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Introduction

The transition process of socio - economic development in Slovakia after 1989 has been connected with necessary qualitative and structural changes. This process has caused the decline of industries with low added value and has contributed to the growth of more perspective industries including tourism. Tourism is considered to be one of the strategic issues of regional development. Position of regions is strengthened also due to membership of Slovakia in the EU. It is generally recognized, that effective regional policy is a precondition for regional cohesion by means of development of perspective economic activities including tourism. The effective regional tourism policy as integral part of regional policy is the basis for achievement of synergy effects from tourism development on regional development. The paper deals with the problem of absence of systematic regional tourism policy in Slovakia and presents the results of the field research conducted on the sample of 604 respondents - stakeholders in tourism development in Slovakia. 50% of them were the representatives of public sector and 50% representatives of private and NGO sectors. The questionnaire distributed by e-mail was the main method of collecting data.

1. Regional Tourism Policy in Slovakia

As more Slovakian and foreign tourism experts stress (Chovan, J. 2000. p. 200; Gúčík, M., 2004, p. 190; Kmeco, L., 2002, p. 83; Kučerová, J., 1999, p. 56; Inskeep, E., 1991, p. 320) the absence of regional tourism policy is the main reason of uncoordinated and ineffective tourism development in the country. They stress the fact, that regional tourism policy is based on targeted and program oriented co-ordination of incentives and supporting instruments aimed at sustainable

development of tourism in regional destinations by means of activities and policies of self-government regions. We characterize sustainable tourism development as a development, which provides not only the satisfaction of current economical, social and aesthetical needs of tourists and residents, but also secures the satisfaction of the needs in the future. This development secures identity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life supporting systems in destinations. It means sustainable development is concentrated on long - term objectives and is realized step by step, is planned and well regulated. According to this definition, the precondition for sustainable tourism development is planning including carrying capacity analysis and the essential output of planning is also well-defined regional tourism policy, which as a system formulates objectives, instruments and stakeholders of tourism policy on the regional level. These issues are presented in this article.

The regional tourism policy is important part of the socio-economic policy in many EU countries. The optimum utilization of tourism resources is the basic objective of regional tourism policy. It is the continuous process of discovering and realization of activities aimed at increasing benefits for region and eliminating negative impact of tourism development on region.

Regional tourism policy is based on the set of preconditions. They include attractive tourism potential - supply, integrated marketing and management, correct and honest co-operation between private and public sector, existing organizational structure of tourism from national to regional and local levels, regional information system and of course also positive attitude of inhabitants to tourism development. The regional tourism policy is system with interconnected subsystems - subsystem of objectives, instruments and incentives and stakeholders - organizations and entities responsible for creation and implementation

of regional tourism policy. The instruments of regional tourism policy can be divided into two groups (Chovan, 2000, Maier, 1998, Tödting, 1998, Wokoun, 2003). These are financial and non-financial instruments. The local taxes and recreational taxes are important financial instruments of regional tourism development in more countries (Austria, Switzerland). Due to the fact that Slovakia became the EU member state in 2004, the EU structural funds are important financial instrument of regional tourism policy. The main non-financial instrument is regional tourism marketing, training of local businesses and education of local inhabitants.

The regional tourism policy in Slovakia has been influenced by changes in socio-economic development of Slovakia. The problems of tourism development on regional level have been up to now solved mainly by means of physical and territorial planning. The basis of this approach is dated to the 60's of the 20th century. The first „Regionalization of tourism“ in previous Czechoslovakia was approved in 1962 and updated in 1981. This updated document has been the basis for physical planning. Based on this document 24 tourism regions were identified in Slovakia and divided according to their importance into 4 categories - international, national and regional importance and recreational regions with specific purpose in tourism development (with very high quality of potential). This document defined also carrying capacity for particular tourism resorts and was the basis for investment incentives of previous regime. The names of the regions were based mainly on names of the main tourism attractions in the regions (the High Tatras, the Low Tatras, the Small Fatra mountains, Piešťany - Trenčín spa region, etc.).

The new Regionalization of tourism in Slovakia was elaborated in 2003 with the objective to define the borders of tourism regions according to new administrative division of Slovakia and to formulate priority forms of tourism development in particular regions and sub-regions. In comparison with the document from 1981 there are more changes - 21 tourism regions, the names of previous ones were changed and mainly historical names of the regions are implemented. The „old“ approach to the categories of the regions has been applied. The regions are divided according to their importance for tourism development into 4 categories (international,

national, above regional and regional importance). This document ought to be used as the basis for regional tourism development in Slovakia. However, it has more shortcomings. If this document was the basis for sustainable tourism development in the regions, it would have to define carrying capacity as it is also stressed in Agenda 21 for tourism. If this document was used as the marketing tool, the names of the regions would not be well known not only to Slovakian tourists, but also mainly to foreign tourists. It is very hard to promote 21 regions in such a relatively small country as Slovakia. But the main problem of this development document is, that it does not define main stakeholders - entities responsible for tourism development in these regions as well as does not comprise the system of financing and instruments, which can be used in tourism development in these 21 regions. As the results of all these shortcomings, the document can be considered as a recommendation for future creation of physical plans in particular regions and not as a basis for effective regional tourism policy.

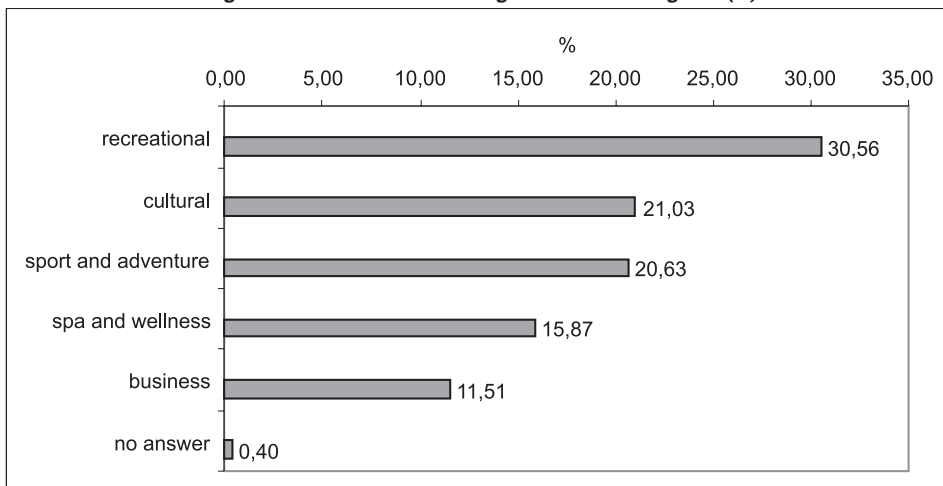
With the objective to analyze the regional tourism policy in Slovakia we have conducted primary research aimed at the objectives, instruments and stakeholders - entities of regional tourism policy in Slovakia.

Research methodology and research methods

In the primary research we have tested four hypotheses. The first one: Slovakia has up to now no clear and systematic regional tourism policy in spite of the great tourism potential in 21 officially recognized tourism regions. The second one: The partial objectives of tourism policy in Slovakia should be aimed at the support of recreational tourism. The third one: We assume that the main coordinator of regional tourism development in Slovakia should be special national tourism board, which doesn't exist so far in Slovakia. The existing Slovak Tourism Agency has competences in the field of tourism marketing and is not responsible for creation of tourism policy on national and regional level. The fourth hypothesis was: We suppose, that the decreasing taxes and social fees paid by businesses are main financial instruments of regional tourism development.

The questionnaire was the main research method in primary data collection. The questionnaire consisted of 19 closed and opened questions so

Fig. 1: Tourism Forms Enabling Cohesion of Regions (%)



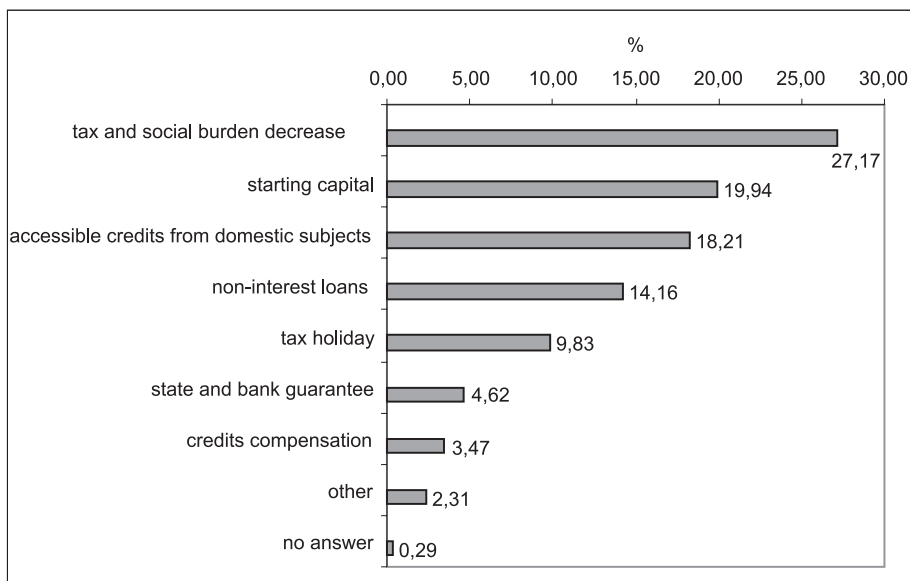
Source: Own research

that the respondents could express their own opinions. The questionnaire has been distributed to professionals in tourism from public and private sector. The sample in Slovakia was 604 respondents (50% representatives of public and 50% representatives of private sector and

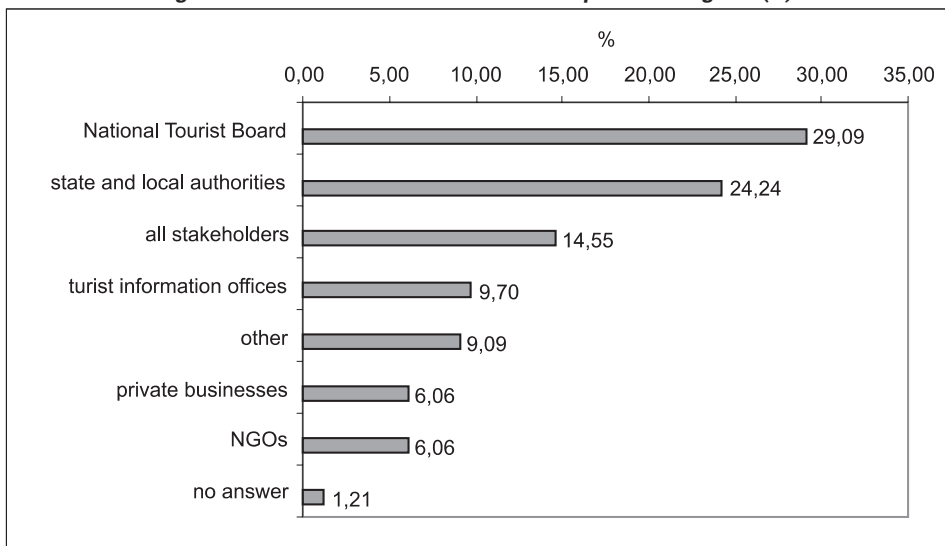
NGOs), including respondents such as Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, self-governing regions, municipal offices etc.

The questionnaires were distributed by e-mail based on the created database of tourism organizations in private and public sectors. The return rate was

Fig. 2: National Financial Instruments of Regional Tourism Policy (%)



Source: Own research

Fig. 3: Main Co-ordinator of Tourism Development in Regions (%)z

Source: Own research

19.54%, 118 responses (42.4% of them from public sector and 57.6% from private and third sectors).

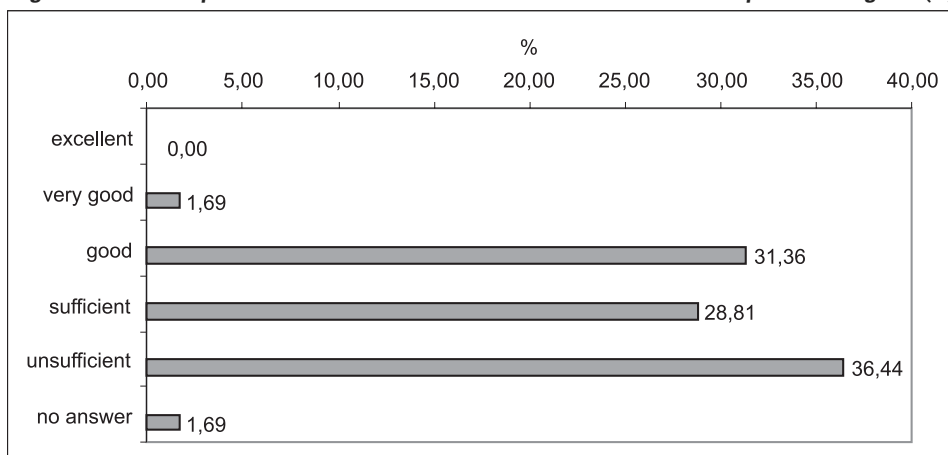
We don't present all the results of the research in this article but those ones, which were connected with objectives, instruments and stakeholders of regional tourism policy in Slovakia.

Research Findings

The results of the field research demonstrate the fact, that majority of Slovakian respondents

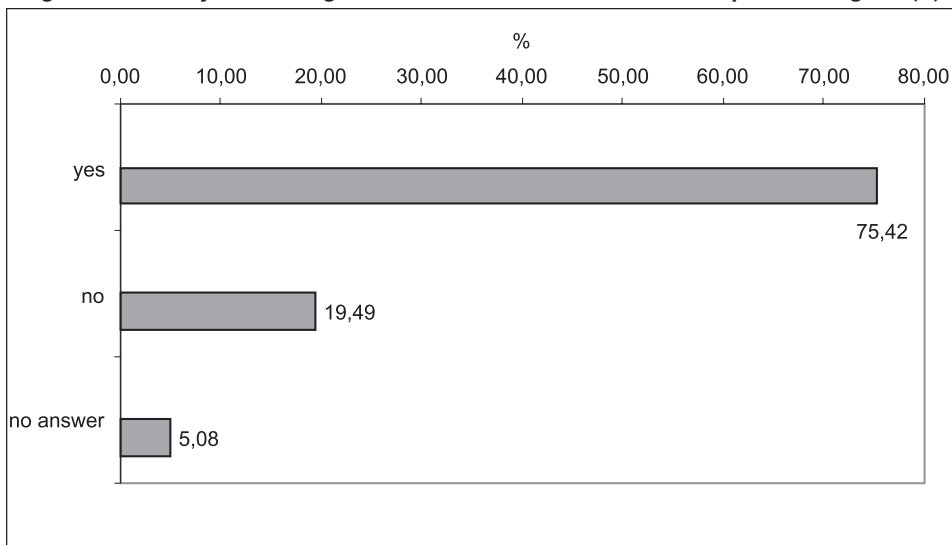
consider objectives, entities and stakeholders and instruments of regional tourism policy as unacceptable. The only one exception is the tourism potential in Slovakian regions, which is according to the majority of responses very suitable for tourism development.

30.56% responses from Slovakia stressed the need to support recreational tourism as an objective of regional tourism policy (Fig. 1). The other forms are cultural tourism (21.03%), sports

Fig. 4: Level of Cooperation of Public and Private Sector in Tourism Development in Regions (%)

Source: Own research

Fig. 5: Bureaucracy in Obtaining Financial Resources for Tourism Development in Regions (%)



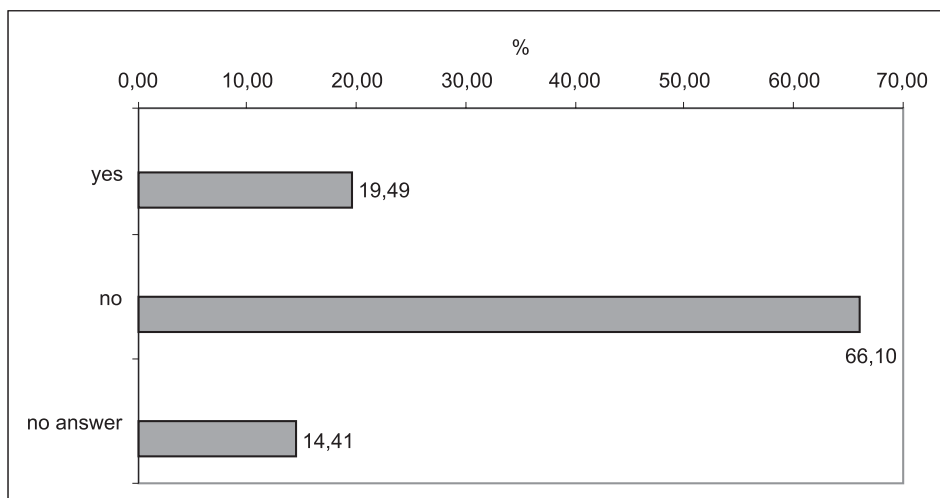
Source: Own research

and adventure tourism (20.63%) and spa and wellness tourism (15.87%). These results are in contradiction with the objectives of Strategy of tourism development in Slovakia for the period 2007 - 2013, which considers city and cultural tourism, spa and health tourism, winter tourism, summer tourism and holiday by rivers and lakes as well as rural tourism i.e. priority forms of

tourism development in Slovakia. Relatively too many forms of tourism entitled in this government document can lead to distribution of human energy and financial resources into too many smaller activities with lower synergy effect in particular tourism regions.

As the data in Fig. 2 demonstrate, 27.17% of Slovakian respondents think, that the main

Fig. 6: Corruption in Obtaining Financial Resources for Tourism Development in Regions (%)



Source: Own research

instrument of regional tourism policy should be the decrease of taxes and social burdens paid by entrepreneurs. 19.94 % respondents consider providing starting capital and 18.21 % accessible credits as suitable financial instrument of regional tourism policy. The answers are influenced by the fact, that about 90 % of all tourism businesses in Slovakia are SMEs, many of them family businesses and therefore not always interesting clients for banks.

Regional tourism policy needs to have entity, responsible for creation and implementation of this policy. The results of the field research demonstrate the fact, that according to 29.09 % of Slovakian respondents, it is necessary to create National Tourism Board, as specialized government organization which would be the main coordinator and creator of regional tourism policy in Slovakia (Fig. 3). In conditions of Slovakia the creation of National Tourism Board should be based on unification of organizations already existing on the national level (Slovak Tourism Agency and Section of Tourism at the Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic). This new organization, which could come into existence from existing ones, should have competences also in the creation of regional tourism policy in Slovakia. 24 % of respondents stress, that state and local authorities should be the main entity responsible for regional tourism policy and 15 % responses consider all stakeholders to be responsible for regional tourism policy. The last answer is in contradiction with the responses drawn in Fig. 4.

The involvement and responsibility of all stakeholders into creation and implementation of regional tourism policy depends on the level of cooperation, which is very low in Slovakia (36 % unsatisfied responses). The cooperation between private and public sector is important precondition for creation and implementation of regional tourism policy. 65.25 % Slovakian respondents consider level of this cooperation as sufficient or insufficient.

The objective of our primary research was also to find out the attitude of respondents to the level of bureaucracy and corruption in obtaining financial support from domestic resources. Based on the results of the field of research bureaucracy is considered to be high as 75.42 % Slovaks have given positive answer (Fig. 5). Corruption seems to be great problem in Slovakia, as 19.49 % Slo-

vaks has met with corruption in case that they were trying to get financial support from domestic resources (Fig. 6). This problem must be solved also due to the approved schemes of providing grants from the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund in Slovakia in the period 2007 - 2013.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of regional tourism policy in Slovakia we have proposed the methodology of creation and implementation of regional tourism policy in Slovakia. We formulate the set of recommendations, which can be divided into 3 main subsystems of the regional tourism policy system. They are objectives, instruments and stakeholders of this policy. The main objective of policy should be cohesion of regions based on economic activities connected with tourism, support of socio-economic cohesion and competitiveness of tourism regions on international tourism market by respecting principles of sustainable tourism development. The main emphasis should be given to the support of recreational tourism, secondary to sports or adventure tourism, cultural, spa and wellness tourism and business tourism. This main objective should be elaborated to the set of partial objectives concentrated on marketing, co-operation and communication between private and public sector on all levels (national, regional and local), investment incentives to public tourism infrastructure, increasing incomes per incoming tourists and improvement of entrepreneurial environment.

Instruments are very important subsystem of regional tourism policy. In case of Slovakia it is important to utilize financial and non-financial instruments. They are mainly starting capital, decreasing of tax and social burdens for entrepreneurs, the access to loans mainly for small family businesses and EU structural funds.

The subsystem tourism stakeholders - entities responsible for creation and implementation of regional tourism policy is the main weakness of regional tourism policy in Slovakia. There is great discrepancy between 21 tourism regions created in Slovakia based on the geographical approach and existing organizational structure of public sector. There is no systematic interconnection between the Ministry of Economy, Tourism Unit and regions, the contacts and activities are based

on ad hoc basis. The existing self-government regions (8) should be responsible for creation and implementation of regional tourism policy in the region. These self-government regions should create the specialized regional tourism organization financed partially from the public sources and partially from its own marketing and entrepreneurial activities. This system is implemented in many EU countries including Austria. Its implementation in Slovakia depends mainly on the political will to accept the legislation aimed at the solution of these problems.

Acknowledgement

We would like to express our gratitude to all people from Slovakia, representatives of public, private sector and NGOs, who were so kind and filled in our questionnaire. Without their help we would not be able to conduct this research.

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Doručeno redakci: 7. 3. 2008
Recenzováno: 14. 5. 2008; 15. 5. 2008
Schváleno k publikování: 13. 1. 2009

ABSTRACT**REGIONAL TOURISM POLICY IN SLOVAKIA****Jana Kučerová, Tomáš Makovník**

Regional tourism policy is a necessary precondition for tourism development in Slovak regions and their competitiveness at the international tourism market. It is based on the set of necessary preconditions. They include attractive tourism potential such as supply, integrated marketing and management, correct and honest co-operation between private and public sector, existing organizational structure of tourism from national to regional and local levels, regional information system and of course also positive attitude of inhabitants to tourism development. The regional tourism policy is a system with interconnected subsystems - subsystem of objectives, instruments and incentives and stakeholders, which are organizations and entities responsible for creation, and implementation of regional tourism policy.

The objective of this paper is to present results of the secondary and field research, which has been conducted in Slovakia in 2005/2006. Its scientific goal was investigate the conditions for development of methodology of creation and implementation of regional tourism policy applicable in conditions of economic praxis of the Slovak Republic. Research sample created 302 representatives of public sector and 302 representatives of private sector engaged in tourism development in Slovakia. The results demonstrate the fact, that objectives, instruments and stakeholders as subsystem of regional tourism policy are influenced by existing state of tourism development in Slovakia. Slovakian respondents are not satisfied with regional tourism policy and expect systematic solution. Based on the analysis of basic aspects of regional tourism policy in Slovakia we have proposed the methodology of creation and implementation of regional tourism policy in Slovakia for self-governing regions. We formulate set of practical recommendations and also methodical issues, which can be divided into three main fields - objectives, instruments and main stakeholders.

Key Words: *tourism, regional tourism policy, Slovakia.*

JEL Classification: R58, Y10