

Abstract

The designation of protected areas is currently the most widely adopted means of conserving natural ecosystems. Whilst the conservation of nature is the primary concern in protected areas, it is also recognized that meeting the needs and priorities of participants (e. g. local residents, visitors) is vital to the long-term survival of such areas. Studies dealing with attitudes of participants may improve protected area management, and help to identify the problems in the area.

The Ph.D. thesis „*Sustainable tourism in selected protected areas in the Czech Republic*“ was carried out in Krkonose National Park (KPNAP), Sumava National Park (NP) and Protected Landscape Area (PLA) in the Czech Republic and in Karkonoski Park Narodowy (KPN) in Poland. Many socioenvironmental research studies have been done focusing on the problems of tourism in these areas. The results of these studies could be affected by the timing and location of the survey. The main objective of the research is to compare characteristics and attitudes of visitors and local people in protected areas in different seasons (winter and summer) and in different types of protected areas (national parks and protected landscape area).

The first part of the results finds the differences between perceptions and attitudes of visitors of the KRNAP/KPN. Surveys were conducted during the winter and summer season 2000. There were recognised following statistically significant differences between visitors of both parks: visitor's nationality, size of the town, expected length of stay in the Giant Mts, means of transport to the national park and in perception of tourism intensity on hiking tracks.

Most research studies in Czech national parks were carried out during the summer season; therefore different results in the winter season are expected. The second section of the results shows differences in characteristics and preferences of visitors in two main tourist seasons in national parks KRNAP, KPN and Sumava NP. The research found three significantly different items depending on the timing of the survey: visitors' nationality, type of accommodation and financial costs. More foreigners visited Sumava NP and KRNAP in summer than in winter, while the situation in KPN was strictly opposite. Winter visitors also spent more money in comparison with summer tourists. Concerning carrying capacity, in KRNAP, the feeling that tourism is too concentrated was more widely held by tourists in the winter season than in the summer season, opposite to the situation in KPN and Sumava NP.

The third part aims to describe perceptions and awareness of local residents in two categories of the Sumava region protected areas – NP and PLA. Interviews were conducted during the summer season of 2008. According to the results, there were more natives and indigenous residents in NP than PLA. Similarly, local people in NP were working more often in the private sector and they had more benefits from tourism. Residents in PLA were less informed about Administration activities, more satisfied with topical nature conservation level and against expansion of NP to their place of residence. Also, a significant finding of the study is that residents (especially in PLA) were supportive of some forms of participatory management. They were interested in the advancement of the area, mostly in the form of improvement of tourism-related facilities. They loved this region and also called for better communication with NP/PLA Administration.

According to this study, the timing and location of the survey administration could strongly affect the results of visitors' and residents' qualitative research in protected areas.