

ANALYSIS OF TOURISM SERVICES IN THE CZECH-POLISH PART OF THE EUROREGION NEISSE

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Abstract: The border areas are influenced by the cross-border visitation of tourists, which is usually of a short-term character. These are shopping, exploring natural attractions, commuting to work, visiting friends and relatives, attending cultural and social events, and transit transport.

In the course of 2018-2019 a joint research of EF TUL and UE Wroclaw was carried out to determine the quality of tourism services in the Czech - Polish border area. The aim of the research was to find out how respondents perceive and evaluate the quality of services. Almost 1000 respondents on the Czech and Polish side evaluated transport services, accommodation services, sports and recreational services, catering services and the position of information centers. The paper presents the results of this research.

Keywords: Tourism services, Czech-Polish area, quality of services, research, cross-border comparison

JEL Classification: Z32

INTRODUCTION

Over the last twenty years social media and networking have gained popularity and interest among the young, middle aged and elderly. It can be declared, however with caution, that it is the young who are connected to the social media the most. They use social media for several purposes of which social networking seems to be the most important and leading cause. According to James Mageto (2017) these social sites impact the lives of our youth in a society a great deal in terms of morals, behavior and even education-wise. The purpose of this study was to examine social networking among university students at Szent István University, Gödöllő, Hungary.

1. THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

In an era of global competition, where many tourist destinations are offered, the competitive advantages in tourism can be divided into three areas: basic supply (natural and historical attractions), derived supply (infrastructure and human factor), and service quality. (Rogoziński, 2005)

The last part, service quality, is the subject of the presented research. Service quality has been defined differently by different authors. Parasuraman et al. (1985) defined service quality as "the degree and direction of mismatch between customer perception and expectations" and "perceived service quality" as "the gap between customer's expectations and perception as a measure of service quality". The smaller gap, the better the quality of services and the greatest customer satisfaction. (Demir, 2013) Measurement of service quality has gained increased attention in tourist literature in recent years (Hudson & et al, 2004, Voss, Spangenberg & Grohmann, 2003). Service quality is a constant term in all modern industries and is one of the basic strategies to achieve customer satisfaction. (Akroush et al., 2016) The definition of service quality can be divided into two areas:

- Technology-driven and product-oriented definitions that defined quality in terms of compliance with requirements based on company specifications.
- Market-oriented and customer-oriented definitions, as appropriate, that focus on customer benefit and satisfaction. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007)

Tourism products are characterized by immateriality, short durability, heterogeneity, and the human factor. Many destinations offer similar or the same services that clients receive when staying in different destinations, so quality becomes critical to differentiating one destination from another. According to Palatková (2006), quality is what the client wants, plus what the destination can offer to the client in differentiating and profiling their product compared to competitors. Quality has a very subjective character in the field of tourism services. The quality of the service – tourism product – according to the ČSN ISO 9004-2 (Kvalita, 2014) standard is given both by defining the need that the service should satisfy, the nature of the service in terms of value added for the customer, but also by comparing comparable services with each other. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007)

The proximity of Poland led the Department of Marketing and Trade of the Faculty of Economics of the Technical University in Liberec to decide to carry out primary research on the quality of tourism services in the Czech-Polish border area. The Faculty of Economics cooperates with Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny, Wydział Ekonomii and Zarządzania i Turystyki w Jeleniej Górze and therefore the research was carried out on both sides of the border. **The aim of the paper is to identify the quality of provided services in the Czech-Polish part of the Neisse Euroregion based on primary research.** The Czech-Polish border area under investigation is part of the Neisse – Nisa – Nysa Euroregion. The Euroregion was established in 1991 on the territory of three border regions, the Czech Republic, the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Poland. All three areas are connected by many common problems and interests, resulting from similar systemic changes and from many years of common history. The Neisse River, which also forms the border between Germany and Poland, is the unifying element of the whole territory and a traditional symbol of mutual cooperation of all parts of the territory.

The length of the state border of the Czech-Polish territory within the Euroregion is 130 km. In total, there are 6 road, 17 pedestrian and 2 railway border crossings.

- **The Czech part** of the Euroregion comprises four tourist regions: Bohemian Paradise, Českolipsko, Krkonoše and Jizera Mountains. Natural formations and sights, historical monuments and cultural institutions, sports areas and facilities make this territory an important area for recreation and tourism. (Dědková, Ungerman, 2017)
- **The Polish part** of the Euroregion consists of 51 municipalities in the Lower Silesian Voivodeship. It is a mid-sized and densely populated voivodeship, divided into 26 districts and 4 urban districts. The capital of the voivodeship is Wrocław. (Ozimek & Szlachciuk, 2016).

The border area lies at the border with a neighbouring state and includes the border area of a neighbouring state, which is different from the concept of a border area that includes only the territory at the borders of one state. Cross-border tourism is the activity of persons traveling to the borders of a neighbouring state outside their usual environment for less than one complete year, for leisure, trade and other purposes not related to gainful activity.

Tourism in border areas is divided according to three criteria:

- recreational tourism;
- cultural tourism;
- tourism focused on exploring natural beauty

The Czech-Polish cross-border area has excellent natural conditions for the development of tourism. The offer of tourist destinations in this area goes hand in hand with a wide range of quality accommodation and catering facilities as well as well-developed infrastructure that ensures easy accessibility of the location. Some parts of the region are sought after due to less widespread specific activities such as church tourism, sightseeing and wellness. (Myslivcová, 2019)

2. METHODOLOGY

Secondary data and primary research on the Czech and Polish side of the Neisse Euroregion were used for the paper. Secondary sources led to the characterization of the theoretical concept of service quality. The primary research was carried out by trained interviewers who were students of EF TU in Liberec

on the Czech side and Wydział Ekonomii, Zarządzania i Turystyki w Jeleniej Górze on the Polish side. The method of personal interviewing was chosen for the primary quantitative research.

To fulfil all the research objectives, the structured questionnaire had two parts. The first part was devoted directly to the evaluation of services in six areas: transport services, accommodation services, sports and recreational services, information services, local infrastructure services and catering. Each of these six areas was then determined in more detail. The questions were scaled, where respondents could answer on a scale of one to five. Descriptive statistics, mean, mode, median and standard deviation were used for evaluation. The t-test was used to determine the differences between the Polish and Czech regions. This is a parametric test assuming that sample standard deviations can serve as an estimate for population standard deviation and account for a normal distribution of the measured trait.

The second part then dealt with categorical questions concerning sex, education and age. The results are processed in the form of tables. Pearson's chi-squared test was used to evaluate categorical questions to determine if there were significant differences in respondents' answers. The paper does not present critical values, but only p-value; tests were performed on the significance level $\alpha=0.05$. To determine the differences in the evaluation of quality, the following hypothesis was put forward:

H0: There are no statistically significant differences in the answers to the categorical question.

H1: non H0

3. RESULTS

The survey took place from September 2018 to March 2019 in the Czech-Polish part of the Neisse Euroregion. For data collection the Czech part was divided into 15 territorial units and the Polish part into 8 territorial units. The aim was to obtain objective information from all parts of the region, so the division was carried out so as to target the maximum number of tourist locations. The research was conducted by trained students by personal interviewing. From each of the 23 sub-regions, students were to collect 50 responses. The final evaluation included 640 respondents on the Czech territory and 416 respondents on the Polish territory.

3.1 Assessment of service quality in the regions

The assessment of service quality on the Polish side of the Neisse Euroregion was carried out in eight locations. Table 1 shows only averages for six aggregated service areas. The assessment is supplemented by the mean averages and the table is sorted according to this value from the highest quality to the lowest quality.

Table 1: Assessment of service quality, Polish region

	Transport services	Accommodation services	Sports and recreation services	Information services – IC	Local infrastructure services	Catering	average
Karpacz	1,92	1,81	2,2	2,28	2,19	2,17	2,09
Sklarská Poreba	2,24	2,09	2,08	2,44	2,47	2,24	2,26
Zgorzelec	1,92	1,69	2,23	2,43	2,9	2,8	2,32
Jelenia Góra	2,56	2,34	2,64	2,44	2,47	2,37	2,47
Bolesławiec	2,17	2,14	2,35	2,75	2,28	3,14	2,47
Kamienna Góra	2,52	2,34	2,24	2,74	2,91	2,27	2,52
Lwówek Śl.	2,63	2,39	2,46	3,16	2,58	3,04	2,71
Lubań	2,94	2,96	2,97	3,04	3,07	3,27	3,04

0 – not sure, 1 – highest quality, 5 – lowest quality

Source:own

The results are ranked according to average quality of service in each area. If the resulting values are divided into two equal intervals, into good (1; 3) and poor (3; 5), it can be stated that respondents consider on average six destinations as good. Only one destination is closely designated as poor quality. Respondents identified the highest quality services in Karpacz, which is clearly the most visited place in the Polish part of the Neisse Euroregion. It contains, for example, the Gołębiewski Hotel with the largest bed capacity in Poland (1,800 beds in 880 rooms). Karpacz is the second most visited place after Zakopane in Poland, which is also associated with the quantity and quality of services provided. The Poreba glassworks, which the respondents rated as the second highest quality, is, like Karpacz, part of the Krkonoše National Park of Poland. Third place in the quality of services went to the city of Zgorzelec, which lies on the border with Germany and directly adjacent to Gorlitz. Zgorzelec is busy with cross-border traffic, which promotes quality of service. (Kachniewska, 2002) On the other hand, the city of Lubań got the worst rating; this city is not very popular with tourists. This probably corresponds to the inferior quality of services.

The Czech region was divided into five parts for the evaluation of services. Each part was then divided into three localities. These were:

- Liberec District: 1) Frýdlant Hook: Hejnice, Nové Město, Jindřichovice, Frýdlant. 2) Liberec. 3) Český Dub, Sychrov, Osečná, Jablonné
- Jablonec nad Nisou District: 1) Tanvald, Desná, Smržovka, Velké Hamry. 2) Železný Brod, Malá Skála, Zásada. 3) Jablonec n.N., Bedřichov, Janov n.N., Lučany n.N.,
- Česká Lípa District: 1) Cvikov, Nový Bor, Kamenický Šenov. 2) Zákupy, Mimoň, Ralsko, Hamr na jezeře. 3) Č.Lípa, Doksy, Dubá, Ústěk
- Semily District: 1) Turnov and Bohemian Paradise 2) Semily, Lomnice n.P., Jilemnice, Poniklá, Vysoké n.J., 3) Harrachov, Rokytnice n.J., Benecko.
- Šluknov Hook: 1) Varnsdorf, Jiřetín, Chřibská, Rybníště, Doubice. 2) Krásná Lípa, Rumburk, Jirkov, Brtníky. 3) Šluknov, Mikulášovice, Dolní Pustevna, Lobendava

Table 2: Assessment of service quality, Czech region

Locality	Transport services	Accommodation services	Sports and recreation services	Information services - IC	Local infrastructure services	Catering	Average
Liberec District	2,23	2,3	2,6	2,43	2,45	2,4	2,41
1)	2,7	2,3	2,3	2,3	2,5	2,3	2,40
2)	1,9	2,3	2,4	2,1	2,4	2	2,18
3)	2,1	2,3	3,1	2,9	2,5	2,9	2,63
Jablonec n.N. District	2,26	2,23	2,6	2,76	2,36	2,73	2,49
1)	2,4	2,2	2,3	3,2	2,3	2,9	2,55
2)	2,1	2,3	3,1	2,8	2,5	2,9	2,62
3)	2,3	2,2	2,4	2,3	2,3	2,4	2,32
Česká Lípa District	2,39	2,78	2,49	2,81	2,87	2,62	2,66
1)	2,22	2,81	2,12	2,9	3,1	2,22	2,56
2)	2,27	2,93	2,95	2,94	3,01	3,04	2,86
3)	2,7	2,6	2,4	2,6	2,5	2,6	2,57
Semily District	2,56	2,66	2,73	2,5	2,56	3,1	2,69
1)	2,6	2,2	3,3	2,2	2,4	3,3	2,67
2)	2,6	2,6	2,4	2,6	2,5	2,5	2,53
3)	2,5	3,2	2,5	2,7	2,8	3,5	2,87
Šluknov Hook	2,39	2,96	2,83	2,96	3,1	3,04	2,88
1)	2,57	2,53	2,33	2,61	2,41	2,95	2,57
2)	2,37	3,23	3,05	3,07	3,4	2,94	3,01
3)	2,22	3,11	3,12	3,2	3,5	3,22	3,06

0 – not sure, 1 – highest quality, 5 – lowest quality

Source:own

In the Czech Republic, the Liberec District and the Liberec Region were the best rated. It is also the most visited locality of the Czech part of the Neisse Euroregion. On the contrary, the worst ranking was given to places in the Šluknov Hook. In this locality there is an absence of larger cities and related services. Almost all values are on average (2; 3), which can be described as moderate satisfaction with services. Only two areas exceeded 3, which can be described as mild dissatisfaction with services. Both localities with a rating over 3 are in the Šluknov Hook.

3.2 Cross-border comparison of service quality

The main objective of the research was to identify differences in the quality of services provided on the Czech and Polish sides of the Neisse Euroregion. Massive data collection was carried out in 23 localities. Due to the extent of the research, the resulting data is huge, but due to the extent of the paper, only the overall and average values are presented. Table 3 summarizes data from all localities in the Czech Republic into one set, and data from Poland is aggregated into another set.

Table 3: Comparison of quality of services in the Czech Republic vs. Poland

	Czech Republic		Poland		p-value	Difference in averages
	mean	sd	mean	sd		
Σ Transport services	2,65		3,0			
Condition of roads	2,6	1,079	2,9	0,976	0,391002	-0,3
Size of parking lot	2,7	1,241	2,9	1,182	0,309407	-0,2
Information signage	2,1	1,120	2,5	1,092	0,391002	-0,4
Availability of parking	3,2	1,293	3,6	1,162	0,277512	-0,4
Σ Accommodation services	2,9		2,8			0,1
Composition of accommodation facilities	2,8	1,441	2,5	1,449	0,335519	0,3
Equipment, furnishing	2,6	1,550	3,6	1,466	0,039704	-1,0
Offer of activities, trips by accommodation supplier	2,9	1,519	2,6	1,558	0,319845	0,3
Behaviour of staff	3,2	2,098	2,3	1,427	0,045859	0,9
Σ Sports – recreation services	2,3		2,4			-0,1
Well-maintained natural trails without garbage	2,1	1,021	2,3	1,134	0,205385	-0,2
Clear signage	2,1	1,088	2,3	1,08	0,413223	-0,2
Sufficient number of shelters, rest areas, waste bins, kiosks	2,8	1,199	2,8	1,132	0,35531	0,0
Readable, understandable information materials	2,2	1,262	2,3	1,108	0,81514	-0,1
Σ Information services - IC	2,0		2,3			-0,3
Clear information leaflets	2,1	1,283	2,3	1,304	0,172632	-0,2
Behaviour of staff	2,0	1,265	2,2	1,312	0,27385	-0,2
Suitable opening hours IC	2,1	1,260	2,4	1,377	0,211704	-0,3
Easy accessibility	2,0	1,246	2,3	1,327	0,145329	-0,3
Speed of service provided	2,0	1,238	2,3	1,373	0,205405	-0,3
Σ Local infrastructure services	3,1		2,9			0,2
Good location of public services	2,8	1,221	2,6	1,093	0,391002	0,2
Well maintained green areas	2,6	1,094	2,5	1,054	0,235255	0,1
Clean roads	2,9	1,059	2,6	1,073	0,391002	0,3
Public WC	3,9	1,641	3,6	2,233	0,37152	0,3
ATMs	2,7	1,511	2,8	1,614	0,511278	-0,1
Possibility to pay by card	3,5	1,330	3,2	1,119	0,391002	0,3
Availability of Wi-Fi	3,1	2,293	2,9	1,588	0,342247	0,2
Σ Catering	3,2		3,0			0,2
High quality food and drinks	3,1	1,113	2,9	1,083	0,449966	0,2
Behaviour of staff	3,5	1,166	3,2	1,047	0,92138	0,3
Menu clarity	3,1	1,138	3,2	1,052	0,932148	-0,1
Environment of catering areas	2,9	1,198	2,3	1,149	0,705722	0,6
Speed of service provided	3,2	1,149	3,3	1,032	0,928964	-0,1
Σ	2,71		2,73			-0,018

not sure, 1 – highest quality, 5 – lowest quality

Source:own

The table indicates values that are exceptional. If the quality rating of services is divided by 3 into good quality and poor quality services, the table shows that most services are rated as good quality. Respondents in the Czech Republic cited eight types of services as poor quality. The greatest dissatisfaction in the Czech Republic with services is in catering. The lack of public toilets, the availability of Wi-Fi, staff behaviour and the lack of parking spaces are also negatively assessed. On the Polish side, respondents are also dissatisfied with catering, card payment, public toilets and lack of parking spaces. Respondents in the Czech Republic and Poland are satisfied with the other services. The standard deviation shows how large the variance in the responses is. The limit for SD was set at 2, which was

exceeded only by the availability of Wi-Fi and staff behaviour in the Czech Republic, and lack of public toilets in Poland. Respondents agree on the other assessments, as evidenced by the low variance. Parametric t tests were performed to determine the differences between the quality of services in the Czech Republic and Poland. (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). Parametric tests are more accurate, but have several conditions that were met. All data were used for the calculation and the resulting p-value is presented in the table. The differences between quality assessment in the Czech Republic and Poland were statistically insignificant for most parameters. Only two attributes were statistically significant, both of which are in the area of accommodation. To analyse the differences in detail, a differential analysis was performed. Differences are in favour of Poland are marked in colour, other differences are in favour of the Czech Republic. However, the observed differences do not exceed the value of one. Overall, the differences in the provision of services between the Czech Republic and Poland are minimal. Only a few sub-evaluations show some differences.

3.3 Effect of categorical questions

The first part of the questionnaire dealt with the quality of services; the second part of the questionnaire dealt with the characteristics of respondents. Respondents were asked about three characteristics: education, age and gender. Pearson's chi-squared test of good agreement was used to identify differences in respondents' responses. The test is always used separately for respondents from the Czech Republic and Poland. The resulting values are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Effect of categorical parameters in respondents

Czech Republic								
Education			Age			Gender		
University	144	22,51	Do 18	30	4,68	male	280	43,75
Secondary school	356	55,62	18-29	314	49,06	female	360	56,25
Trained with graduation	103	16,09	30-39	114	17,83			
Trained, basic	37	5,78	40-49	118	18,43			
			50-59	42	6,57			
			60 and more	22	3,43			
total	640	100 %	total	640	100 %	total	640	100%
p-value	$\alpha=0.05$	0.04233	p-value	$\alpha=0.05$	0.03191	p-value	$\alpha=0.05$	0.09455
Poland								
Education			Age			Gender		
University	78	18,75	Do 18	10	2,40	male	206	49,51
Secondary school	242	58,18	18-29	207	49,76	female	210	50,49
Trained with graduation	70	16,82	30-39	97	23,31			
Trained, basic	26	6,25	40-49	57	13,70			
			50-59	31	7,47			
			60 and more	14	3,36			
total	416	100 %	total	416	100 %	total	416	100 %
p-value	$\alpha=0.05$	0.1212	p-value	$\alpha=0.05$	0.03841	p-value	$\alpha=0.05$	0.0945

Source:own

The sample of Czech respondents was 360 women (56.3%) and 280 men (43.8%). The largest group of respondents (49.1%) was in the range of 18-29 years, the next group were respondents in the category 40-49 (18.4%). The category 30-39 represented 17.8% of respondents. In the age group 50-59 there were 6.6% of respondents and the least represented categories were respondents under 18 years of age (4.7%) and respondents over 60 years of age (3.4%). Over half of the respondents (55.6%) had secondary education, 22.5% had basic education, and 21.9% reported having completed apprenticeships.

On the Polish side of the Neisse Euroregion, 416 respondents participated in the survey, of which 50.5% (210) were women and 49.5% (206) were men. The overwhelming majority of Polish respondents, 49.8%, belonged to the 18-29 age group. 23.3% of the respondents were between 30 and 39 years old, 13.7% of the respondents were 40-49 years old, 7.5% of the respondents were 50 to 59 years old, and a negligible number, 2.4%, were less than 18 years old. 3.4% of respondents were in the category over 60 years of age. Of all respondents, 58% were secondary school students, 19% were university graduates and 6% of respondents reported primary education.

For respondents in the Czech Republic, statistically significant differences were identified in education and age, where the hypothesis H0 can be rejected and the hypothesis H1 accepted. For respondents from Poland, there are statistically significant differences only at the age where H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted.

4. DISCUSSION

The assessment of the quality of services in individual regions of the Czech Republic and Poland shows that there is a correlation between the attractiveness of the location and the quality of services. For example, Liberec and Ještěd are the most visited places in the Czech Republic, and at the same time respondents are most satisfied with the services provided. On the other hand, the Šluknov Hook is an undiscovered locality with low traffic. In this area, respondents were most dissatisfied with the quality of services. The same correlation is evident in the Polish localities where Karpacz and the Sklářská Poreba are associated with the highest quality of services, while being the most visited locations in the Lower Silesian Voivodeship.

The quality of service was compared in 29 aspects. From this perspective there were two where a statistically significant difference was identified. This is the "quality of accommodation" section, where respondents in the Czech Republic were more satisfied with the accommodation facilities, while Polish respondents were much more satisfied with staff behaviour. Other aspects of the assessment were very similar in both the Czech Republic and Poland. Overall, however, variations in quality evaluation are minimal. Deviations in quality evaluation are only due to subjective responses and are not statistically significant.

Categorical questions were used to determine more detailed characteristics of respondents and their answers. For respondents from the Czech Republic, statistically significant differences were identified in education and age. The responses were subsequently separated according to these parameters to determine where the differences lie. It was found that the higher the education, the lower the satisfaction with the offer of services. Higher education is often associated with a higher income, and these people have higher demands on the quality of services. They are also willing to pay for quality services. A correlation between age and satisfaction was identified. The threshold is 40 years of age. Younger respondents were more satisfied with the quality of services than respondents 41 and older. This is probably due to the quality demands of older respondents. For younger respondents, the location is decisive and services are only ancillary. Among Polish respondents, statistically significant differences were identified only for age. In the case of Polish respondents, younger respondents were again more satisfied with the quality of services than older respondents. The limit value for Polish respondents is 50 years of age. Older respondents were significantly less satisfied with the quality of services provided.

CONCLUSIONS

Border areas are affected by cross-border traffic, which is usually of a short-term nature. These are shopping, exploring natural attractions, commuting to work, visiting friends and relatives, attending cultural and social events, and transit transport. Based on the research, several recommendations can be made; information centres should provide information in multiple languages, especially in German and Polish. Border regions should jointly promote marketing through information centres. They should create joint promotional materials to promote tourism, and present them together at tourism exhibitions. Poland and the Czech Republic have a lot to offer each other. Due to their geographical location, they are easily accessible. Currently, the offer of travel agencies and agencies more or less follows the demand of tourists from both countries. The offer includes both the most frequent tourist destinations and the most in-demand services. However, it is necessary to update, expand and modify the offer and make it more attractive for young people in the future. It is young people who are the future of outbound tourism; they form their own opinion on the destination and do not let themselves be influenced by others. Based on our findings in the 18-29 age group, more than half of the respondents had not yet visited a neighbouring country. This age group likes to travel frequently, and likes getting to know new places, so the tourism industry's communication should be targeted to this category.

The aim of the paper was to identify the quality of services in the Czech and Polish parts of the Neisse Euroregion. This goal was achieved by massive data collection and subsequent evaluation. Due to the extent of the paper, only the overall results are presented. The paper summarizes basic information about the quality of services in the Czech Republic and Poland. The information may be useful for service providers in these regions. At the same time, data can be used by visitors to these regions or government officials. Another direction of research could be to carry out the same research in the German part of the Neisse Euroregion.

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