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**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL ADVANTAGES OF THE LIBEREC REGION
AS A FACTOR OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE NORTHERN PART
OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC**

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The paper deals with the potential solutions for the elimination of disparities in the Liberec region, as a result of the decline of the traditional textile industry. One of the options could be more extensive involvement of tourist travel as it brings rather high added value. Tourism has a strong tradition in the region of Liberec and in the long term, it belongs to a line of business with strong economic contributions. Some localities of the region are overcrowded during either the summer or winter season, but unutilized out of season. Other destinations are not visited by tourists even during the main season. This article focuses on possibilities that would lead tourists into those particular destinations, no matter what the time of the year.

Keywords: tourism, locality, textile industry, market segments.

1. Introduction

Currently the Liberec region is still considered as a rather industrial area. It offers a developed glass-making and jewelry industry, production and processing of plastic materials, machinery and manufacturing industry closely connected to its car-making industry. A Few years ago the textile industry was considered as one of the traditional industrial branches there. In 2000 this industrial branch employed more than 5 thousand people, with annual sales amounting to CZK 4 billion, although recently the textile industry lost its dominant position. This caused a higher unemployment rate with less jobs available in the region. Such a considerable decline of the textile and recently also glass-making industries is hardly redeemable. One of the potential solutions could be focusing on such

branches of national economy that are capable of high added value, such as the tourist industry and services. The Liberec region definitely has a good enough history to make this work.

The area of the Liberec region is very attractive, both for its natural and culture-historical values. The main indicator that evaluates the level of tourism in a given locality, is primarily, the number and quality of local mass accommodation possibilities. Due to the decreasing number of both Czech and foreign visitors to the Liberec region, the number of accommodation capabilities is sufficient.

2. Tourism as a strategic area of Liberec region development

The area has attractive potential for tourists and visitors. Tourism includes activities of a natural character, such as trekking, recre-

ation, or seeing nature at first hand and the cultural character of the area, including sight-seeing and visiting concerts or exhibitions. The Potential of wildlife tourism in the Liberec region is generally at a high or very high level, which is the result of a very diversified recreational territory in the Liberec region. The attractiveness of the region is completed by its good location neighbouring Germany and Poland and the possibility of sport complexes for both summer and winter activities.

The land of the region is distinguished by a variety of landscape types beginning with hills, over highlands to high mountains such as Krkonoše, the Jizera Mountains, Ještěd Spine or Lusatian Mountains. The most famous touristic attractions are for example Trosky, Vyskeř, Kozákov, Ralsko, Bezděz, Luž, Hvod, to name just few. The Rocky cities of Hrubá skalska or Kokořínsko and caves like the Bozkovic Caves were eroded by water. For successful development of tourism, the concentration of cultural objects is a very significant factor. The Potential of the cultural subsystem of tourism in the region of Liberec shows lower quality. Almost half of the villages of the Liberec region, that is 49,3% does not offer any attractive cultural subsystem and another 25,1% showed in 2008 only a basic potential. Within the Liberec region, there is no culture-historical monument that would be named on the world heritage list of UNESCO. That does not mean though, that there are no monuments at all. 8 national culture-historical monuments, namely Bezděz, Frýdlant, Lemberk, Sychrov, Zákupy, Hrubý Rohozec, Trosky, the hotel and broadcast tower of Ještěd belong among very often visited cultural attractions in the region. Other favourite locations are also 15 city conservation areas, 8 village conservation reservations and 10 village conservation areas. In the region, there is also a huge number of other monuments, like castles, chateaux and their ruins. There are also a number of museums, galleries, some theatres, botanical and zoological gardens. Other interesting places are a number of lookout towers that are dominated mainly by the Jizera Mountains. In two resorts of the region, spas are also present- Spa Libverda and Spa Kundratice.

For regional economics, it is important that tourism generates profit not only in the main season, but also in between these times. The Winter season is mostly considered the main season in the Liberec region, which is caused by its geographical location. Winter sport resorts are well equipped, its infrastructure is at a high level, human resources are professional and prepared for tourism. Despite this fact, some visitors complain about their low language skills. In some destinations of the Liberec region, the summer season is considered the main season. These are mostly localities with water surfaces, such as Mácha's Lake, Hamer Ponds or dams located near city agglomerations. Winter resorts are mostly closed in the quieter seasons- spring and autumn, summer resorts are closed permanently out of season- in autumn, winter and spring.

3. Using advantages of the Liberec region

Due to a ratified document *Strategy of development of Liberec region for years 2006-2020*, there should be, among others, strengthened creation of touristic programs and products and its adaptation to contemporary touristic trends. There are a lot of new trends in tourism. From the economic point of view, there is firstly an effort to utilize the whole calendar year for gains. In the places that were aimed at seasonal utilization, the travel agencies and owners of the resorts have to prepare offers that would make whole year utilisation possible. For the creation of those offers, other subjects have to be involved too e.g. providers of supplementary services for tourism and among them, firstly, the keepers of resorts and operators of cultural and other objects. The Liberec region also has to involve the 215 individual villages, churches, educational establishments and media in the region. New promotional materials have to be issued to propagate new trends in the tourist industry that would be obtainable at informational centres, about services giving not only basic but also additional tourist services.

4. Forming new segments for the tourism market in the Liberec region

Another new trend in the tourist industry is to aim at new segments of tourism, such as seniors, believers and families with small

children. For these segments, adequate offers are necessary.

Segment of seniors is becoming more and more important, primarily in developed countries. Sometimes these seniors are known as tourists of the third age. European seniors have approximately 15% longer stays (4 and more nights). Most of these vacations occur within the home country. It is also noticeable that while younger-aged groups go on the most number of vacations in total, older-aged groups have a little more vacations per head per year. On average, every European senior has 2.1 vacations per year, meanwhile younger tourists have 2.0 vacations per year. As for seniors' vacations, it is a long time ago since these were only spa stays or resting and watching television in calm hotel resorts. Seniors not only want to live actively, but also rest attractively and keep themselves fit both mentally and physically. That is why accommodation resorts should provide them with enough sport activities – the ideal is swimming in a pool, doing exercises in a gym, walking or cycling routes, but also comfort to some extent, corresponding with their age. Offers should also include cultural activities and possibilities to gain knowledge. Older tourists would also welcome individual help from a member of hotel staff who endeavours to meet their special needs. Full access for disabled people should be provided. In a group of seniors, the presence of a medic should be considered and it is essential to provide comfort in both transit and accommodation (max 1-2 bed apartments), respect seniors lower adaptability in catering and the day's regime. Within the senior tourist industry, it is also better to choose mostly out of season times for better temperature conditions, calmness, but also lower prices for services.

The World Tourism Organisation says that the worldwide foreign gains from tourism for last year reached 735 billion dollars. Tourism to a religious destination is accomplished by, on average, around 300 million people. In a worldwide context, it displays a turnover of about 18 billion American dollars (325 billion Czech crowns). This results from actual indications of The World Religious Travel Asso-

ciation – WRTA. Religious tourism shares gains from all tourism of around 2 per cent. Religious tourism is often considered a part of cultural tourism, but it represents a specific part of tourism, not only from the motive of participation on a tour (the motive of tourists to actually go somewhere), but it is also specific from the point of view of the different participants' approach and also often the range and method of spending their time. In Europe, tourism connected to Christianity is the most common. Other religions have definitely less importance in this area.

Important church fetes, events, wakes, special church dignitaries and special religious motives, such as believer meetings are lined up with the religious motives of tourism. In the Liberec region, there is a lot of sacred buildings that are already a part of tourism, or could become a part of it soon.

Families with small children more often look for chances to take part in one day tourism, weekend tourism and also longer stays, for example collective tours. It is always necessary to prepare a special offer for this segment. One of the possible actions, could be the foundation of a museum of bedtime stories. Bedtime stories characters are – apart from the popular Disney or Russian fairytales – with no exception cheerful. The Region of Liberec would be a good locality for the promotion of bedtime stories characters, due to its nature, but also other conditions favour it for activities joint with this intention.

CONCLUSION

Tourism in the Liberec region ensures noticeable gain to the economy of the area. It has developed presumptions for its growth, however, some destinations are utilised only for part of the year in the main tourist season (winter or summer), in other parts of the year, these are not utilised at all or only partly. If the main service suppliers for tourism want to focus on creating individual offers or whole offer packages in the time of the mini season, they should focus on new segments of tourism, such as seniors, believers and families with small children.

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