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## **The relation between income from active foreign tourism and the number of foreign visitors: a case study of the four Visegrad Countries**

### INTRODUCTION

Tourism plays an important role in the social, cultural, psychological, physical and geographical environment. It is a very significant phenomenon in the creation of living standards. The importance of tourism is described primarily as an important source of revenue for the national budget. It contributes to the gross domestic product, enables the creation of new jobs, and supports the development of the regional economy. Tourism sector operations have multiple effects as they significantly influence a number of other economic sectors, such as: transport, trade and culture. Therefore, the tourism economy is perceived as a flywheel of both the local and regional economy. It also helps to preserve culture, customs and traditions. The World Travel and Tourism Council expects the tourism sector to grow faster than the wider economy and many

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other industries in the next decade. Tourism is expected to generate more than 370 million jobs by 2026 (WTTC, 2015).

The aim of the study is to examine the relationship between income from active foreign tourism and foreign visitors in the V4 countries (Slovak Republic, Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary) in the period from 2009 to 2015. The positive development of tourism up until 2008 was then significantly affected by the global economic and financial crisis, which had a significant effect on tourism from 2009 to 2015. This period of economic crisis also affected the tourism sector, which then returned to the position that it had occupied before the crisis. Here we present the status of these indicators as individual overviews of income from active tourism and numbers of visitor arrivals.

In this study we present a partial outcome that focuses on the relationship between income from active foreign tourism and foreign visitors within the V4 countries. A hypothesis was put forward which assumed the existence of a positive relationship between income from active tourism and the number of foreign visitors. This relationship was examined separately for each Member State. The data from the 2009–2015 period were evaluated by correlation analysis using Pearson's coefficient. It is the number of foreign tourists together with the income from active foreign tourism that is most often used by UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organisation) to evaluate the volumes of international tourism in individual regions and states, as well as to compile the ranking of the most frequently visited countries in the world. These statistical indicators of tourism development for each country are important (monitored quarterly) in order to respond to changes in status and to seek suitable causes and remedies (in the case of an undesirable decline). Tourists, especially from more distant continents, are not considered to be source markets for certain V4 countries, but they are important for the V4 countries as a group, which see the importance of increasing active tourism. For example, tourists from Asia tend to visit more than one country during one trip. Rather than remaining in one country, they visit others as well.

The V4 group is trying to approach many problems in a coherent way. This is done through economic, cultural and scientific achievements, or as an attempt to stabilise the region. Tourism is to some extent an important link and a reason for cooperation between the member countries, especially for markets where single countries would not succeed. The V4 countries are committed to creating a competitive region for tourism ready for the digital age. In recent years, the V4 countries have discussed intensifying the levels of marketing cooperation for highly solvent markets.

The arrival of foreign tourists in a country/region is accompanied by the arrival of money, which they plan to spend there. This, of course, implies some direct proportion. If this does not occur, it is necessary to look for the barrier and to remove it.

This paper consists of an introduction, with a subsection concerning tourism policy in the V4 countries and an overview of V4 tourism. The following parts include the study methodology, the results and their interpretation, and the main conclusions.

## TOURISM POLICY IN THE V4 COUNTRIES

The Visegrad Four (V4) is an informal grouping of four Central European countries (Slovak Republic, Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland) coordinating common activities according to current political needs and foreign policy goals (Druláková, 2007). All countries of the V4 Group accessed the European Union in 2004, but after joining, there appeared critical voices claiming that in this situation the V4 had lost its sense of existence, as the primary objectives of transformation and integration into European structures had been achieved (Strážay, 2011). Time has shown that the V4 countries are able to adopt criteria and measures affecting their economic, social or cultural development on their own, which emphasised the justification for the existence of the community.

In 2004, they signed the Declaration of the Prime Ministers of the Czech Republic, the Republic of Hungary, the Republic of Poland and the Slovak Republic on cooperation between the Visegrad Group countries after their accession to the European Union, in Kroměříž in the Czech Republic (Druláková, 2007). By signing this declaration, they undertook to cooperate and meet the objectives that are based on this declaration. Tourism enters directly or indirectly into several areas of cooperation among the V4 countries.

Cooperation in education, science, culture and sport brings a number of benefits to the V4 countries. These include access to customer databases, access to new markets, better satisfaction of the needs of customers and thus incoming tourists, increased perception and differentiation of tourist flows and increased social responsibility and introduction of rules and initiatives for sustainable tourism (Kozoň, Cuper, 2016).

Cooperation also continued in the preparations for joining the Schengen area. All the countries took joint efforts, set up working groups and subsequently applied for Schengen membership in 2004 (Neubauer, 2016), which finally came to effect in 2007. Entry into the Schengen area was a strong factor for the V4 countries to expand their opportunities for tourist flows, which was reflected in the choice of periods analysed statistically for the purpose of this study.

The V4 countries implement a policy of tourism development on their own. They try to coordinate this policy together with other interests of the V4 group.

In the 2009–2015 period under review, the Slovak Republic supported marketing promotion within neighbouring countries, including the V4 countries, as its main source markets (including countries with high market potential i.e. Ukraine, Austria and Russia). Characteristics of the neighbouring countries were re-developed focusing on demand preferences for individual source segments. In the same period, the Slovak

Republic significantly supported the products of summer and winter tourism, congress tourism, spa and health tourism, rural tourism and agritourism, as well as cultural and urban tourism, for which it has excellent potential as a country. Another goal was to increase the competitiveness of tourism while making better use of its potential in order to balance regional disparities and create new job opportunities. The area of priorities also concerned the improvement of informatisation as well as the quality of employees in tourism (SACR, 2013).

In Hungary, as part of overcoming the negative effects of the economic crisis, they reduced the VAT rate on accommodation services to 18% in July 2009 (VAT on other services at that time was 27%). The Hungarian National Tourist Office (Magyar Turizmus Zrt.) emphasised promotional activities in neighbouring countries, which was carried out in cooperation with other V4 countries. Hungary still focuses more on supporting domestic tourism. In this context, a new system of employee benefits (Széchenyi Card) was introduced in 2011, with the aim of achieving better results in domestic tourism in the coming years.

Between 2010 and 2013, the Czech Republic introduced the National Tourism Support Program, which also includes the “Tourism for All” sub-program. This sub-project focused on the development of new products aimed at reducing seasonality in tourism and creating conditions for the creation of new jobs throughout the calendar year. The program also focused on marketing support for newly created products.

Poland developed a strategic direction for the development of tourism for up to 2015, preceded by an analysis of the conditions for Polish tourism and a comparison with global and European trends. This led to the definition of priority areas to strengthen the dynamics of tourism development. It aims to achieve a highly competitive tourism product, with human resource development, marketing support and an analysis of the stays and flows of foreign visitors as source markets, etc. (MDVR SR, 2013).

Tourism support policy in the V4 countries is perceived as a part of development plans, regional policies as well as a stimulant for economic development.

The V4 countries have the need to cooperate in other areas linked with tourism. This is mainly needed in the field of business support legislation, the position of tourism in the economy of the state, and in relation to the natural and cultural resources of the individual countries.

The V4 countries understand this as a requirement of social responsibility, in terms of creating favourable conditions for the development of tourism. This is then transferred to tourism revenue. Acquiring new source markets is challenging and, in the case of lack of support for tourism, there may be a diversion of tourist flows and a reduction in income from active tourism (Bucher, 2015).

Primarily within tourism, the emphasis is on the presentation of the following six product groups: capitals, historic cities, UNESCO monuments, Jewish monuments, spas and MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions)

(Visegrad Group, 2014). These are high-income areas, which are also at the center of attention of foreign tourists and residents of the V4 countries alike.

Joint steps have also been taken by the V4 countries to promote tourism. The presentation of the countries as a whole, as a single destination rather than individually, is more than needed. The joint promotion of the V4 countries in the field of tourism was covered by the European Quartet – *One Melody* platform (Kozož, Cuper, 2016). Here we want to draw attention to the importance of a common approach in promoting new target markets. The creation of joint promotion and a unified presentation procedure has an impact on the direction of tourist flows to the area of Central Europe including the V4 countries.

Within the V4 area, a tourism group has been created which focuses mainly on joint promotional activities in third markets in order to strengthen the position and competitiveness of the member countries. The joint promotion of the V4 countries in the field of tourism is covered by the European Quartet – *One Melody* platform. This platform brings together the national tourism centers of the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, Poland and Hungary. The aim of the cooperation between the V4 countries is the development of incoming tourism, especially from more distant destinations. Therefore, joint activities are carried out in the markets of Japan, China and the USA and, since 2007, also in the Asian part of the Russian Federation, where the V4 countries are presented as a single marketing unit. For this purpose, individual projects and marketing activities are used for the V4 countries, which are set out in the activity plan for the relevant year (Lochmannová, 2015).

Surveys of specialised organisations as well as international tourism trends confirm the increased interest by third-country visitors in traveling to Europe. The V4 countries have become very interesting due to their historical affinity, geographical accessibility and tourist offer. The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and the Slovak Republic do not compete in distant markets; instead, tourists from these countries choose to visit a region rather than a specific country. In 2014–2015, the V4 countries continued to exchange experience and implement marketing and promotional activities under a common brand, Discover Central Europe (MNZVE, 2016).

In June 2020, the Slovak Republic took over the presidency. In the field of tourism a meeting of the country leaders was held at Štrbské Pleso (March 2019), where a joint financial plan for joint marketing activities in the next period was approved, with a common budget of 300,000 euros. One of the goals of joint promotion for the coming period is to increase traffic and arrivals in the Central European region, attract visitors and present the V4 countries in the USA, Canada, the Russian Federation, China, the Gulf countries and Australia (MFA, 2019).

Achieving the above-mentioned goals (as well as others) will require the systematic creation of optimal conditions for increasing the number of incoming foreign and domestic tourists, as well as close cooperation of all stakeholders directly or indirectly affecting tourism performance, where the basic indicators are income from tourism and destination traffic.

## OVERVIEW OF THE V4 TOURISM SITUATION

Several authors deal with the issues of the V4 countries. Bucher (2015) examines the competitiveness of the V4 countries as a tourist destination. The study evaluates individual indicators, such as environmental sustainability, safety and reliability, tourism priorities, transport infrastructure, tourism infrastructure, information and communication technologies, and the price competitiveness of tourism human resources, tourism affinities, natural and cultural resources, all of which are competitiveness indicators of the V4 countries compared to other countries of the European Union. The development of foreign income from foreign arrivals (active tourism / incoming tourism) is also monitored among the V4 countries as well as in selected leaders in tourism, such as Germany and Austria. In conclusion, the author points out that the result of all the activities of the V4 countries is search of a way to make the V4 destination more attractive. This should lead to a higher number of foreign participants and consequently to an increase in the revenue side of the budget.

Šauel, Pařil and Viturka (2018), in their study, describe the metropolitanisation of cities within the V4. They do not only analyse the economic profile of representative places, but also their ability to attract visitors. The results of their study show the dominance of the Czech metropolises, followed by Poland. Majerová (2018) examines the offer of the cities within the V4 countries with regard to source markets in active tourism. She repeatedly emphasizes the importance of cities and the culture and entertainment offered within them. She states that important source markets for V4 cities are visitors to Western Europe, which indicates the marketing orientation of the V4 countries. The author points out the need to create profiles of visitors in active tourism. Jankowska, Wacowska-Slezak and Zukowska (2014) focus on the risk of accidents caused by incoming tourists from V4 countries to Poland. The study focuses on the following voivodships: Mazowieckie, Dolnośląskie, Śląskie and Małopolskie. These voivodships feature the highest arrivals of Slovak, Czech and Hungarian tourists. In conclusion, the authors state that, despite the bad condition of the roads in Poland (unlike in other European countries), incoming tourists are not exposed to great risk in terms of transport. They recommend drawing conclusions for the competent institutions, regarding increasing the safety of specific groups of tourists and thus partially encouraging their arrival in Poland as a destination country.

Abraham (2014) deals with tourism in connection with regional development, including with the role of clusters in tourism within the V4 region. The author states that the tourism strategies for the V4 countries are completely different to those of the EU strategy. Each country involved in the study has developed its own independent system of tourism movement indicators. Pristach (2016) examines the V4 countries in terms of their approach to regional policy, and concludes that each country has a differentiated approach to it. The main differences concern, for example, tourism

capacity indicators, presuppositionals of tourism policy, both local and regional, etc. Kozma (2019) comes to the same conclusions within the scope of a more general economic topic, when he describes the strategy of sustainable development of the V4 countries and the indicators for each country separately. His conclusions are that while the strategies for the V4 countries share similarities, compared to the EU, the national strategies are different. The strategy for the development of tourism in the V4 countries also takes into account the priorities and interests of the V4 countries.

Chudy-Hyski (2013) focuses on the development of the spatial structure of the largest groups of foreign visitors to Poland, by voivodship. German tourists prefer visiting the provinces of Mazowieckie and Małopolskie, while Russian, Ukrainian and Lithuanian tourists travel mainly to the provinces of Podkarpackie, Lubuskie and Dolnośląskie. The findings have their application in the field of foreign visitor flows, related to the targeted promotion within the source markets. Provinces that know the tourist profile can initiate activities aimed at tourists from specific countries, while knowing the structural similarity of provinces related to the arrival of foreigners in Poland mitigates the selection of partners for project implementation.

Among Slovak authors researching the issue of the V4 countries, Belanová (2014) deals with the quality of the business environment in the countries surveyed, with an emphasis on the availability of financial resources. Gonos and Timková (2017) are also concerned with the competitiveness of the V4 countries, with an emphasis on the global index and GDP growth, where they state that the V4 countries joined the European Union together and of course had positive expectations. The economies of the countries found themselves in a new space in the form of a larger market. In identifying trends in the GDP growth rate for the V4 countries, they identified a sharp decline in the growth rate for all the above-mentioned countries, especially in 2008 as a result of an international financial crisis. The context of V4 development, with an emphasis on the economic indicators or political development, has been examined by several authors. Hudec (2016), Kozoň and Cuper (2016) focus on the position and state of domestic and foreign tourism development in the V4 countries. In the study, they monitor and evaluate attendance as well as indicators of accommodation facilities in the V4 countries. For the years 2012 to 2015, they confirm an increase in the number of foreign visitors, which they assess as a positive development in the V4 countries. In connection with tourism and regional development, there are not just Slovak authors (Šenková, 2018; Švedová, Dzurov Vargová, 2018), but also others (Mayer et al., 2019; Włodarczyk, Tryhubczak, 2018).

## METHODOLOGY

The aim of the study is to examine the relationship between income from active foreign tourism and the number of foreign visitors in the V4 countries (Slovak Republic, Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary) in the 2009 to 2015 period. On the

basis of these criteria, we put forward a hypothesis in which we assumed the existence of a dependence between the income from active foreign tourism and the number of foreign visitors in the individual V4 countries. We examined the relation between income from active foreign tourism and attendance for each country individually.

We used several mathematical-statistical methods to evaluate the partial goals. The correlation analysis used the Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ).

We tested (verified) the hypotheses:

$$H_0: r = 0 \quad H_1: r \neq 0$$

$$p \geq 0.05 \quad p < 0.05$$

where:

$r$  – Pearson coefficient

$\alpha$  – level of statistical significance

$p$ -value (compared with  $\alpha = 0.05$ ).

The Pearson correlation coefficient is the selection correlation coefficient. It takes a value in the interval  $[-1;1]$  and expresses the degree of linear correlation between  $X$  and  $Y$ . The closer the value of  $|r|$  to 1, the stronger the linear dependence, while the closer the value  $r$  to 0, the weaker the linear dependence. If this coefficient takes the value of 1 or  $-1$ , all points lie on the regression line and the dependence of quantities  $X$  and  $Y$  is exactly linear. If  $r = 0$ , we can say that there is no linear relationship between  $X$  and  $Y$  (non-existent).

The basis for the analysis was secondary data from the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic ([www.susr.sk](http://www.susr.sk)), the Statistical Office of the Czech Republic ([www.czso.cz](http://www.czso.cz)), OECD (<https://stats.oecd.org/>) and Eurostat (<https://ec.europa.eu/>). The surveyed period was 2009 to 2015, one associated with the outbreak of an economic crisis (2009), which affected tourism until its alleviation. The uniqueness of the period lies in that even the crisis tourism sector returned to its original performance in a short time in 2015 (after only 5 years). The positive development of tourism until 2008 was later significantly affected by the global economic and financial crisis, which had a significant effect on tourism from 2009 onwards. The year 2015 had been the first one since 2009 when the tourism performance increased above that for the years prior to 2009. This was significant for the observations during this period.

## RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE ANALYSIS

We observed that, based on the visitor rate index (annual growth rate), the number of foreign visitors increased in the monitored period of 2009–2015 in three of the V4 countries, namely the Slovak Republic, Poland and the Czech Republic. A decline of 1.09%, which was not significant, was recorded in Hungary.



In order to maintain accuracy, it is important to mention the decline in the number of visitors in 2014 to the Slovak Republic, the largest drop in visitor numbers in this area. The Ministry of Transport of the Slovak Republic, after the decline in tourism in 2014, announced a weak winter result from the point of view of visitor numbers due to the lack of snow. Another reason was attributed to the crisis in Ukraine, thus reversing the trend of increasing the number of foreign visitors from there and from Russia. Another disadvantage was the strong euro currency, which made these vacations more expensive for people from neighbouring countries who do not use the same currency. We can also say that, over the review period on average, the Slovak Republic saw 3.74 million foreign visitors, the Czech Republic 14.33 million, Hungary 25.45 million and Poland 32.19 million.

**Table 1. Foreign visitors to the V4 countries in the period 2009–2015**

Year	Slovak Republic		Czech Republic		Poland		Hungary	
	Visitors in mln	Index	Visitors in mln	Index	Visitors in mln	Index	Visitors in mln	Index
2009	3.38	–	11.98	–	27.38	–	25.69	–
2010	3.39	100.29	12.21	101.92	28.79	105.15	26.11	101.63
2011	3.57	105.31	12.89	105.57	31.02	107.75	27.44	105.09
2012	3.77	105.60	15.09	117.07	32.49	104.74	25.72	93.73
2013	4.04	107.16	15.40	102.05	33.95	104.49	23.41	91.02
2014	3.72	92.07	15.58	101.16	35.61	104.89	24.33	103.93
2015	4.33	116.4	17.19	110.33	36.12	101.43	25.41	104.44

Source: own study based on Eurostat 2009–2015.

Nominal income from active tourism in each of the V4 countries developed positively, and increased in each country during the review period. This increased by 5.05% in the Czech Republic, by 15.2% in Hungary, by 25.25% in Poland and by 27.54% in the Slovak Republic, the last being the highest result. On average, over the review period, the Slovak Republic earned EUR 1.84 billion from active tourism, the Czech Republic EUR 5.91 billion, Hungary EUR 4.84 billion, and Poland EUR 8.29 billion.

**Table 2. Income (nominal) from active tourism in the period 2009–2015**

Year	Slovak Republic		Czech Republic		Poland		Hungary	
	Income (bilion, EUR)	Index	Income (bilion, EUR)	Index	Income (bilion, EUR)	Index	Income (bilion, EUR)	Index
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>
2009	1.67	–	5.74	–	7.13	–	4.54	–
2010	1.68	100.59	5.72	99.65	7.08	99.3	4.47	98.46
2011	1.77	105.36	5.87	102.62	8.00	112.99	4.67	104.47

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2012	1.78	100.56	5.95	101.36	9.03	112.88	4.49	96.14
2013	1.92	107.87	6.14	103.19	9.11	100.89	4.84	107.79
2014	1.94	101.04	5.93	96.58	8.77	96.27	5.64	116.53
2015	2.13	109.79	6.03	101.69	8.93	101.82	5.23	92.73

Source: own study based on Eurostat 2009–2015.

We came to the following conclusions concerning the dependence between the selected variables for the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary:

The results show that in three of the V4 countries, namely the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic and Poland (Table 3), a positive relationship was confirmed between income from active tourism and the number of foreign visitors.

**Table 3. Correlation between the number of foreign visitors and nominal income from active tourism**

Specification	Slovak Republic	Czech Republic	Poland	Hungary
Correlation coeff.	0.932	0.841	0.892	-0.490
p-value	0.002	0.018	0.069	0.265

Source: own study.

The hypothesis in the case of Hungary, however, was not confirmed. This means that there was no statistically significant relationship between the active income from tourism and the number of foreign visitors. We assume that this was influenced by the situation that occurred after 2008 in the form of the economic crisis, and its impact on tourism was still evident in 2009. The statement can be supported by adducing the study of Karelová (2016), who examined the business environment of the V4 countries. The study covers the period of 2010–2016 and shows that the lowest quality of the business environment among the V4 countries was found in Hungary. The country was ranked in the penultimate place in all indices, respectively. The author worked with the indices from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, Global Entrepreneurship Index, Ease of Doing Business Index, Global Competitiveness Index, Index of Economic Freedom, and Corruption Perception Index. Kincses *et al.* (2017) examine the situation for the tourism market in Hungary with regard to transit visitors in 2009–2013. Their findings record the fact that Hungary went through a change in the motivation of transit visitors during the period of the economic crisis. Tourism experts and economic policy makers were asked to evaluate these changes. However, this happened with a slight time delay. They recommended monitoring the country-specific factors (such as labour market conditions or tourism offer) and the conditions (visa requirements, transport infrastructure, accommodation along transit routes, etc.) provided by Hungary. In conclusion, they emphasise the monitoring of individual groups (not only transit

visitors), which, if suitable and quick decisions were made, could contribute to Hungary's competitive advantage.

We can assume that income from foreign visitors depends on the available amount that they are able to spend on tourism. The subject of further research could thus be a study of the purchasing power of individual source markets, depending on their disposable income, the ability to generate savings as well as the willingness to spend the saved money on tourism.

Kozoň and Cuper (2013) come to the same conclusions regarding the number of visitors to the V4 countries in their study for the 2012–2015 period. The authors suggest focusing on the promotion of visitors from more distant regions in order to attract more tourists who will remain at the destination and spend more money during their stays. At the same time, they emphasise the improvement of air connections in the V4 countries and support the introduction of information technologies.

## CONCLUSIONS

The object of the study was the Visegrad Four countries. In the present study, we focused mainly on the analysis of the number of foreign visitors and income from active tourism. Within the hypothesis, we assumed the dependence of the given variables. The statistically significant relationship between income from tourism and the number of foreign visitors was not confirmed for one of the V4 countries, namely the Republic of Hungary. Thus, we can neither confirm nor fully reject the research hypothesis for all the V4 countries. Therefore, it is worth underlining that tourism plays an important role in the economies of the countries, but it is essential to manage this sector in a proper way. Tourism management and tourism policy (at local, regional and national levels) should be perceived as priority actions and initiatives by decision-makers and authorities. Suitable directions for tourism policy and strategies should be indicated and implemented by those who are responsible for tourism development in each country. One might also claim that tourism promotion is very important because it enables tourists to visit a country and the residents to host the tourists.

Tourism is a sector that is sensitive to a wide range of diverse factors and its development is fundamentally influenced by various global or regional events. In the 2009–2015 review period, the number of foreign visitors increased in three of the V4 countries. On the other hand, an insignificant decline of 1.09% occurred in Hungary. Active tourism revenues in all the V4 countries developed positively, which represented an increase of 5–27.5%. It can also be stated that tourism has the ability to react to an unfavorable situation caused by economic crisis (which hit tourism in 2009) in each country individually. It also influenced positively the entire economy of the countries because it contributed to their economic growth.

As mentioned earlier, the V4 countries themselves speak of intensifying marketing cooperation. Positioning the V4 countries, not only as destinations, is

possible only through consistent, continuous and long-term brand building. Its direction should have a positive effect on the increase in tourist flows as well as in the incomes of the V4 countries, as a result of a favorable development. At the level of the association of the countries, this should not only include intensifying the participation in trade fairs or exhibitions of tourism, but also the monitoring of incoming foreign visitors (tourists), whose initial moment of decision on the choice of a country / destination is based on the interest in the V4 region. Clearly, cross-border cooperation, which is also in the interest of the EU area, should be promoted in the V4 countries. Innovation or creation of new tourism products based on the promotion of new types of tourism for international and regional markets should be encouraged.

The V4 countries work together as a whole. However, are there closer ties between the countries within this group? We could identify them in the so-called central V4 countries, primarily the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic. Especially the Slovak Republic is forced to cooperate in the V4 organisation as a whole, but also with each neighbouring country with which it borders, through cross-border cooperation. Cooperation between Poland and the Slovak Republic has resulted in negotiations on a common brand in tourism. How will the other V4 member states react to this situation?

Will these initiatives presenting the services and products of tourism in the Slovak Republic and Poland, with the aim of attracting and gaining foreign visitors, be perceived as a threat or as a manifestation of common initiatives of the V4 countries? There are stronger voices questioning whether the V4 is still justified. Nevertheless, the V4 countries continue to set their common goals and support the development of the member countries. One of the latest examples is the rejection of the digital tax within the EU. The V4 countries, on the other hand, are announcing the preparation of their national digital taxes.

If we focus on the Slovak Republic, we can observe an increase in foreign visitors from the unfavourable year of 2009 to 2014. Tourism has confirmed its flexibility and resilience to changing economic conditions, and 2010 can be characterised as a year of stabilisation, where there was a minimal but still growing number of tourists compared to 2009. For the year 2014, the decline in the number of foreign visitors was justified by the unfavourable situation in winter – a lack of snow and hence the failure of the ski season. The real reason was, of course, the inability to replace the usual winter offer with another product. Here it is necessary to point out the importance of creating tourist products in accordance with the demand occurring in individual segments – which means understanding the source markets. There is still a need to monitor the number of foreign visitors, and it seems appropriate to re-perform the analysis of the source markets in order to define their preferences and transform these preferences into tourism products, not only in the Slovak Republic but also in the V4 countries. The V4 countries have given priority to the presentation of selected and preferred types of tourism in the

source markets, such as spa tourism within the Russian Federation. In the light of the growing competition in the international tourism market, it is necessary to add new products to the V4 offer in the form of packages. The V4 countries are working on this as part of the Discover Europe project. We would like to point out that the new non-traditional forms of tourism that the V4 countries can offer visitors should be included in the project. These include creative tourism, glamping tourism and how to try to present a “diverse palette of tastes” in culinary tourism.

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### Summary

The importance of tourism primarily lies in it as an important source of revenue for the national budget. It contributes to the creation of gross domestic product, enables the creation of new jobs, and supports regional economic development. The tourism sector plays multiple roles because it significantly influences a number of other economic sectors, such as: transport, trade, and culture. Therefore, the tourism economy is perceived as a “flywheel” for local and regional economies.

The present study is an analysis of foreign visitors and revenues from tourism within the Visegrad Four countries in the 2009–2015 period. The aim of the study is to describe the position of tourism in the Visegrad countries. Specifically, it focuses on the relationship between income and traffic within the Visegrad Four countries. The data obtained from official sites of the statistical authorities and the OECD were evaluated using Pearson's correlation coefficient. There was a presumption of the existence of a dependence between the income from tourism and the number of visitors in individual countries of the Visegrad Four. On the basis of testing, the main hypothesis cannot be verified or falsified. The statistically significant relationship between the income from tourism and the number of foreign visitors was not confirmed in one of the Visegrad Four countries, namely in the Republic of Hungary. Therefore, it is significant to manage the tourism sector in a suitable way. Tourism management and tourism policy should be perceived as priority actions and initiatives by decision-makers and authorities. Suitable directions for tourism policies and strategies should be indicated and implemented by those who are responsible for tourism development in each country. Moreover, the countries of the Visegrad Four should continue to cooperate, to exchange information on legislative changes in the field of tourism in individual countries, but mainly in promoting the Visegrad Four as a unified whole.

*Keywords:* tourism, Visegrad four countries, arrivals, incomes.

### **Relacja między dochodami z zagranicznej turystyki przyjazdowej a ruchem turystycznym: studium przypadku czterech krajów Grupy Wyszehradzkiej**

#### *Streszczenie*

Turystyka odgrywa niezwykle ważną rolę w kształtowaniu budżetu państwa, ponieważ stanowi istotne źródło jego dochodów. Sektor turystyczny przyczynia się do PKB, stwarza nowe miejsca pracy, wspiera rozwój regionalnej gospodarki. Przemysł turystyczny pełni rolę tzw. mnożnika turystycznego, ponieważ przyczynia się do rozwoju innych sektorów gospodarczych, jak między innymi transportu, handlu czy kultury. Gospodarka turystyczna w związku z tym postrzegana jest jako „koło zamachowe” lokalnej i regionalnej gospodarki.

Opracowanie przedstawia wyniki badań dotyczących ruchu turystycznego i wpływów finansowych z niego wynikających w czterech krajach należących do Grupy Wyszehradzkiej w okresie 2009–2015. Celem opracowania jest przedstawienie roli turystyki w gospodarce krajów z Grupy Wyszehradzkiej, a w szczególności skupiono się na relacji ruch turystyczny – przychód. Analiza (przy użyciu współczynnika korelacji Pearsona) i interpretacja danych statystycznych oraz wyników badań pozwoliła na wykazanie prostej zależności między przychodami z turystyki a liczbą odwiedzających dany kraj. W trzech krajach, tj. na Słowacji, w Czechach oraz w Polsce, potwierdzono występowanie takiej zależności, natomiast takie współwystępowanie nie miało miejsca na Węgrzech. W związku z powyższym, odpowiednie zarządzanie branżą turystyczną okazuje się być istotnym zagadnieniem. Zarządzanie turystyką i polityka turystyczna powinny stanowić priorytet w działaniach decydentów i przedstawicieli władz. Odpowiednie kierunki i strategie rozwoju turystyki powinny być wskazywane i wprowadzane w życie przez osoby odpowiedzialne za jej rozwój. Ponadto kraje z Grupy Wyszehradzkiej powinny kontynuować współpracę, wymianę informacji dotyczącą zmian w przepisach prawnych w zakresie turystyki w poszczególnych krajach, ale głównie współpraca ta powinna polegać na promowaniu turystyki w krajach z Grupy Wyszehradzkiej jako wspólnej destynacji turystycznej.

*Słowa kluczowe:* turystyka, cztery kraje Grupy Wyszehradzkiej, przyjazdy, przychody.