

The Effect of Cultural and Natural Heritage on Tourism Attractiveness in Slovakia

Abstract

This thesis questions a traditional understanding of cultural and natural heritage as two of the main determinants of tourism attractiveness. The motivation to write it was that in Slovakia, there are multiple locations with plentiful natural and cultural monuments, but since some of them are popular tourist destinations, the others are relatively unknown from the tourism perspective. Based on the review of the existing academic literature, the author understands the concept of attractiveness as a phenomenon composed of the attributes of a certain attraction or location and tourists' perception of the destinations. Therefore, the models connect both aspects of the tourism system – supply and demand for tourism. The dependent variable representing demand is the number of visitors in accommodation establishments per district in 2018 or this value per capita. The main independent variables are the number of national cultural monuments and national natural monuments and reserves, the variables typical for a tourism product. Despite the estimates of their effects seem to be clearly positive and significant, especially for nature, before including additional explanatory variables and their logarithmic transformations, in the extended models, the significant positive effect remained only for the cultural heritage, with an even higher level of confidence. The important role of a distance from the capital was found, resulting from the fact that the least developed regions with higher unemployment rates are generally located in the eastern part of the country. Some tests and models for the spatial interaction effects were also performed in the thesis, but none of them were sufficiently significant. The results of the analysis indicate that tourism policymakers should, in the case of natural heritage, focus mainly on the promotion of other destinations rich in natural beauties, not only the most visited Tatra region. In the case of cultural heritage, its positive effect was proved. However, because many districts with this type of monuments are located in east Slovakia, the investments in this region are necessary to converge more to the west of the country and fully use its potential.

Keywords: tourism, cultural heritage, natural heritage, attractiveness, regional analysis

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