

## HUNTING TOUR OPERATORS AND TRAVEL AGENCIES IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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### **Abstract**

Tour operators and travel agencies have to face many pitfalls at the moment. They have to adapt to changing needs of customers, including the desire for an active holiday. Game hunting has a long tradition not only in the Czech Republic, but the hunting is gradually becoming more and more popular. Hunting mediation is an excellent business opportunity for tour operators and travel agencies. The aim of this paper is to analyze the current situation and offer of hunting tour operators and travel agencies operating in the Czech Republic. Their offer is evaluated on the basis of questionnaire survey, which took place from September to December 2017, and evaluated on the basis of simple relative indicators. The research has shown that the hunting offer is mostly focused by small travel agencies that specialize exclusively in offering hunting. The offer includes both outbound and inbound tourism. Hungary, South Africa and Russia prevail among hunting destinations most often offered. The most common customers of tour operators and travel agencies are Czechs, Germans and Austrians. Hunters usually travel in groups, mostly men and prefer individual hunting. More than half of the customers are stable customers and use the services of organizations repeatedly. Both Czech and foreign customers prefer trophy hunting. Research results can serve stakeholders in the field of hunting tourism to improve their position on the market.

**Keywords:** hunting tourism, tour operators, travel agency, business opportunity.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The aim of the paper is to summarize the results of research among tour operators and travel agencies in the Czech Republic selling hunting tourism products. This form of tourism appears to be underused for the development of rural areas that have potential for hunting tourism. The Czech Republic does not have any comprehensive information on the analysis of the potential of sustainable hunting tourism. This lack of information then restricts businesses to enter to the international market and, last but not least, restricts the development of relations between individual actors of hunting tourism. The paper analyzes the current situation on the hunting tourism market from the point of view of hunting agents. This contribution should help to identify business opportunities for existing businesses or founding businesses to determine their visions or action plans.

### **1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Very few authors focus their research on hunting tourism in the Czech Republic Kroupová, Navrátil, Pícha, Hasman (2014) dealt with the difference of demand for hunting tourism. Ristic, Sajko, Simat, Matejevic (2013) compared hunting tourism in the Czech Republic and Hungary rather in terms of supply and number of game. The analysis of the offer of the Czech hunting tour operators and travel agencies did not concern any

of the authors. From abroad, Sigursteinsdóttir, Bjarnadóttir (2009), who worked on the North Hunt - sustainable hunting project in Northern Europe, gave an analysis of the offer of hunting travel agencies in northern Europe. A report summarizing their analysis showed that most of the hunting organizations are active globally or in Europe. The largest group of customers is consisted of Germans and Americans. Trophy game hunting was rated as the most popular. A typical customer was a man who travelled individually.

### **1.1. Tour operators and travel agencies in the Czech Republic**

Tour operators and travel agencies are big and important players in the tourism market. Tour operators organize tours, set up packages for their customers according to requirements and needs. Travel agencies represent the role of intermediary (Petrů, 2007). The latest survey made by the Czech Statistical Office, which was carried out in 2013, revealed that there are over 900 tour operators in the Czech Republic and around 1100 travel agencies. A total of 73 % of them are oriented to outbound tourism, 28 % to the inbound and 35 % to domestic tourism. Destinations that make up the main offer of outbound tourism are Croatia, Italy, Greece, France and Austria. Source markets in inbound tourism are Russia, Germany, USA, France and Italy (Beníčková, Vančura 2013).

### **1.2. Hunting tourism**

Hunting tourism is one of the specific forms of tourism. In Czech literature there are only references to its classification among some of the forms. For example, Petrů (2007) considers hunting tourism as a specific form of tourism. The Explanatory Dictionary (Zelenka 2014) considers hunting tourism as an outdoor recreational activity outside buildings. In foreign literature, for example, Newsome (2005) distinguishes consumption and non-consumption forms of tourism, in which game is the main motivation factor. Among the non-consumable forms he classifies the viewing and photography of game in a natural environment, thus game hunting as a form of consumption form of tourism. Significant disagreements persist in whether or not to consider hunting tourism under ecotourism. Modern forms of tourism such as agrotourism and ecotourism represent valuable benefits for the region, as they contribute to improving the quality of tourism services and contribute to the social and economic potential of the area (Lacina 2013). Deere (2011) is concerned with the sustainability of hunting tourism and the conditions that must necessarily be set in the area of basic pillars with the assumption of environmental friendliness, economic viability and social adequacy.

In the view of the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC), the sustainable form of hunting tourism is one of the means of game protection and, at the same time, the use of natural resources, which is crucial especially for rural regions (CIC 2008).

Hunting tourism is done by hunters who travel to remote destinations from the area where hunting is regularly conducted by them, often abroad, and where hunting is the main purpose. Frequent motivation for hunting abroad is the desire for adventure combined with the possibility of gaining a strong or interesting trophy. For this attractive element

of tourism, participants are willing to pay considerable sums of money to providers of hunts (IUFRO 2015).

Federation of association for hunting and conservation of the EU (FACE) considers hunting tourism as a special form of eco-tourism, with strong emphasis on sustainability, which includes, above all, strict adherence to international rules, particularly CITES and other legislative instruments, conventions and nature conservation agreements (FACE 2004).

Due to the specific determination of the form of tourism, it is clear that tour operators and travel agencies that want to target a narrow segment of customers with specific requirements will have different offers and trends than tour operators and travel agencies in the Czech Republic in general.

## **2. METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH**

Research was conducted between hunting tour operators and travel agencies in the form of a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire was distributed in several ways - personal interviews and online filling. The questionnaire consisted of 20 questions that were closed and open. A total of 37 organizations are offering hunting products. 26 organizations responded to the questionnaire, but 5 respondents were disqualified because the organization did not deal with the sale of hunting. Overall, 21 responses were evaluated. Data collection took place from September to December 2017. The data was subsequently processed in Microsoft Excel.

The aim of the survey was to answer questions from two areas:

- What is the product of hunting tour operators and travel agencies?
- To whom hunting tour operators and travel agencies sell hunting tourism products, so who are their customers?

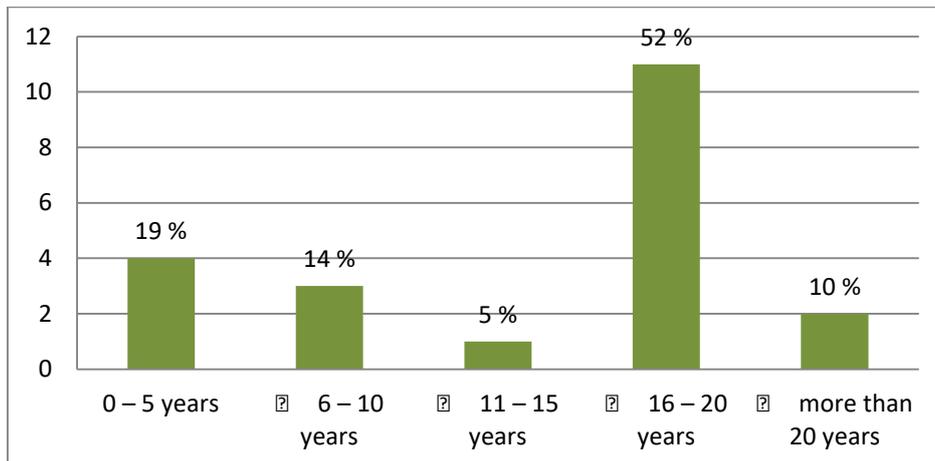
## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Hunting tour operators and travel agencies have a specific position on the market. 86 % of respondents said that they are involved in inbound tourism, 71 % of them in outbound tourism, which points to a difference from the general trend of tour operators and travel agencies, which said they were more focused on outbound tourism. 81% of respondents are classified as travel agencies, so only 19 % of respondents were tour operators. Their offer is compiled to customers according to their requirements. Hunting travel agencies are considered among small businesses according to their size. 81% of respondents said they had no employees, 1 tour operator said they had more than 5 employees, 2 travel agencies had between 3 and 5 employees and 1 travel agency employs up to 3 employees.

Over half of the surveyed organizations have been operating on the market for more than 16 years. However, even in the last 10 years, new tour operators and hunting travel agencies have been established. The reason is not only improving business environment, but also increasing of interest of tourists to spend holidays in active way and increasing

possibilities of fee hunting in the Czech Republic and abroad. The detailed structure of tour operators and travel agencies operating period is illustrated in Graph 1 below.

Graph 1: Duration of action in market

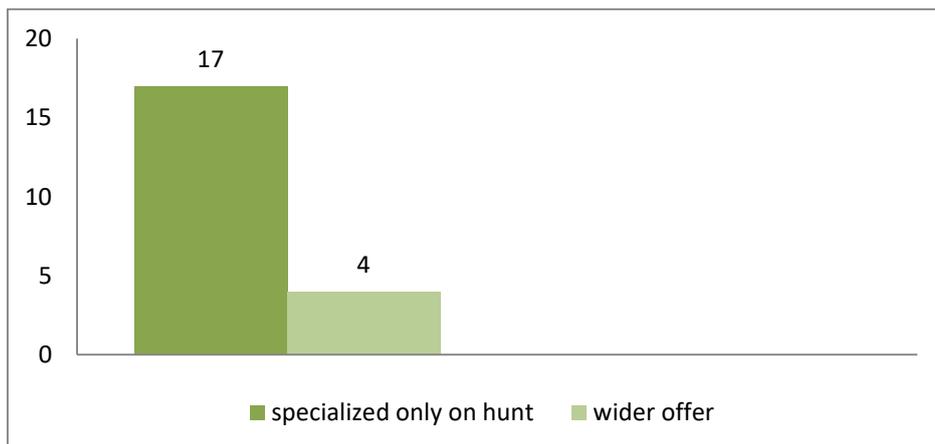


Source: Authors research, 2017

### 3.1. Product of hunting tour operators and travel agencies

The product of hunting tour operators and travel agencies is mainly hunting of game. More than 80 % of the surveyed organizations focus exclusively on the hunting offer, as illustrated in Graph 2. Golf tourism, weddings in exotic destinations, business trips and enotourism were also mentioned in terms of *wider offer*. So, if the organization offers hunting, it is a very specialized group targeting only this form of tourism.

Graph 2: Specialization of organizations



Source: Authors research, 2017

Fee hunting is offered according to the species of game or animals that are found in the destination and which are legally authorized to manage by hunting. Table 1 shows the list of countries where most of the addressed organizations are selling their products and a list of at least the most frequently sold products in the given destinations.

Table 1: Countries to which organizations most often offer their products

Country	Share of tour operators and travel agencies	Offered game/animal hunt
<b>worldwide</b>	<b>5 %</b>	<b>All kind of animals</b>
<b>Europe</b>	<b>85 %</b>	
- Czech R.	85 %	Hoofed game, small game
- Hungary	57 %	Hoofed game, small game
- Austria	24 %	Hoofed game, small game
- Spain	24 %	Hoofed game - ibex, sheep, small game
- Estonia	19 %	Hoofed game, small game, bear, wolf, lynx
<b>Asia</b>	<b>29 %</b>	
- Russia	29 %	bear, moose, reindeer, snow sheep, capercaillie, grouse
- Kazakhstan	14 %	Wild boar, wolf, ibex, Maral deer, Siberian roe
- Kyrgyzstan	19 %	ibex, argali Marco Polo
<b>Africa</b>	<b>52 %</b>	
- JAR	52 %	buffalo, antelope, impala, warthog
- Namibia	24 %	horse, kudu, warthog, caracal, buffalo
- Tanzania	14 %	buffalo, lion, crocodile, oribi, hyena
- Zimbabwe	10 %	antelope, feathered animals, buffalo, elephant
<b>America</b>	<b>10 %</b>	
- USA	10 %	deer, wapiti, bison, moose, grizzly
- Canada	10 %	moose, wolf, lynx, black bear, wapiti, kojot

Source: Authors research, 2017

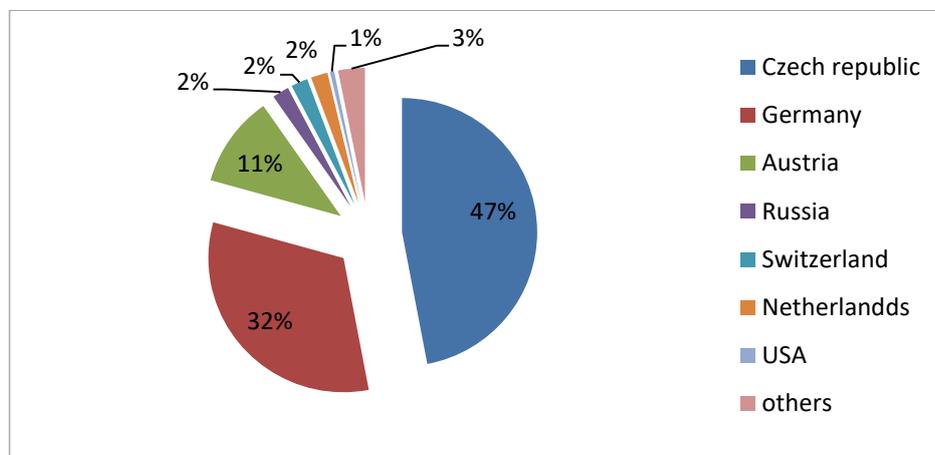
The most offered outbound destinations are Hungary, Austria and South Africa. Spain, Estonia has also often appeared; Slovakia and Poland were mentioned. The Asian continent is clearly on the rise of interest, especially countries like Kazakhstan or Kyrgyzstan. Russia is already a stable destination for a longer period. Africa is clearly leading with South Africa, which is offered by 52 % of organizations. From the American continent, hunting is offered in the USA or Canada, with Mexico or South American countries being mentioned. In the Czech Republic, all hoofed game is offered - the Red Deer (*Cervus elaphus*), the Sika Deer (*Cervus Nippon*), the Moufflon (*Ovis musimon*), the Fallow deer (*Dama dama*), the Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*), the Wild Boars (*Sus scrofa*), especially on the driven hunt, and the small game of hunts on hares, pheasants and wild ducks are offered. Unlike the results of the questionnaire survey of

Sigursteinsdóttir, Bjarnadóttir (2009), which stated that organizations operate globally, only one such tour operator was listed in the Czech Republic. Most Czech hunting tourism organizations focus on selected destinations.

### 3.2. Customers of hunting tour operators and travel agencies

The most frequent customers of hunting tour operators and travel agencies based on the average percentages mentioned are Czechs. Germans and Austrians are other large groups of customers. The most frequent organization's customers are listed in Graph 3.

Graph 3: Nationality of organization's customers

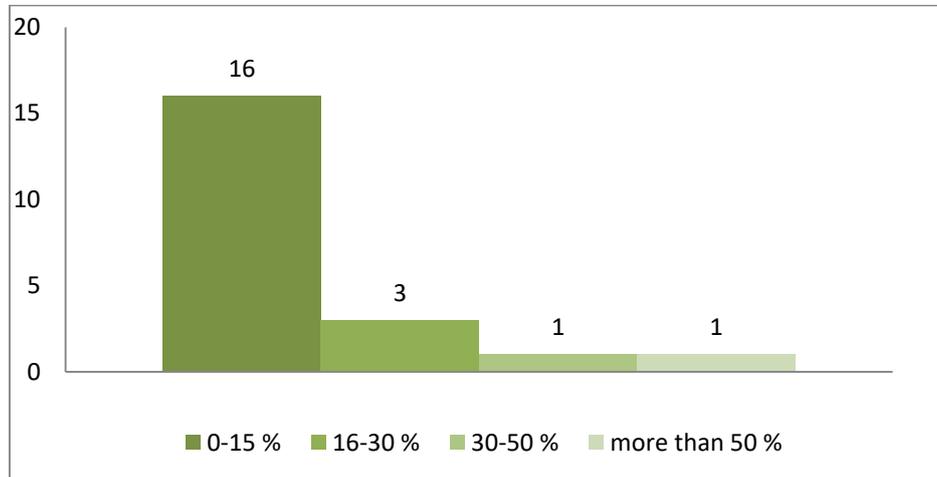


Source: Authors research, 2017

Sigursteinsdóttir, Bjarnadóttir (2009) states that the largest customers group is made up of Germans and Americans, so Germans can be regarded as the source market for hunting tour operators and travel agencies both in the Czech Republic and in the Northern countries.

16 hunting tour operators and travel agencies said their services were repeatedly used during the year by less than 15 % of customers. Only one travel agency stated even more than 50 % of customers use its service multiple times a year.

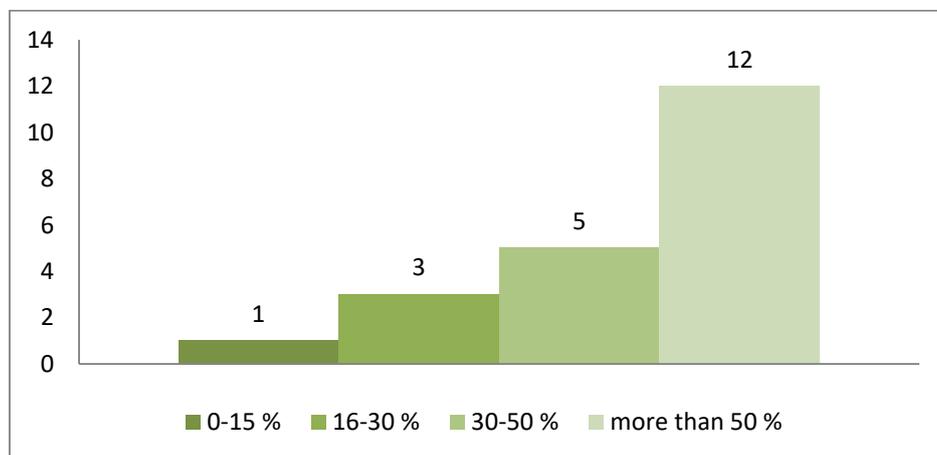
**Graph 4: Proportion of customers who come to hunt more than once a year**



Source: Authors research, 2017

Because hunting is a specific matter, it is necessary to deal with many formalities and to ensure the entire course of the event, the quality of the provided services is a prerequisite for the return of the customers. 12 tour operators and travel agencies said that more than 50 % of customers use their services repeatedly and are their permanent customers.

**Graph 5: Proportion of customers who come back to organizations**

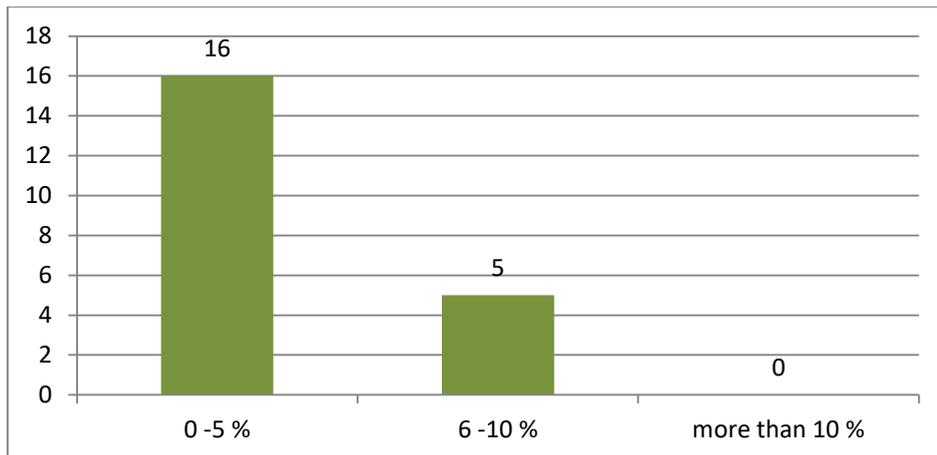


Source: Authors research, 2017

Hunting has been a male affair since ancient times. Customers of most tour operators and travel agencies are men. Women represent in most cases only less than 5 % of customers, with a maximum of 5-10 % of the total number of customers, but rather with larger organizations, which also offer residential trips. However, an increasing number of female hunters could be a good opportunity for both tour operators and travel agencies

to adapt the products offered more for women. Here the results of the research are consistent with Sigursteinsdóttir, Bjarnadóttir (2009), where women account for a maximum of 10 % of customers.

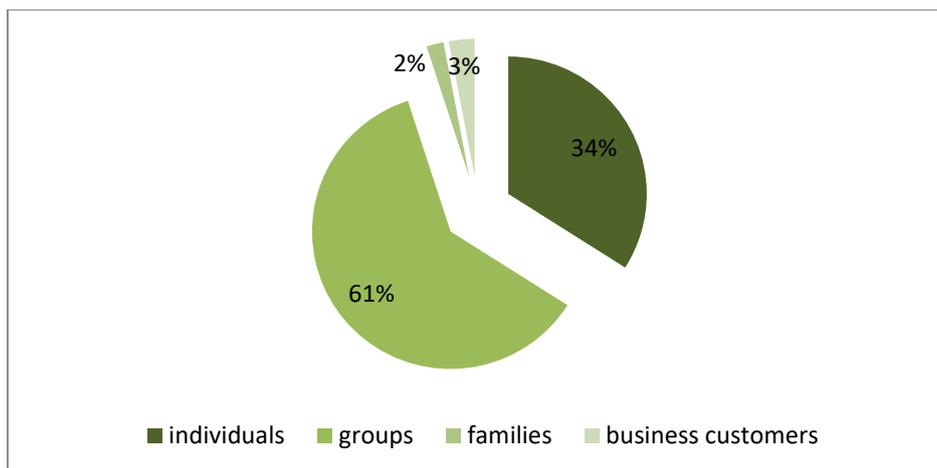
**Graph 6: Share of women in the total number of customers**



Source: Authors research, 2017

Responding to the question of who sells most of their products, the average of the % was calculated. The most common customers are groups of hunters or individuals. Families make up only 2 % and business customers 3 % of all customers. The situation is different from Sigursteinsdóttir, Bjarnadóttir (2009), who in their report states that customers who use their services are most often individuals.

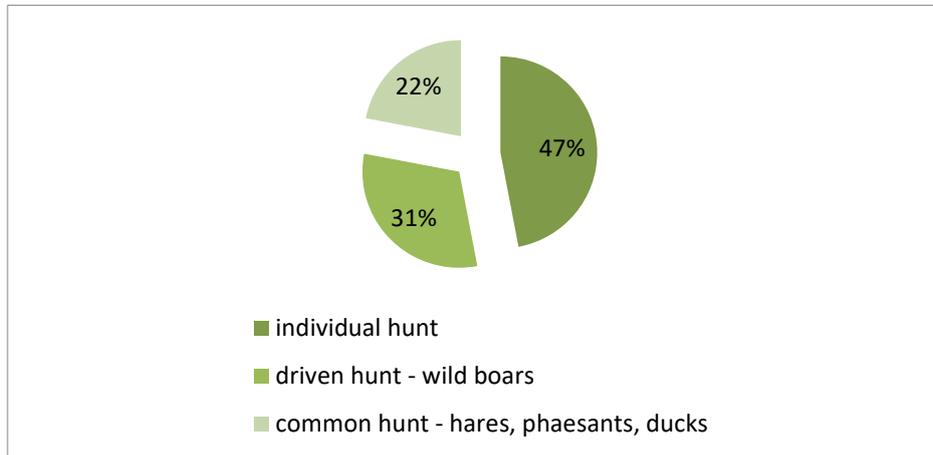
**Graph 7: Customer segment**



Source: Authors research, 2017

47 % of hunters prefer an individual hunting method, with guided accompaniment.

**Graph 8: Hunter´s preference of hunting method**



Source: Authors research, 2017

The research further revealed that 97 % of Czechs and 83 % of foreign hunters prefer trophy hunting, so it is in agreement with the results of the Sigursteinsdóttir, Bjarnadóttir (2009) report that customers prefer trophy game hunting. 90 % of the organizations said they did not notice a drop in demand for hunting tourism and all addressed tour operators and travel agencies said they agreed with the claim that the Czech Republic has a good potential for the development of hunting tourism.

## CONSLUSION

The aim of the paper was to evaluate and compare the offer of hunting tour operators and travel agencies in the Czech Republic. The hunting offer is mostly focused by small travel agencies that specialize exclusively in offering hunting. The offer includes both outbound and inbound tourism. Hungary, South Africa and Russia prevail among hunting destinations most often offered. The most common customers of tour operators and travel agencies are Czechs, Germans and Austrians. Hunters usually travel in groups, mostly men and prefer individual hunting. More than half of the customers are standing customers and use the services of organizations repeatedly. Both Czech and foreign customers prefer trophy hunting.

Among the largest limits of survey include the limitations of a larger survey, the reluctance of organizations to participate in the research, and the credibility of the answers given by the organizations. Based on the research conducted, it would be worthwhile to focus on the way of marketing activities and communication of tour operators and travel agencies. It would be advisable to conduct a questionnaire survey directly between the customers of the tour operators and the travel agencies in order to determine the satisfaction of the customers with offered services, their quality and range.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## TUROPERATORI I PUTNIČKE AGENCIJE U PODRUČJU LOVNOG TURIZMA U ČEŠKOJ REPUBLICI

### Sažetak

Turoperatori i putničke agencije u ovom se trenutku suočavaju s brojnim nepredviđenim preprekama. Moraju se prilagoditi promjenjivim potrebama korisnika, koje uključuju želju za aktivnim odmorom. Lov ima dugu tradiciju u Češkoj i izvan nje i postaje sve popularniji. Posredovanje u lovu izvrsna je poslovna prilika za turoperatore i putničke agencije. Cilj je ovog rada analizirati trenutačnu situaciju i ponudu turoperatora i putničkih agencija koje posluju na području lovnog turizma u Češkoj. Njihova se ponuda ocjenjuje na temelju podataka iz anketnog upitnika koji su prikupljeni od rujna do prosinca 2017. i koji su se vrednovali uzimajući u obzir jednostavne relativne pokazatelje. Istraživanje je pokazalo da je ponuda lova uglavnom koncentrirana kod malih putničkih agencija specijaliziranih isključivo za lovni turizam. Ponuda uključuje ulazni i izlazni turizam. Najčešće ponuđene destinacije su Mađarska, Južna Afrika i Rusija. Najčešći su klijenti turoperatora i putničkih agencija Česi, Nijemci i Austrijanci. Lovci obično putuju u grupama, većinom su muškarci i preferiraju individualni lov. Više od polovice klijenata stalni su klijenti i višekratno se služe uslugama organizacija. I Česi i strani klijenti

preferiraju lov na trofejnu divljač. Rezultati istraživanja mogu poslužiti dionicima na polju lovnog turizma da poboljšaju svoj položaj na tržištu.

**Ključne riječi:** lovni turizam, turoperatori, putničke agencije, poslovna prilika.

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