

Versatility in Hospitality Industry Around the Globe A Case Study on Sustainable Tourism in Czech Republic

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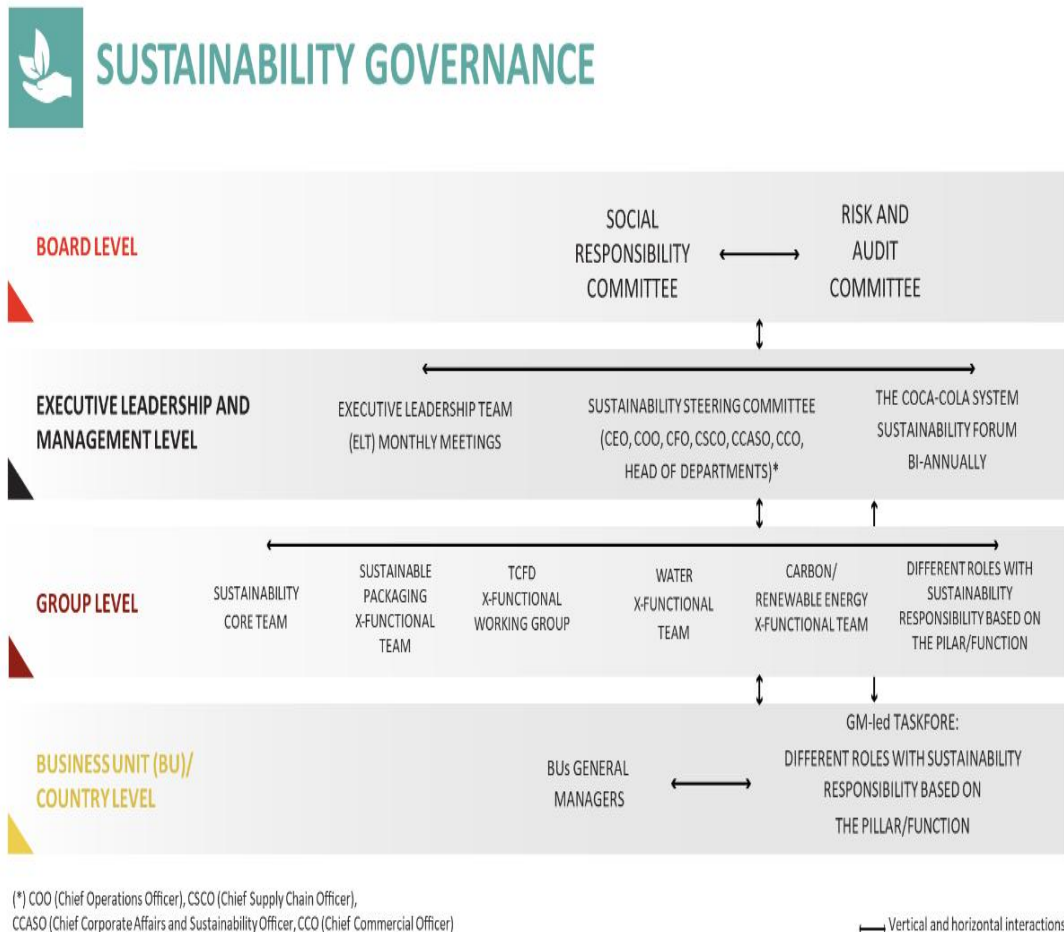
Abstract: *The increasing importance of tourism and the growing number of tourists put pressure on tourist destinations. To support competitive and sustainable tourism development, it is advisable to focus on alternative forms of tourism in order to diversify tourism options in the destinations. From this point of view, it seems appropriate to deal with the issue of 'Special Interest Tourism' as a form of 'alternative', 'ethical', or 'environmentally responsible' tourism. The paper reflects the urgent need for sustainable tourism research. The aim of the paper is to provide the introduction and overview of the issue and outline perspectives that may open the way to future, more systematic research. The situation in the Czech Republic is based on the mapping of the current spatial distribution of selected special interest tourism attractions. The findings identify the possibilities for diversification of general (mass) tourism offers. The metadata from the Czech and foreign meta information systems and databases are used. The investigation of the topic shows that the whole world walks towards sustainability. The global challenges are of high importance and every country must think about the negative effects of global warming, pollution, degradation, poverty, etc. The empirical analysis shows that there are many problems in sustainable development of tourism in Armenia. The research empirically confirms and theoretically proves that Armenia has a great potential for tourism development and steps must be undertaken to increase the environmental, cultural sustainability, develop infrastructures, raise competitiveness, etc. The main conclusion is that for sustainable development of tourism it is necessary to raise public consciousness and knowledge of other aspects of ecology and sustainable tourism, use renewable energy sources, ensure sustainable landfill and waste management, use electric or hybrid vehicles, etc. Sustainable tourism development in Armenia should contribute to socio-economic, cultural and environmental development of the country. The results of the research can be useful for the state organs, private sector, and also for researchers in the tourism sphere.*

Keywords: Environment, Tourism, Destinations, Diversification

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism, as one of the largest global industries, is a significant energy consumer and a contributor to the increase in carbon emissions and climate change (Becken & Simons, 2002; Becken et al. 2003; Whittlesea & Owen, 2012). Apart from the negative global environmental consequences (Gössling, 2002; Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2013), tourism as an energy consumer causes local environmental impacts, such as deforestation or water deficiency, which are critical especially for remote or island communities (e.g., Tabatchnaia-Tamirisa, Loke, Leung, & Tucker, 1997; Nepal, 2008). The inflows of tourists can put significant pressure on transport infrastructure, water resources, and on public finances (OECD, 2018). In the last three decades, tourism has been also significantly affected by the displays of economic and cultural globalization (Gössling, 2002; Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2013). [1]The impacts brought other serious environmental, social, and economic problems. The most frequently mentioned impacts are the negative effects of increased concentration of people in small space, traffic overexposure, increased consumption and energy inconvenience, problems with supply and cleaning of garbage, and also irreversible changes in natural and cultural landscape (e.g., Tabatchnaia-Tamirisa et al., 1997; Nepal, 2008). In response to this unsustainable tourism development, the international tourism organizations have focused on key policy and governance reforms in tourism.

As a result of consumer demand and managerial concerns based on ethics as well as economics, the tourism industry has come under pressure in recent years to become more environmentally friendly (Baker, Davis, & Weaver, 2014; Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2013). In this sense, tourism has come to the fore in promoting some innovative clean energy solutions, such as applying energy-saving systems in accommodation facilities, implementing solar heating and air-conditioning technologies (Michalena & Tripanag- kostopoulos, 2010), or using waste from tourist attractions for renewable energy production (Shi et al., 2013).[2] Similarly, the current EU's tourism initiatives are closely linked to supporting com- petitioner and sustainable growth in the tourism sector and the co-financing of sustainable tourism projects to diversify tourism options in Europe (e.g., DESTI-SMART project ad- dressing challenges for efficient sustainable tourism). From this point of view, the paper is designed to reflect the urgent need for sustainable tourism research and broaden the existing knowledge about special interest tourism as an alternative form of tourism in the Czech Republic. The aim of the paper is not to give a comprehensive conceptualiza- tion of the phenomenon nor to map all existing forms and regional resources of the special interest tourism in the Czech Republic, but rather to provide the introduction and overview of the issue and outline perspectives that may open the way to future, more systematic research.



II. SUMMARY

The destinations face challenges in managing tourism flows and preventing or mitigat- ing the negative impact of tourism on cities, beaches and other natural wonders, and on quality of life of host communities [3] Prague: Czech Statistical Office. 2017 In this context, the buzzwords such as ‘overtourism’, ‘tourismphobia’, ‘airbnbsa- tion’ or ‘demarketing’ have become commonly used in the research studies on tourism, reflecting the problems of unsustainable

tourism development, excess of the destination carrying capacity, the destruction of the physical, economic, and socio-cultural environment, or imbalance between the interests of local residents and tourists (e.g., Postma & Schmoecker, 2017; Guttentag & Smith, 2017; Butler, 2018; Seraphin et al., 2018).

On the other hand, the rapidly growing tourism industry still creates different opportunities for destinations, their visitors, and businesses. To overcome the mentioned problems of some destinations, it is advisable to focus on new activities and alternative forms of tourism (Wall et al., 2017). Concerning this claim, the potential for sustainable tourism development and further research directions lies beyond the mass tourism typical of its large-scale sold standardized products. Here is space for the focus on alternative forms of tourism, based on highly individualized services and the satisfaction of unique experiences (Benur & Bramwell, 2015), which to some extent derive from the principles of sustainable tourism, characterized by an environmentally friendly way of travelling, the authenticity of experiences, and positive relationship with the host community (Sims, 2009).

Bridging the gap between those 'pains of tourism development' and research interest in alternative tourism approaches, it seems appropriate to study new tourism patterns and motivations and deal with the issue of Special Interest Tourism as a form of 'alternative', 'ethical' or 'environmentally responsible' tourism (Hall & Weiler, 1992). According to Hall and Weiler (1992), special interest tourism occurs when the tourists' motivation and decision-making are primarily determined by a particular special interest with a focus either on activities and/or destinations and settings. Smith, Macleod, and Robertson (2010) defined special interest tourism as travelling with the primary motivation of practising or enjoying a special interest. It also reflects new tourism consumption patterns, increasing the diversity of interests of the late-modern leisure society (Douglas, Douglas, & Derrett, 2001; Sousa, 2018) and highly differentiated tourists' needs and motivations (Dwyer et al. 2008). It takes into account new social values, such as the increased importance of outdoor activities, awareness of ecological problems, educational advances, aesthetic judgement and improvement of self and society (Hall & Weiler, 1992; Trauer, 2006).

Ecotourism Benefits

Under ideal circumstances, ecotourism provides local economic benefits (e.g. employment, improved infrastructure, increased business for local stores) while also maintaining ecological resource integrity through low-impact, non-consumptive resource use. Those who advocate ecotourism as a viable conservation option cite its potentially non-consumptive nature and its financial promise (Jacobson & Robles, 1992). Unlike many sustainable harvesting initiatives, eco tourism consistently provides a financial return per hectare competitive with current land uses. For instance, Ceballos-Lascurain (1996) cites a study estimating Amboseli National Park's financial value (attributable mostly to tourism) at US\$40 /ha, as compared to less than US\$0.80 /ha when used for agriculture. Another study by Munn (1991, as cited by Brandon, 1996) found that each free-flying macaw in Peru generated between US\$750 and US\$ 4700 annually in tourism revenues. Ecotourism can also substantially contribute to the local economy, especially when local residents are involved in its management and operations (Lindberg et al., 1996; Wunder, 2000).

In some cases, ecotourism financially supports protected areas through tourism-related park fees. The mere existence of an ecotourism lodge increases the number of people visiting the area and, consequently, the gross revenues contributed to park management. Moreover, in many cases ecotourism offers the economic justification necessary to establish a protected area (Brandon, 1996). Ecotourism can also offer success above and beyond that of a traditional integrated conservation and development project. Because ecotourism brings people closer to local markets, it can be an important, low-cost mechanism for local businesses and artisans to market and sell their goods (Healy, 1994). Thus, ecotourism serves as a spin-off for other businesses.

Brandon (1996) also discusses ecotourism's role in building a constituency to promote conservation and providing an impetus for private conservation efforts. Under such circumstances, conservation benefits can extend beyond the immediate scale of the ecotourism venture, as ecotourists (national and international) become active advocates for conservation in the area visited, as well as in their home towns or countries. Where ecotourism serves as an impetus to private conservation efforts, it essentially expands the scope and diversity of protected areas.



Tourism Development In Four Costa Rica Area

The Manuel Antonio region on the Pacific Coast of Costa Rica is easily accessible from San José. The combination of easy accessibility, growing investments and scenic beauty made the region one of the most visited areas in the country. Tourism in the region began in the 1960s when a road was built from San José to Quepos. In 1972, on the insistence of the local communities, the national government created a recreation park to preserve remaining areas of natural coastal vegetation (J. Badilla 2002, personal communication). Later, in an attempt to protect it from the damage caused by tourism, the area was reclassified as a National Park (Manuel Antonio National Park; MANP). In 1979, MANP was visited by 30,000 people. In the 1980s, Northern Americans started tourism businesses here, and the tourism industry really took off. It is estimated that in 2003 around 200,000 tourists—mostly foreigners—visited the region (Cordero 2004). Since then, the number of visitors to the Manuel Antonio region has increased even more (M. Esperla, 2002/2005 personal communication). Tourism in the Manuel Antonio region is not solely nature based. A study by Ankersmid and Kelder (2001) revealed that most tourists (61%) were interested in the combination of nature and beaches. Only, 17% of tourists mentioned nature as the main reason for visiting the area.

The Monteverde region is situated in the Northwestern part of Costa Rica on the Tilaran Mountain range around the Continental Divide. The altitude of the area varies from about 600 to 1,842 m. Tropical Montane Cloud Forest, one of the world's most threatened ecosystems, covers much of the Monteverde region (Nadkarni and Wheelwright 2000). There are three main protected areas in the region—the Monteverde Cloud Forest Preserve (MCFP, founded in 1972), Bosque Eterno de los Niños (BEN, founded in 1986) and the Santa Elena Reserve (SER, founded in 1992). Although scientific tourism in the Monteverde region started earlier, commercial tourism didn't really take off until the 1980s. This surge was partly due to a documentary broadcast by the BBC in 1978. The creation of the BE and SER helped the region gain further fame as a green tourist location (Aylward et al. 1996). Still, because the area is relatively isolated due to its bad traffic connections, tourism numbers have never risen as high as in the Manuel Antonio region. MCFP, which almost all tourists to this area visit, had almost 55,000 visitors in 2000 (Burlingame 2000). As in the Manuel Antonio region, the number of tourists to the Monteverde region has increased rapidly in the last couple of years to an estimated 75,000 in 2004 (M. Cruz, 2005, personal communication).

The Tortuguero region, a backwater area in the province of Limón, is situated on the Caribbean Coast. The region is relatively isolated as all traffic is water based. Getting to the region requires a boat trip of at least 45 min. Swamps combined with tropical rainforest are the region's main ecosystems. With a record of over 2,600 different species of plants and trees, Tortuguero's biodiversity is very high (Solano Marín 1992). Tortuguero National Park (TNP) was created in 1975 to protect sea turtles. The region began to attract a few tourists in the late 1980s. Since 1996, the annual number of visitors to NP has grown from 9,000 to an estimated 80,000 persons in 2004. This year around 90% of all visitors were foreign. Mostly, nature lovers visit the region. Apart from natural beauty, the region has no other tourist attractions. Tortuguero hardly receives individual visitors as most tourists arrange a package tour in San José. This consists of the trip to the region and an overnight stay in one of a limited number of lodges. (D. Loth, 2002/2005, personal communication; Reyes and Troëng 2002; Harrison and Troëng 2005).

The Asociación Comunal para el Manejo Forestal (ASCOMA FOR) stimulates com-munal development and forest protection in the rural-mixed tropical lowlands. ASCO MAFOR is situated in the province of Alajuela, a 3.5-h car drive from San José. In 2001 TACOMA FOR initiated a community-based tourism project in the communities of Ouebrada Grande, Santa Elena, Garabito and San Marcos. They work together with Ecoteach (a United States/Costa Rican-based conservation organization). The four com-munities each independently try to provide tourists with facilities. ASCOMAFOR unites them by promoting tourism and by providing resources. Annually, 850 tourists (mostly youngsters aged 11-18) live with Costa Rican families and follow cultural, ecological (reforestation) and horticultural programs. Recently, a women's organization has taken the initiative to transform part of their homes to cater for independent tourists. In 2004, they received 218 visitors (J. P. Ruiz, 2002, personal communication; O. Vargas, 2002/2005 personal communication). All tourists in the region are foreign.

Economic impacts of tourism in the research areas:

Economically, the Manuel Antonio and the Monteverde region benefit from an increase in foreign exchange as a result of tourist spending in hotels, restaurants and souvenirs shops. In the Monteverde region, almost all of this money stays in the region. For example, many of the handicrafts sold are also produced here. Tourism has diversified the local economy rather than resulted in a loss of other resource bases (Burlingame 2000; M. A. Méndez 2002, personal communication; W. Parejeles, 2002/2005, personal communication) However, in the Manuel Antonio region, local ownership of tourist facilities is very low which causes much economic leakage out of the region (X. Delgado, 2002, personal communication; Duim et al. 2001). Also, contrary to the Monteverde region, only few handicrafts are produced here, so the linkages between tourism and other economic sectors are weak (G. Acuña, 2002, personal communication; A. C. Alvarado, 2002, personal communication; Duim et al. 2001). Both regions suffer from inflation of local prices, which makes it difficult for local people to make ends meet (G. Acuña, 2002, personal communication; Chamberlain 2000; X. Delgado, 2002, personal communication).

Although foreign money is spent in the Tortuguero region, the emphasis on package tours means that most money is made outside the region and that there is little room for local entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, tourism has brought some more money to the local economy, especially to local guides. Nowadays, the region is very much dependent on tourism and subject to inflation (D. Loth, 2002/2005, personal communication; V. Vargas, 2002/2005, personal communication; S. Troëng, 2005, personal communication; Place 1998: 115). The small scale of tourism with ASCOMA FOR brings only little extra income to the region. On the other hand, tourism is community based, which means that it only employs locals, and all foreign exchange stays within the region. No other economic drawbacks are observed (T. Rodríguez, 2002, personal communication; C. E. Sibaja, 2002/ 2005, personal communication).

Social impacts of tourism in the research area:

Tourism in both the Manuel Antonio and the Monteverde region has stimulated locals to improve their education (e.g., the private college of ecotourism). Medical care has also, and women have gained empowerment (C. Aruya, 2002, personal communication; M. Gonzales, 2002/2005, personal communication; Koningen 1996; J. Vargas, 2002, personal communication). Support given to local culture in the Monteverde region is another positive aspect of tourism. In the Manuel Antonio region, on the other hand, cultural disintegration is perceived, especially between different generations (Arts and Gudden 2002; Delgado personal communication). In both regions, the growing number of tourists and immigrants has caused community organization to diminish. In the Monteverde region, this has caused the community development planning system to stop functioning effectively (N. Scrimshaw, 2002, personal communication). Also, the increased access to alcohol and an increase in crime rates are considered troublesome in these regione (Acuña et al. 2000; Chaves, personal communication; Koningen 1996; Moffat 2000; F. Nuñez. 2002. personal communication). Drug abuse and prostitution are said to have become troublesome in the Manuel Antonio region as well. Another negative social aspect of tourism in the Manuel Antonio region is that the higher prices in this region cause locals to be excluded from some tourist facilities and parts of the coastal area (Duij et al. 2001; Verger, personal communication).

In the Tortuguero region, the package tour structure limits the contacts between locals and tourists. Also, local people appear to make little use of the recreational facilities. Tourism development has nevertheless slightly stimulated the improvement of education infrastructure and medical facilities in the region (J. Madden, 2002, personal

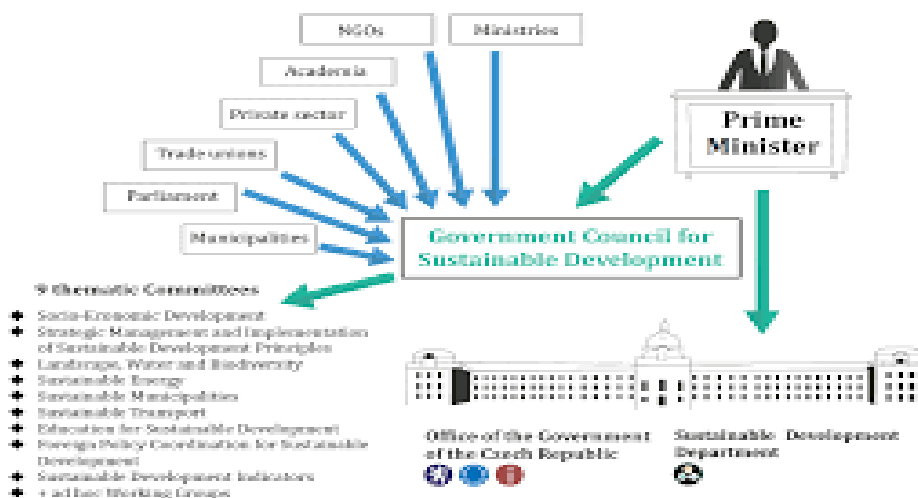
communication; J. Montana, 2002, personal communication; E. Orlando, 2002, personal communication). Following the influx of tourists, women also gained empowerment. The Women's Association that manages the recycling plant exemplifies this (J. Madden, 2002 personal communication). However, frictions about how the incoming communal money should be used have been reported too. This has had a negative effect on the way people deal with environmental and social issues. Also, alienation has taken place in the community, possibly as a result of the influx of tourism workers (D. Loth, 2002/2005 personal communication). Tourism with ASCOMA FOR integrates local education and culture in the tourist experience and stimulates intercultural exchanges. Women are the leading force behind tourism with ASCOMAFOR, and in this way, they have gained empowerment. Unfortunately, the positive effects of tourism remain limited due to the small scale of tourism. On the other hand, no negative social aspects of tourism were mentioned either (G. Alvarez, 2002, personal communication; G. Espinoza, 2002, personal communication; M. Hernandez, 2002, personal communication; O. Vargas, 2002/2005 personal communication).

Eco-adventure holidays:

Being one of the first countries to embrace eco-tourism, Costa Rica has benefited enormously from its international reputation. Over the last decade, however, competition for the eco-tourist dollar has grown. Many MEDCs have increased their market share and have been joined by LEDCs including Madagascar, Borneo and Namibia – all hoping to become the ‘next big thing’.[4] Costa Rica, with its well-educated and entrepreneurial population, has not been slow to react and its natural resources are now being used to appeal to a different sector of the market. Less drawn to bird- and wildlife-watching (although these still appeal as part of the holiday), young, single professionals and families with a larger disposable income want to take part in more active eco-adventure holidays. Costa Rican-owned companies such as Aventuras Naturales and Rios Tropicales, who were originally involved in the development of the country's white-water rafting business, have now expanded to take advantage of this eco-adventure market. Activities they offer include:

- Flying through the canopy of the rainforest on zip wires. The largest of these is located near volcan arenal and involves being hurled at speeds of up to 40mph along 700 metre-long cables, 65 metres above the forest floor.
- Other canopy adventures where participants travel through the trees using ropes, harnesses and treetop platforms.
- Horse riding, ranging from gentle meanders taking in mud baths near active volcanoes to high- speed gallops across the plains of guanacaste.
- Central america's longest water slide (measuring 450 metres) near rincon de la vieja national park.
- Rafting or kayaking down some of the world's best white-water rivers with grades of rapids from easy to the extremely tough grade six . Some trips may involve overnight stays in eco- lodges that are only accessible from the water.
- Mountain biking, either cross- country or downhill, from the central highlands to the oceanic plains – costa rica also plays host to two of the world's toughest endurance races each year.
- Popular hiking trips through the rainforests and up the mountains on single- or multi-day excursions – a four-day ascent of chirripo, the country's highest peak at 3820 metres, for instance, books up several months in advance.

By providing such a wide variety of activities, Costa Rican eco-adventure tourism appeals to many different types of traveller and the business has expanded greatly from its initial concentration on surfing and scuba diving. Although no actual figures exist for the economic benefits, this sector of the economy is growing and employs an increasing number of people, from highly qualified guides to chefs and drivers.



III. CONCLUSION

Special interest tourism and its relatively broad definition represent a white spot, providing opportunities for further research. The future special interest tourism research agenda includes a lot of challenging issues, such as – for example – What is the potential of special interest tourism to become a significant niche within the tourism industry?; How (whether really) special interest tourists differ from mass tourists?; What are the tourist operators' and companies' strategies to present their products and attract potential customers?; What is the impact of visiting special tourism attractions on individuals' experiences, attitudes and future travel behaviours?, etc.

Even though many special interest tourism attractions in Europe and specifically in the Czech Republic draw considerable numbers of tourists, it is a question whether they are able to generate a bigger contribution to local economies by motivating tourists to extend their stay and spend more money in the region or locality (e.g., Frantál & Urbánková, 2017). The cooperation between companies, tourist agencies and regional and local authorities seems to be a critical point for a more effective exploitation of special interest tourism potential in regions. Analysing the constraints of industrial tourism development, Otgaar (2012) emphasized that the interests of public and private actors are often fundamentally different or even conflictual concerning the number, composition, and spread of the flow of tourists and visitors.

McKercher and Chan (2005) even pointed out that much of the research documenting the size and importance of special interest tourism is based on secondary analysis of visitor survey data and presupposes the existence of a direct correlation between actions and motivations. They illustrated that the true importance of special interest tourism is many times overrated. The paper provided the introduction and overview of the regional resources of the special interest tourism in the Czech Republic, that may open the way to future, more systematic research. The synthesis of the results could help to diversify general tourism offers and mitigate the over-dependence on 'traditional mass' tourism activities. The findings focused in detail on five selected types of special interest tourism: entertainment, adventure, nature, cultural, and industrial tourism.

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