

# Rural tourism in areas with specific historical landscape structures: The experience of Slovakia

FRANTIŠEK PETROVIČ \* [fpetrovic@ukf.sk]

HANA BIELIKOVÁ \*\* [bielikova.hana@gmail.com]

JOZEF ŤAŽKÝ \*\*\* [jtazky@ukf.sk]

**Keywords** | Dispersed settlement, rural areas, rural tourism, Slovakia

**Objectives** | Dispersed settlement in Slovakia could be characterized as one of the unique historical landscape structures. These well-preserved cultural – historical settlement structures reflected socio – economical activities that were strongly influenced by natural and historical conditions (Huba, 1989; Janšák, 1967). Formation of dispersed settlement in concerned area, which is Nová Baňa region, dates back to 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century when settlers were moving to more remote and hardly accessible areas in search of fertile land. Therefore, areas remained relatively untouched by the fast development and are still considered to be marginal. Focus of this paper is to depict the importance of using developmental tool, such as rural tourism undoubtedly is, that would not harm fragile relics of settlement structures and would enrich the area with resources needed to sustain the genius loci of the area.

**Methodology** | First step was precise area definition that was followed by gaining the primary data needed to characterize area. As interested area three municipalities in Nová Baňa region were chosen, namely Nová Baňa, Veľká Lehota, Malá Lehota. All three municipalities are known for its dispersed settlement and Nová Baňa stands for administrative centre of other two. In order to reach the goal of the study, mostly statistical and field research were conducted. To understand the importance of tourism development in the area, economical statistics of tourism facilities in area were used to compute its economic influence. Necessary data were gained through the research that was filled out by 121

\* **PhD. Full professor** in the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra (Slovakia)

\*\* **PhD student** in the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra (Slovakia)

\*\*\* **PhD student** in the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra (Slovakia)

respondents. Survey was also used to find out the tourist characteristics that are important to know by the decisions regarding further tourism development. Survey took part throughout the year of 2015, face to face with actual visitors of the area. Data concerning the touristic facilities gain through semi-structured interviews with heads of facilities, total number of 20 respondents.

**Main Results and Contributions** | In 2015 total number of 1,438 visitors visited the area which stands for more than 4,000 overnight stays. These visitors brought total income of 108,175 € to the facilities. Facilities employ altogether 17 permanent employees and 56 seasonal employees. Survey showed that total spending per person was 46.56 €, greatest portion belonged to accommodation (more than 40%). Average spending per person within interested area therefore was 103.29€. Altogether it makes total spending of 66,953.28€, which is not omissible contribution in area with more than 20% unemployment rate.

Important is also finding that great amount of contribution to rural tourism development stays on secondary living that has been expanding last couple of years.

Talking about the preferences of visitors, most of the visitors (more than 89%) come to the area because of natural attractions that area offers. Among other attractions cultural ones are desired by the visitors as the area is known for Pipe fest. The area could benefit from its location as it is located between two districts. Area offers many opportunities for providing sports activities which is desired by more than 69%.

**Conclusions** | Unique phenomenon of dispersed settlement and unspoiled, preserved landscape make out of Nová Baňa very attractive destination. This area is rich in natural, cultural and historical tourism attractions. To preserve this area from deterioration it is necessary to choose very carefully forms of tourism development. This could be made by development of tourism in the area that can very sensitively include residents of the area into tourism development and representation of their region as destination suitable for recreation. Dispersed settlement belongs to areas that are considered to be marginal, which resulted into insufficient infrastructure services. It is total tourism development that could help to develop these areas in very sensitive way that would ensure that unique character of this area would not be harmed.

**Acknowledgement** | Projekt č. 025UKF-4/2015

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