



Original article

Evaluation of sustainable tourism potential of the principle Giant Mountains resorts in the Czech Republic

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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes a new methodology for assessing the potential of sustainable tourism. It examines the overall potential of the landscape when faced with the negative impacts of tourism. Our assessment combines components of tourism and environmental sustainability. The methodology involved consultation with experts, and verification by tourists before being applied to the study area. The methodology was then applied to selected tourism centres in the Giant Mountains. The Giant Mountains are a popular tourist destination thanks to their outstanding natural beauty, and represent significant potential for tourism development. They are also one of the most over-burdened regions from tourism in the Czech Republic. However, many negative impacts of tourism exist, reducing the overall tourism potential of the region. Comparative results from the individual tourist centres in the study reveal the significant impact of potentially reducing attributes. Our assessment of the potential for sustainable tourism development in the area thus combines the environmental aspect of sustainable forms of tourism, with the identification of the most serious threats that need to be avoided to maintain the environment in the long-term. The results reveal the significant impact of excessive and inappropriate infrastructure and housing, as well as insufficient environmental education and legislation.

KEY WORDS: tourism potential, sustainable tourism, potential assessment, the Giant Mountains

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1. Introduction

According to the EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2007), “sustainable tourism is tourism which is economically and socially viable without detracting from the environment and local culture.” However, in areas heavily affected by mass tourism it is difficult to balance economic interests with social and environmental concerns. VYSTOUPIL ET AL. (2017) cite studies by PECHLANER & TSCHURTSCHENTHALER (2003), SAARINEN (2003), WALL & MATHIESON (2006) and TELFER & SHARPLEY (2002) and provide several benefits of tourism for the development and economic prosperity of mountain areas. Tourism

represents one of the few options for forming the strong economic conditions that are required to maintain populations in these areas and has a direct impact on incomes and employment in the region. It brings additional finance into the area, creates economies of scale; leads to internationalization of business and improves the transfer of knowledge. Conversely, there are studies exposing the negative effects of tourism, such as increased antagonism between tourists and the local population, as well as their acculturation. Most recently ALVAREZ-SOUZA, 2017; FRANK, 2016; JOO ET AL., 2018). In addition, BIZZARRI (2016) and JAROS (2015) cite lower

public investment in infrastructure used by residents to service the tourist sector, and the negative perceptions of protected areas by residents.

This article introduces a methodology for assessing the potential for sustainable tourism by measuring sustainable tourism activities. It also takes into consideration attributes which reduce the sustainability of tourism. This methodology is then applied to our study area in Krkonoše, Czech Republic. We chose the Giant Mountains region (Krkonoše in Czech, Karkonosze in Polish) because this is one of the most visited national parks in the world thanks to its natural and landscape features. Yet at the same time, the Giant Mountains are among the most damaged protected area on earth (KLAPKA, 2008).

1.1. Evidence of the burden of tourism in Krkonoše

The Giant Mountains National Park (GMNAP) receives between five and six million tourists annually (one million more than Yellowstone Park, in the United States in 2017). According to data retrieved from 21 roadside scanners installed at the entrance to zone one of the GMNAP, 1.41 million people entered this most strictly protected area (Director of the GMNAP Administration Jan Hřebačka cited by KUČERA (2017). POTOCKI (2010) examined the pressure on the natural environment in the large Giant Mountain resorts. He observed that there was a huge imbalance between lettable beds and full-time residents in the Giant Mountain resorts. GMNAP has the highest number of lettable beds and the densest bed capacity per square kilometre of all protected areas in the Czech Republic. In Špindlerův Mlýn, tourists outnumber residents by a ratio of five to one in the high season (both winter and summer holidays). Exceeding this amount of tourism in the area has negative impacts on the environment and on the local community. These effects are an increase in traffic and congestion problems, noise and air pollution, higher water consumption (tourists consume on average three to four times more water than residents, ARLEM (2012), higher energy consumption (heating and air conditioning), higher waste production, and results in the concreting of wooded and fertile areas for car parks, an overall rise of commodity prices within the resorts, and a singular focus on tourism as an economic activity (to the detriment of other activities such as agriculture or forestry)(BIZZARRI, 2016).

PÁSKOVÁ (2008) examines the damage caused by the sub-standard construction of many houses, cottages, apartments, guest houses and hotels. Business efforts to build additional ski slopes and

the constant pressure to increase accommodation capacity has led the Giant Mountains area to become a destination designed only for the needs of tourists, with little consideration for the impact this has had on the environment and the local community. TRUHLIČKA (2007) and ŠTURSA (2011) believe that developmental activities undertaken in the Giant Mountains show little empathy with the surrounding landscape. Multi-storey buildings are awkwardly juxtaposed with the character of traditional mountain villages. These architectural intrusions have transformed traditional rural mountain settlements into an urban form. The drive to maximize financial returns on property built on expensive land results in a reduction of greenery and a disproportionate increase in accommodation capacity.

CHLAPEK ET AL. (2009) provide additional evidence of the negative impact downhill skiing has had in the Giant Mountains: the ski slopes significantly scar the landscape; it causes soil erosion, degenerates the surrounding vegetation and forces changes in the macroclimate. Most slopes cannot be used without artificial snow, placing additional pressure on natural water resources. Night skiing threatens the health of many animal species, as artificial lighting can cause disruption to their communication, feeding and reproductive patterns (BUJALSKÝ ET AL., 2014; ŠPATENKOVÁ, 1996). In the Giant Mountains, the negative effect of downhill skiing on the natural environment is the most acute in the Czech Republic, since it has the largest concentration of ski slopes (VYSTOUPIL & ŠAUER, 2011). Therefore, it is important to identify alternative activities which are sustainable whilst increasing the tourism potential of the region.

1.2. Sustainable tourism

The main academic disciplines that contribute to an understanding of tourism potential and sustainability are economics, anthropology, sociology and geography. Economics sees tourism as a dynamic sector, possible sources of employment and income for the local population and a source of foreign currency reflected in the balance of payments. Anthropology and sociology reflect on the socio-cultural and socio-economic aspects derived from tourism – interpersonal relationships between visitors and locals, distribution of power, customs, culture and their subsequent repercussions on the social fabric of the region and its organization. While geography has contributed to: tourism planning, regionalization from a development approach and evaluation of the impacts of tourism on the landscape and natural environment

(CARDOSO, CASTILLO & HERNÁNDEZ, 2014). As the sustainable approach aims to offer holistic and long-term solutions to tourism development, it is inevitable that a transdisciplinary approach is adopted in order to maintain cultural integrity, conservation of essential ecological processes, biological diversity and local productive systems.

Ever since the publication in 1987 of the Brundtland report, technically known as “Our Common Future”, the sustainability principle has been pursued. However, the concept is somewhat contradictory: it looks to maintain economic development, but without a) compromising the resources (sometimes non-renewable), on which the productive sector and local economy, depend and b) without overloading the sociocultural capacity. Although in the current globalized era, tourism is a cultural representation derived from the encounter between local peoples and tourists in one place (tourist destination), which in turn, must meet the changing needs of liquid tourists¹ (CARDOSO, CASTILLO & HERNÁNDEZ, 2014).

A review of the existing literature provides evidence of several approaches to sustainable tourism. A holistic approach is presented by PAUNOVIC & JANOVIC (2017), who focused their research on mountain tourism in the German Alps. A managerial approach is offered by CORTE ET AL. (2014), who deal with issues surrounding destination management. However, most studies adopt a strategic approach to their work. For example, NOWACKI ET AL. (2018) evaluated tourism development strategies in Poland; TSAUR & WANG (2007) or COTTRELL & CUTUMISU (2006) each provide further examples of evaluations of tourism strategies. Additional works using a strategic approach include CORTEZ (2010) and REICHEL & URIELY (2003). Most recently, KISI (2019) presented a hybrid strategic approach combining SWOT and AHP (Analytic Hierarchy Process) Analyses. SAIZ-ÁLVAREZ (2018) emphasized the importance

¹BAUMAN (2013) uses the term “liquid” to describe a society where the actions of its members change before it is possible to consolidate them into identifiable habits and routines. Liquid life sees the world as a collection of consumer objects, that lose their usefulness at the same time as being used. In practice, anything that cannot prove its financial value is very precarious (BARRENO, 2011). ROJAS (1992) writes, in this sense, about the light man, characterized by hedonism, enthronement of pleasure, consumerism, accumulation of goods, permissiveness, and finally, relativism, where nothing is good or bad and ultimately everything depends on the opinion of the individual (cited in BARRENO, 2011). In this sense, a liquid tourist is a consumer of the landscape and biocultural heritage, for the purpose of adventure and exceptional experience and its subsequent presentation on social networks.

of local communities in his study about social entrepreneurship in one of Mexico’s most popular destinations, the Tequila region (a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site). He concluded that the level of local poverty remained almost the same. He attributes the causes of this to be the sale of the main tequila companies to foreign multinationals; an informal labor market, under development of alternative economic activities; a concentration of wealth among a few elite families, and high levels of insecurity. When addressing sustainable tourism as an alternative for community development ALCÍVAR & BRAVO (2017) stress that in today’s world, where tourist populations are constantly in search of culturally rich new destinations, communities must be empowered with their cultural heritage.

1.3. Approaches to tourism potential

Academics have been working on defining the potential of tourism for many years, and their approaches differ considerably. KRIPPENDORF (1980) sees tourism potential as a complexity of elements to satisfy the needs of tourists. Especially in the 1990s, the term tourism potential was used extensively in the Economics and Geography sphere, without much consideration for its meaning or purpose (IATU & BULAI, 2010). GLAVAN (1996) understands tourism potential as the assembly of components (both material and non-material), scientifically recognized and practically proven, to provide the possibility of touristic capitalization and providing functionality for tourism. NESTOROSKA (2012) on the other hand, provides a narrower definition, limiting its scope to achieving competitiveness in the tourism market. IATU & BULAI (2010) see tourism potential as a qualitative immaterial measure of certain subjective possibilities and conditions. MAMUN & MITRA (2012) agree that the term tourism potential creates misunderstanding and is often replaced by the term “attractiveness”. MUNTELE & IATU (2003) also suggest “touristic offer” as a suitable synonym. We understand tourism potential to be: a summary of specific local socio-environmental components recognized not only by science, but also by the community, with an emphasis on the long-term functionality of tourism.

Current research provides several approaches on how to evaluate tourism potential. IATU & BULAI (2010) discuss material and non-material approaches. They include natural resources, cultural resources, tourism infrastructure and total infrastructure in the tourism potential equation and use multiple linear regressions to quantify tourist arrivals. Another approach adopted by

researchers such as PRINSKIN (2001) and OPREA-GANCEVICI & CHEIA (2011), use a matrix form in which each resource receives a score revealing the importance of indicators. Other researchers have used Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to assess tourism potential in their studies, including CHHETRI & ARROWSMITH (2008), TIMČÁK & VIZI (2006), KLISKEY (2000), MIKULEC & ANTOUŠKOVÁ (2010), NOVOTNÁ (2007) and RUDA (2016). MAMUN & MITRA (2012) also point out that the multi-criteria decision-making technique has also been used and applied in numerous studies.

2. Methodology

The study area of the Giant Mountains includes the cadastral area of Harrachov, Rokytnice nad Jizerou, Špindlerův Mlýn, Pec pod Sněžkou and Janské Lázně; and is connected by a mountain range encompassing a total area of 216.15 km². This area belongs to the tourist regions of Krkonoše and Podkrkonoší (Fig. 1) and has a population of approximately 27,000 residents. The field research was conducted between 2013 and 2015.

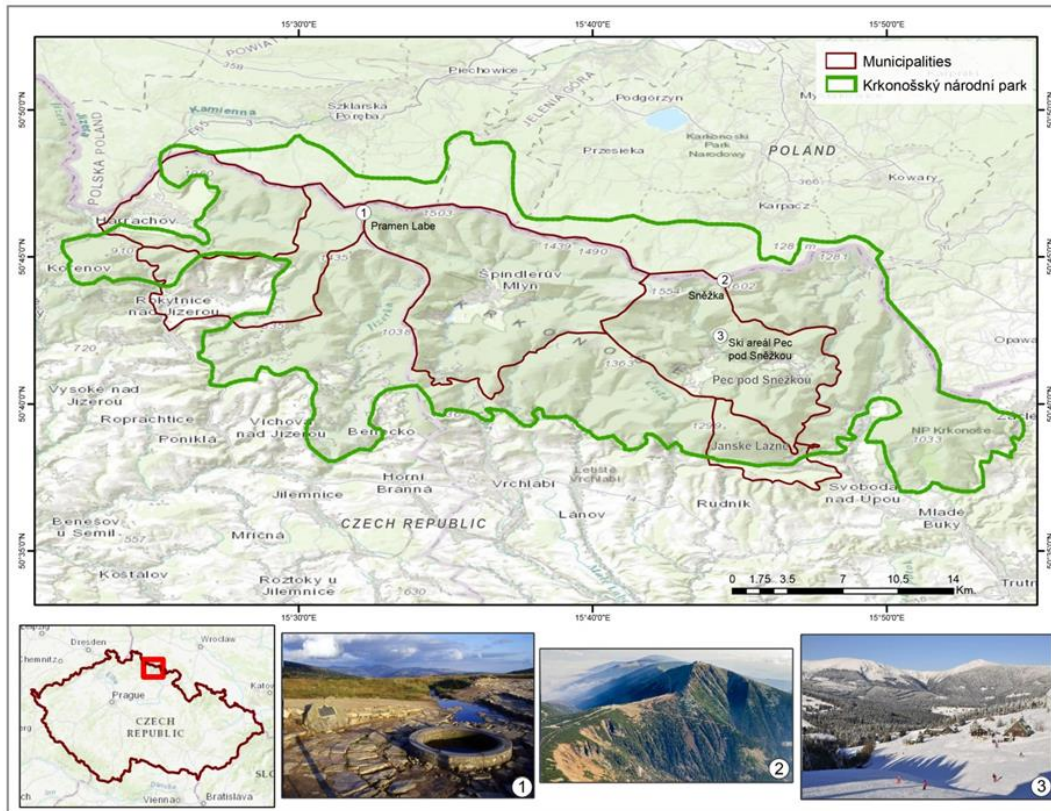


Fig. 1. Location of the study area

(Author's elaboration, based on ESRI base map. Vector data, park boundary, municipalities and georeferencing of images from the web portal: <https://geoportal.gov.cz/web/guest/map>. Photos from: (1) – http://www.pardubicko.info/902_221199_labska-stezka-od-pramenu-labe-do-narodniho-hrebcina-v-kladrubech/; (2) – <http://www.czechtrack.cz/en/snezka-krkonose#.WjfqeVWWYdU>; (3) – http://www.ceske-sjezdovky.cz/stredisko/32_pec-pod-snezkou.html

The methodological approach was conducted in several steps as demonstrated in Figure 2. The proposed methodology was then applied to the Giant Mountains region and the results were compared.

1) Interaction with experts. Fifteen experts², were interviewed in three rounds using the Delphi method. This was to identify sustainable tourism

activities applicable to the Giant Mountains. The experts agreed on the following sustainable tourism activities including landscape suitable for *hiking and mountain tourism, cycling, cross-country skiing, natural sightseeing, fauna and flora observation, rural tourism, forest tourism, equestrian tourism, natural history exploration and geocaching*. Moreover, they were asked about attributes reducing sustainability and they emphasized the following: *excessive & inappropriate infrastructure and housing, insufficient environmental education, unprofessional destination management, and insufficient environmental & conservation legislation*.

²Experts from CzechTourism, Giant Mountain National Park, Czech Union for Nature Conservation, Ministry of Regional Development and researchers from four Czech universities: Mendel University in Brno, University of Hradec Králové, Polytechnic University of Jihlava and University of South Bohemia.

2) A questionnaire for tourists. In total, a sample of 150 tourists were asked to complete a questionnaire regarding the attractiveness of the ten sustainable forms of tourism and the four attributes reducing sustainability, as proposed by the experts. We used a Likert scale (1 – being the most attractive, 5 - the least attractive). The

respondents were chosen by simple random sampling.

3) Determination of Points. The points on the Likert scale were translated and averaged, with the highest rated activity having the greatest number of points, and the attributes most reducing tourism sustainability, the most negative points (Figs. 3, 4).

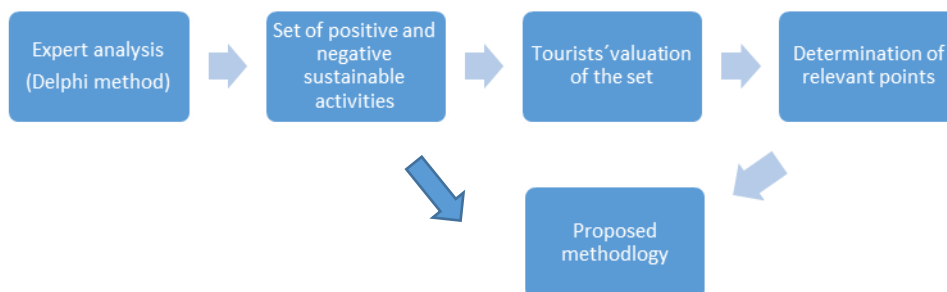


Fig. 2. Scheme of the methodology, author's own elaboration

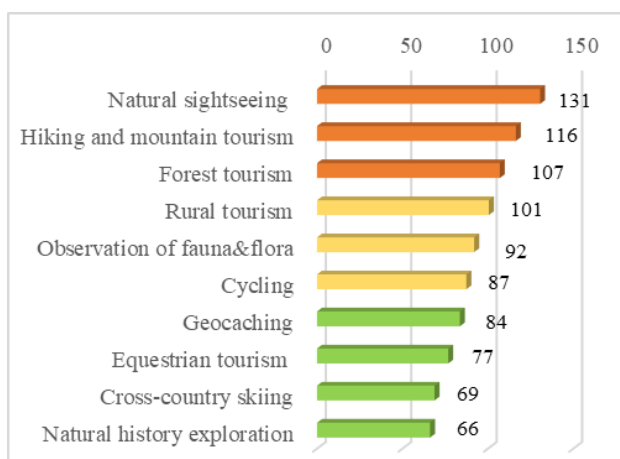


Fig. 3. Attractiveness of the activities of sustainable tourism for visitors, author's own elaboration

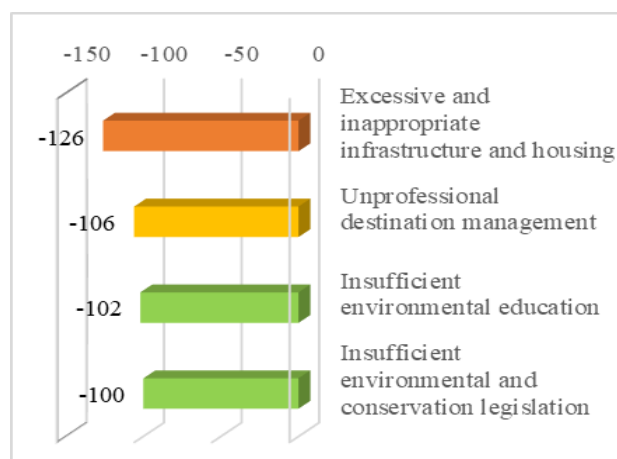


Fig. 4. Values of the degree of severity of attributes reducing the sustainability of tourism, author's own elaboration

4) The scale of points used for evaluation of tourism potential is expressed in Table 1, and was determined according to BÍNA (2002) and PLŠKOVÁ (2014). Only attributes of "fauna and flora" and "insufficient environmental education" are not included because the distinction between the degrees of significance is not relevant (BÍNA, 2002). Points for evaluation of tourism potential were allocated to the categories according to the following scale: the most significant (3), very significant (2), and significant (1). The first degree of significance (1) was derived from the average of the obtained points – totally 131 points (see Fig. 3), and the two subsequent degrees being multiples of this value (second degree – double: 262 points, third degree – treble: 393 points).

5) Evaluation of the potential for sustainable tourism in each resort. The evaluation concerning the potential of the region for sustainable tourism (Table 2) was done by analyzing the following

documents and databases: the Czech Statistical Office (CZSO), the Environmental Protection Agency of the Czech Republic (AOPK CR), the National Heritage Institute (NPÚ) and the National Information and Consulting Centre for Culture (NIPOS). Furthermore, publications of FLOUSEK & VANĚK (2012), VYSTOUPIL ET AL. (2008), VYSTOUPIL & ŠAUER (2011), ŠTURSA (2011, 2012) and data from the map of the Czech Tourist Club (KČT, 2014) were referred to. Key documents for analysis of the characteristics reducing the sustainability of tourism, included: a) mandatory disclosures (official decrees and regulations of the municipality; resolutions of the municipal council - objections, intentions, demands, contracts and tenders) b) territorial plans of individual municipalities, c) data from tourist information centre webpages, d) data from Czech Tourism and e) Czech environmental and conservation legislation.

Table 1. Proposed methodology (Author's own elaboration)

Landscape suitability for various activities	1 st degree	2 nd degree	3 th degree
<i>Natural sightseeing</i>	Significant landscape elements, nature parks, NATURA 2000 protected elements	Significant and larger natural attractions and protected areas of regional level (LPA)	Nationally and internationally important natural creations and specially protected areas
Points	131	262	393
<i>Hiking and mountain tourism</i>	Slightly rugged hills and highlands with watercourses, forests and agricultural areas. Diverse terrain with tourist marked paths	Landscape with higher altitude and relief, higher proportion of forests, meadows and pastures. Any hiking trails	Mountain and foothills with continuous forests, extensive agricultural land-use, lookout points, hiking trails
Points	116	232	348
<i>Cycling</i>	Plains and hillsides in agricultural areas without significant ecological damage; small proportion of forests, compact settlements, suitable off-road routes	Plains, hillsides or open valley with a higher proportion of forests; watercourses or ponds	Mountain, foothills or high plateau with a larger share of forests; low population density and distinctive landscape aesthetics
Points	87	174	261
<i>Cross-country skiing</i>	Partly suitable terrain, altitude approx. 500 m with suitable climatic conditions	Suitable terrain; long-lasting snow cover and natural attraction	Ideal terrain in cold climatic areas; long-lasting snow cover and high natural attraction
Points	69	138	207
<i>Rural tourism</i>	Rural landscape with medium populated settlements in flat or slightly uneven terrain; smaller proportion of forests, water areas and tourist marked paths	Rural landscape with sparsely populated settlements in more rugged terrain of highland characteristics; higher proportion of forests, water areas and tourist marked paths	Mountainous landscapes (or lower altitude landscape if exceptionally attractive) with sparsely populated settlements; high proportion of forests, grasslands and hiking opportunities
Points	101	202	303
<i>Forest tourism</i>	Municipalities with 25 -50% forested area, with tourist infrastructure	Municipalities with 51 -75% forested area, with tourist infrastructure	Municipalities with ≥76% forested area, with tourist infrastructure
Points	107	214	321
<i>Equestrian tourism</i>	Local horse riding paths and circuits of several tens of kilometres (secondary paths from regional paths)	Regional horse riding paths with tens of kilometres (regional paths)	International horse riding paths with hundreds of kilometres
Points	77	154	231
<i>Natural history exploration</i>	Museums and exhibitions with up to 10,000 visitors per year	Museums and exhibitions with 10,000 to 30,000 visitors per year	Museums and exhibitions with over 30,000 visitors per year
Points	66	132	198
<i>Observation of fauna and flora</i>	Existence of localities with occurrence of rare species or larger numbers of species of plants and animals		
Points	276		
<i>Geocaching</i>	Dependent on the density of geocaches: regions with the highest density receive 3rd degree of significance; lowest density regions receive zero points		
Points	84	168	252
Attributes that reduce the sustainability of tourism			
<i>Excessive & inappropriate infrastructure and housing</i>	New housing or infrastructure in environmentally sensitive areas, without objections	New housing or infrastructure in environmentally sensitive or protected areas where objections (protests) were recorded	New housing or infrastructure in protected areas, irretrievable damage despite objections
Points	-126	-252	-378
<i>Unprofessional destination management</i>	Municipalities under the auspices of destination management, participated in EDEN competition, but did not reach final	Municipalities under the auspices of destination management that did not participate in any EDEN competition	Municipalities that are not under the auspices of destination management
Points	-106	-212	-318

<i>Insufficient environmental education</i>	Municipalities where Tourist Information Centres provided neither information nor activities relating to ecology		
Points	-306		
<i>Insufficient environmental legislation</i>	Developed legislation with minor deficiencies	Legislation with serious deficiencies	Non-existent environmental legislation
Points	-100	-200	-300

Table 2. Resulting potential of the Giant Mountain region for sustainable tourism (Author's own elaboration)

Components	Harrachov	Rokytnice/Jizerou	Špindlerův Mlýn	Pec pod Sněžkou	Janské Lázně	Ø
<i>Natural sightseeing</i>	393	393	393	393	393	393
The territory of all monitored municipalities is partly located in the first zone of the GMNAP, in the Biosphere reserve of the UN, forms part of NATURA 2000 and is on the list of important European ornithological territories						
<i>Landscape suitable for hiking</i>	348	348	348	348	348	348
The Giant Mountains have the highest density of tourist marked paths in the Czech Republic. The landscape is mountainous and the population density is low (the highest density is in Rokytnice nad Jizerou, 75.5 inhabitants/km ²)						
<i>Landscape suitable for cycling</i>	261	261	261	261	261	261
The territory is mountainous; with a larger share of forests; low population density and distinctive landscape aesthetics, suitable off-road routes						
<i>Landscape suitable for cross-country skiing</i>	207	207	207	207	207	207
The territory is located on the border of two climatic areas - cold and very cold, it has long-lasting snow cover, the terrain is suitable for cross-country skiing, and the landscape has outstanding natural beauty						
<i>LS for rural tourism</i>	303	303	303	303	303	303
The Giant Mountains are a region whose land-use is divided into mountain, forest and agro-forestry. The monitored municipalities have a share of permanent grassland from the agricultural land area of between 88% (in Rokytnice nad Jizerou) and 99% (in Pec pod Sněžkou), high density of tourist marked paths, high share of forests and the low population density (see above)						
<i>Landscape suitable for forest tourism</i>	321	214	321	321	321	300
This component is measured by the share of forests and the population density. The share of forests in the area of the municipalities is high: between 85% - 91 %; except Rokytnice with 61% of forests. The population density is low						
<i>Landscape suitable for equestrian tourism</i>	0	0	0	0	154	31
Landscape suitability for equestrian tourism was demonstrated only at the Janské Lázně resort, through which passes the 12km long trail known as "Beyond the Mountain Views", which begins in the resort, and ends in Horní Albeřice						
<i>Landscape suitable for natural history exploration</i>	66	0	0	0	0	14
Harrachov achieves a grade 1 rating in the landscape suitability for natural history exploration category because of mining museum, which has a visitor rate of up to 10,000 people per year						
<i>Landscape suitable for observation of fauna and flora</i>	276	276	276	276	276	276
There is a great diversity of plants and animals in the territory under consideration: there are at least 15,000 species of invertebrates, 1 cyclostomata (<i>Lampetra planeri</i>), 5 native species of fish, 11 amphibians, 6 reptiles, 280 species of birds, 76 species of mammals and approx. 1,200 species of flowering plants. A considerable number of species of fauna and flora are considered to be nationally endangered						
<i>Landscape suitable for geocaching</i>	252	252	252	252	252	252
The Giant Mountains region belongs partly to Liberecký and partly to Hradec Králové regions, which are ranked second and third in geocaching density (1.05 and 0.72 caches per km ²) in the Czech Republic						
<i>Excessive infrastructure</i>	-378	-378	-378	-378	-378	-378
This component was measured by the number of objections and protests which have not been taken into consideration by the local authorities. For example land annexation in naturally valuable localities and subsequent threats to vegetation along the watercourse; risk of flooding; interference with species-rich meadows and forests; extension of downhill skiing slopes in the first zone of GMNAP; the possibility of irreversible damage of subterranean karst phenomena, and many others. These irregularities were observed in all resorts						
<i>Insufficient environmental education</i>	0	-306	0	0	-306	-122

Insufficient environmental education was found in both Rokytnice nad Jizerou and Janské Lázně, where Tourist Information Centres provided neither information nor activities relating to ecology						
<i>Insufficient environmental legislation</i>	-100	-100	-100	-100	-100	-100
As a result of the accession of the Czech Republic to the European Union, the environmental legislation was transposed to an almost developed one. Nevertheless, shortcomings in the Czech environmental legislation are caused mainly by too rapid development. Analysis of the Czech environmental legislation was realized with help of experts from GMNP and Czech Union for Nature						
TOTAL	1,949	1,470	1,883	1,883	1,731	1,785
% of the total potential	69.9%	52.7%	67.5%	67.5%	62.0%	63.9%

3. Discussion and conclusions

According to secondary data sources (point 5, above), all Giant Mountain resorts attained the highest number of points in the components of: *natural sightseeing, landscape suitability for hiking and mountain tourism, landscape suitability for cycling, landscape suitability for forest tourism, landscape suitability for cross-country skiing, landscape suitability for rural tourism, landscape suitability for observation of fauna and flora and landscape suitability for geocaching* (Table 2). The Giant Mountain resorts received an average of 1,785 points. This represents a score of 64% of the maximum possible attainable points (2,790).

Unprofessional destination management is not mentioned in Table 2 because it has not been identified in any resort. All municipalities falling under the auspices of destination management, participate in the EDEN³ competition and all have previously been finalists in this competition. The key feature of destinations selected for the EDEN competition is their commitment to the social, cultural and environmental sustainability of tourism. This is therefore a credible form of certification.

As mountain resorts have only a limited influence on the natural potential and landscape suitability for tourism activities, it is necessary to

focus on factors reducing sustainability. The most important is *excessive and inappropriate infrastructure and housing*. We propose that local development plans and their updates should be subjected to mandatory review by two environmental experts. The resulting independent environmental impact assessments and conclusions must then be respected by local authorities and tourism management. Environmental legislation and impact must be strictly adhered to in the case of granting building permits or amendments and serious consideration should be given to the objections and opinions of residents.

At present, the Ministry of the Environment is undertaking steps to integrate new European legislation on Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) into Czech law. Such a move will undoubtedly lead to an improvement in the hastily created Czech environmental legislation.

We state that the Giant Mountains region is one of the more saturated destinations in the Czech Republic and its environmental and social capacity for facilitating tourism has become overstretched. This is in sharp contrast to the results of [VYSTOUPIL ET AL. \(2017\)](#), who conclude that, in most cases, the development of tourism in the Czech Republic does not place excessive pressure on environmental and socio-cultural aspects. They propose that government investment should focus only on selected locations with the highest potential for tourism development. We are closer to the position taken by [YAN ET AL. \(2017\)](#), who propose developing regional tourist sites to attract new tourists seeking authentic heritage experiences. We stress the necessity of ensuring that the limited financial resources of municipal or provincial governments are allocated to the sites and activities that are both sustainable and have relatively high tourist potential. Destination management should distinguish the sustainable tourism activities and expand their offering, while non-sustainable tourism activities should be suppressed. The sustainable tourism activities should be both recommended by experts and highly valued by tourists. The tourist

³In 2014, the European Commission published guidance that assessing sustainable tourism potential should be the first step in preparing tourism products, stressing the importance of stakeholder groups in tourism and local development. European Destinations of Excellence is an initiative promoting sustainable tourism development models across the EU. The initiative is based on national competitions that take place every other year and result in the selection of a tourism 'destination of excellence' for each participating country. Through the selection of destinations, EDEN effectively achieves the objective of drawing attention to the values, diversity and common features of European tourist destinations ([EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2018](#)).

valuation plays a crucial role since tourists are the consumers of tourism activities. The proposed methodology for assessing sustainable tourism potential, with respect to the character of mountainous areas, is systematic and could be reproduced in other mountain regions in the Czech Republic. It has extended the current methodological approach (e.g. BÍNA, 2002, PÁSKOVÁ, 2008) by incorporating attributes which reduce sustainability.

We are, however, aware of a certain number of shortcomings. The “environmental education” component should not only consider tourist education, but also education programmes for residents of all age groups (e.g. campaigns for children and students in school) as well as education programmes for tourist operators.

The “Excessive and inappropriate infrastructure and housing” component is measured only by their location and objections presented by residents. It should also consider the energy efficiency and environmental impact of each new construction. However, irrespective of its feasibility, this goes beyond the scope of our current study.

The opinions of residents and local businesses, as the main stakeholders, should be taken into consideration. In our article we have suggested activities that increase the potential of sustainable tourism and the opinions of local communities are considered only through content analysis of the municipal resolutions on objections, intentions, demands, contracts and tenders. The Czech legal system incorporates mechanisms to ensure local control over planned development projects and public contracts, but construction law is currently being reformed. This will make it easier for developers to build, while conversely making it harder for residents, or local civil associations, to control or resist their intentions.

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