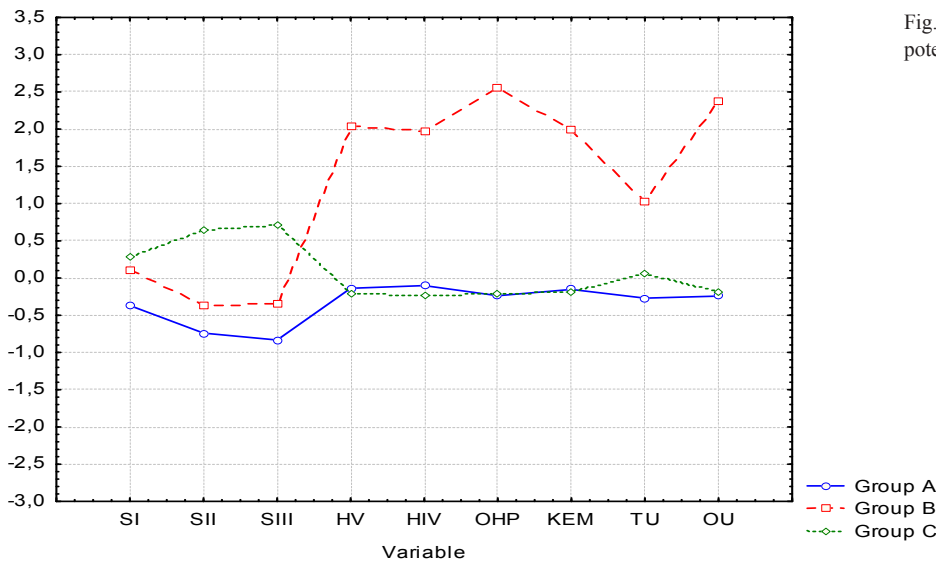


Fig. 2. Averages of all clusters (secondary potentials)

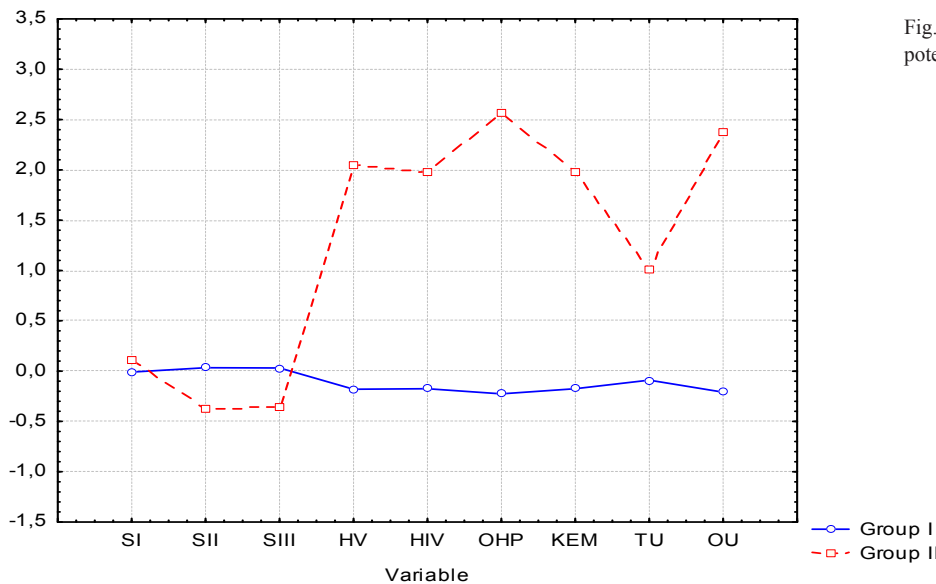


Fig. 3. Averages of all clusters (secondary potentials)

ivers, lakes and ponds, dams, pools, monuments and sights, zoos, caves, ruins, architecture, spas, museums, ski areas and finally culture events. Some proposed potentials as local cuisine or climate gained a low points profit that caused their elimination from the analysis.

The cluster analysis based on these variables parted Czech regions into the following three groups, which are represented in Table 1.

Group 1 can be named as “*touristic medium attractive*” regions. This group provides the most historical attractive areas. There is a huge number of castles – the highest number of all regions in the Czech Republic (Fig. 1), where castles are situated between variable (*TT*) pedestrian paths and (*LA*) popular architecture. Also the most of ruins can be found there, in Fig. 1 the point between (*CT*) cyclo-ways and (*K*) swimming pools. There are also a lot of areas with popular architecture (*LA* in Fig. 1). These areas also provide stalks.

Group 2 can be named as “*touristable*” regions. There is a higher number of national parks, see the first point in Fig 1. There are also a lot of natural protected areas (*CHKO*). Visitors can also admire caves (*J*). There are also good conditions for cycling. There is the highest number of cyclo-ways (*CT*) too. These regions provide a lot of possibilities for relaxing, as well. There are plenty of spas (*L*), dams (the point between (*K*) swimming pools and (*L*)). There are also zoos (the point between (*LA*) and (*CT*)) and ski centers (*LS*).

The last group, group 3 can be named “*distourisable*” regions, because the regions involved in this group, are the poorest in the huge number of variables. There are only rivers, used for sailing (the point between (*CHKO*) and (*J*)), and ponds (the point between (*J*) and (*TT*)).

The results of K-means cluster analysis shows three groups of the Czech region in the focus on their primary potential for rural tourism. The variables, in which regions in each group are similar, offer now view on the named of

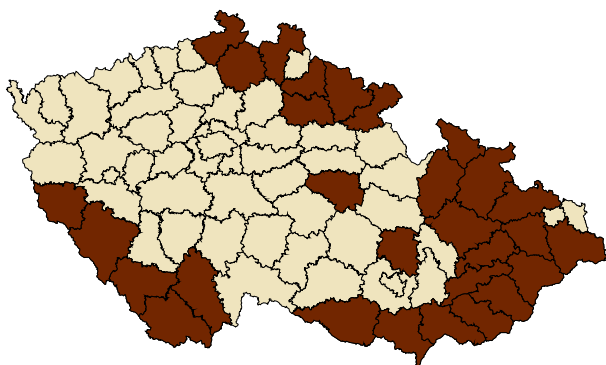


Fig. 4. Regions with good primary potentials of rural tourism

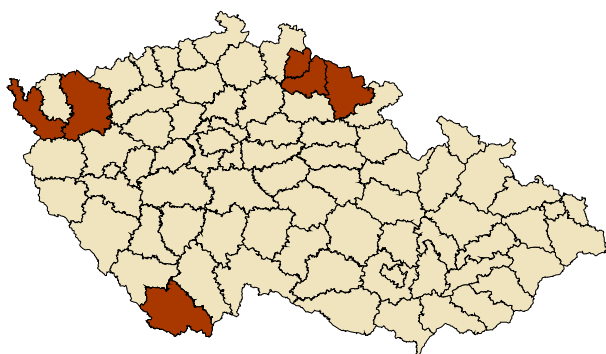


Fig. 5. Regions with the best secondary potentials of rural tourism

all groups. The other possibility how to mark the group 1 can be “*cultural*” region. Group 2 can be called “*natural*” region.

The similarities in secondary potentials of rural tourism

Among secondary potentials were submitted: accommodation (according to the type of accommodation), roads (according to the type of road), and roads for cycling.

The cluster analysis based on mentioned secondary potentials of rural tourism in the Czech regions parted the regions into the following three groups (Table 2).

Group A can be named “*touristic unfriendly*” regions, because there are less possibilities for travelling and also for accommodation. There is the lowest number of roads from all regions (points (*SI*) roads first class, (*SII*) roads second class, (*SIII*) roads third class in Fig. 2). There are not a lot of hotels and pensions, camps and other types of accommodation ((*HV*) hotels with five stars, (*HIV*) hotels with four stars, (*OHP*) other hotels and pensions, (*KEM*) camps).

Group B can be named “*touristic friendly*” regions. There are lots of possibilities of accommodation. These regions offer the highest number of hotels of each category. On the other hand, these regions are not well equipped by roads (Fig. 2).

Group C represents “*touristic friendly*” regions only in roads. There are a lot of roads for travelling, but the possibilities of accommodation are not so good.

In this point of view, there is better way, how to categorize these regions. There can be marked only two groups. One group (group II) involves only the region of Český Krumlov, Cheb, Karlovy Vary, Trutnov, Jablonec nad Nisou and Semily region. Other group (group I) involves the other regions.

Taking in consideration this possibility, group II may be called “*tourist friendly*” regions, because there are perfect conditions of accommodation and also quite high number of first class roads (Fig. 3). Group I represents “*tourist unfriendly*” regions.

CONCLUSION

The results of these analyses show that about half of the Czech regions are well equipped for rural tourism (Figs 4 and 5).

These regions with good conditions can be included into “*cultural*” and “*natural*” regions in the primary potential point of view (Fig. 4). There are also some regions which can be named “*touristic friendly*”, because these regions are very well equipped with hotels and other types of accommodation. These regions can be found especially near country borders (Fig. 5).

Only two regions, Český Krumlov region and Trutnov region provide, both good primary and secondary potentials for rural tourism.

Rural regions as they are defined by OECD methodology (density higher than 150 inhabitants.km⁻²) were then compared to the analyzed groups. There are 16 regions that are not according to the OECD methodology characterized as rural in the Czech Republic. Twelve of these regions belong to the named “*touristic unfriendly*” regions and four of them to the “*touristic friendly*” regions. OECD methodology is based on the density; however the density in all LAU regions may be influenced by the density in the large cities. That means that in the region with higher density can be also good conditions for rural tourism. For this reason there were not analyzed only rural regions in this paper.

It is not only primary and secondary potentials that indicate effective rural tourism in the Czech Republic. The final analysis of rural tourism potentials of the Czech regions should involve also the tertiary potentials, which mean especially the ability of the management to turn the profit from primary and secondary potentials of the regions. Following the mentioned tertiary potentials, there cannot exist regions, which cannot be used for rural tourism.

What to recommend to regions with low primary and secondary potentials? Create new tourist products, focus on events and experience tourism, unusual promotion of the region, and establish public support of tourist enterprises. What should the local authorities be aware of? Promoting the tourist destinations can bring more tourists and more revenues from tourist activities. Increasing number of tourists can influence the environment and destroyed the character of location and nature, which is mainly the

reason why the tourists visit the region. Increasing tourist infrastructure connected to the increasing number of tourist can destroy the tourist heritage in the region. This is what should be local authorities aware of and with this consciousness should be all developing strategies made.

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Computer software

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Hodnocení potenciálů venkovské turistiky v České republice.

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Rozvoj venkova není spojen pouze s rozvojem a podporou zemědělství, ale je nutné brát v úvahu i další možnosti. Jednou z možností je také venkovská turistika, která může obyvatelům venkova přinést dodatečné příjmy, může vytvářet nové zaměstnanecké pozice a přispět ke zlepšení života obyvatel venkova. Příspěvek se zabývá potenciály venkovské turistiky v České republice, konkrétně v jednotlivých okresech. Potenciály turistických destinací lze rozdělit do tří úrovní. Primární potenciály jsou charakterizovány přírodními a kulturními podmínkami regionu. Sekundární potenciály představuje turistická infrastruktura, tedy zejména ubytovací a stravovací služby a také dopravní dostupnost. Terciární potenciály jsou spojené s institucionálním zabezpečením cestovního ruchu. Předkládaný příspěvek se zabývá analýzou primárních a sekundárních potenciálů.

Na základě anketního šetření byly definovaným potenciálům cestovního ruchu, s ohledem na charakter venkovské turistiky, přiřazeny statistické váhy. Za použití klastrové analýzy byly regiony následně rozčleněny do dvou skupin, na turisticky atraktivní regiony z hlediska venkovské turistiky a na regiony méně atraktivní.

venkovské regiony; cestovní ruch; klastrové analýzy; primární potenciály; sekundární potenciály

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