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# SPATIAL ASPECT AND BEHAVIOR OF TOUR OPERATORS IN SLOVAKIA (CASE STUDY)

## Priestorový aspekt a fungovanie cestovných kancelárií na Slovensku (Prípadová štúdia)

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**Annotation**

Slovakia recorded rapid development in tourism. This phenomenon also follows the increase in the number of tour operators and travel agencies. Part of the paper is devoted to spatial aspects of travel agencies and disparities within individual regions of Slovakia. Good management and marketing in controlling and new approaches and trends accelerate the development and advancement of tour operators. The paper is focused on the functional evaluation of a German tour operator which operates in Slovakia for the period 2011–2017. The aim is to analyze the effectiveness of management on the basis of the overall balance in relation to the number of clients and evaluate the number of travel agencies that offer products of a tour operator within the regions of Slovakia. Research was running in 2017 during the summer season. The number of clients depends mainly on the political stability of the destination that the tour operator can not influence, but can influence a whole range of factors and management practices.

**Key words**

marketing, tour operator, travel agency, disparities of Slovak regions and SWOT analysis

**Anotácia**

Slovensko zaznamenáva prudký rozvoj v oblasti cestovného ruchu. Tento jav sledujeme aj v náraste počtu cestovných kancelárií a agentúr. Časť príspevku je venovaná priestorovým aspektom cestovných agentúr a disparitám v rámci jednotlivých regiónov Slovenska. Dobrý manažment a marketing v riadení a nové prístupy a trendy urýchľujú rozvoj a ďalší vývoj cestovných kancelárií. Príspevok je zameraný na funkčné hodnotenie nemeckej cestovnej kancelárie, ktorá na Slovensku pôsobí za obdobie rokov 2011–2017. Cieľom je analyzovať efektívnosť riadenia na základe celkovej bilancie vo vzťahu k počtu klientov a hodnotiť počet cestovných agentúr, ktoré ponúkajú produkt CK v rámci regiónov Slovenska. Výskum prebehol v roku 2017 počas letnej sezóny. Počet klientov závisí hlavne od politickej stability cieľovej destinácie, ktorú nemôže cestovná kancelária ovplyvniť, môže však ovplyvniť celý rad faktorov a postupov riadenia.

**Kľúčové slová**

marketing, cestovná kancelária, cestovná agentúra, disparity regiónov Slovenska a SWOT analýza

**JEL classification:** M31

**Introduction**

Tourism is a very dynamic part of industry. The market is becoming more professional, the needs of clients more demanding, the competition more fiercer and harder. Therefore, it is now proper management the key to success in all areas. Slovakia is one of the countries that have embarked on a rapid development trend in this area. Slovaks, as a conservative nation, are increasingly looking for distant and not classic tourism destinations. This demonstrates by the increasing number of tour operators and travel agencies in the country. Regional disparities in distribution of tour operators and travel agencies in Slovakia are also interesting, their number, scope, focus and

profit that are different in different regions. Management of tour operator is complex and long-term process. It depends on stability, growth, future, the name, and efficiency as well. Therefore it is very important management and marketing as well as the manager work and his team. Correct factors, optimal approaches, prompt solutions in crisis situations are a guarantee for effective operation. A good combination of excellent theoretical knowledge of management, language and communication skills is rightly used in practice.

## 1. Theoretical background

Frequently, the term tour operator and travel agency is mixed. Act no. 281/2001 Coll. about tours, business conditions of tour operators and travel agencies and on the amendment of the Civil Code as amended, as amended by Act no. 95/2002 Coll., Act no. 747/2004 Coll., Act No. 186/2006 Coll. and Act no. 136/2010 Coll. Defines **tour operator** as an entrepreneur who organizes, offers and sells tours on the basis of a trade license and concludes a tour contract. Its main activity is the organization, offer and sell tours to the final consumer to whom has their own behalf to conclude a contract of trip (<http://www.sacka.eu/aktualita/?ID=337>). According to the thematic orientation of the tours, it is a general or specialized tour operator, depending on the type of tourism – tour operator focused on domestic tourism, active foreign tourism (incoming tour operator), or passive foreign tourism (outgoing tour operator), by employees or volume achieved sales of small, medium-sized or large tour operator.

The **travel agency** is a tourism business entity which, on the basis of a trade license, provides services to the extent specified by the same. *The travel agency is different in that the sale of package tours to final consumers can perform only acting as an intermediary tour operator.*

**Marketing** is often mistakenly understood only as selling, or aggressive commercial policy and promotion. However, selling is only one of several marketing functions and is not the most significant. Marketing as a practical activity is associated with offering the required product (services) at the right time and in the right place, at the right price, in a steady way, with effective marketing communication to the right customer target groups and thus achieving prosperity. It is based, on the one hand, on entrepreneurial philosophy, a way of thinking that is knowledgeable and increasingly responsive to customer needs and a management concept - *marketing management* (Liberko, 1998).

As Gúčík (2011) states, *marketing planning* is the tool for managing and coordinating marketing efforts at the destination. When marketing planning destination, it is necessary to decide how to get a destination (product) on the market, how to value the product, distribute it and improve it continuously and ensure its prosperity. Marketing is therefore not a short-term effort to sell the product, but long-term purposeful effort. Planning is an important part of management and marketing and is based on setting goals, visions and developing strategies to achieve them. The basic management steps could be implemented before the strategy was developed. Effective promotion communication tools are media, web site, catalog printing, video presentation, DVD, personal contacts at fairs, exhibitions, promotional journeys, souvenirs with a logo, etc. Management and marketing of tourism is closely engaged by several authors (Seifertová, 2003; Dědina, 2005; Repaská & Vilinová & Romaňáková, 2015; Pachrová & Janoušková & Neckářová, 2017; Tremboš & Trembošová, 2014; Šauer, 2017).

**Marketing mix** - a set of satisfying customer needs elements called 4P. It represents a theory, a philosophy that aims to provide the right product, at the right price, with the right marketing communication, in the right place. The basic components of the marketing mix include: the product (which is offered to customers), the price (by which the product is sold), the place or distribution (through which the product becomes available to the customer) and the communication (which the customer acquaints with the product) (Jurková & Ferencová, 1995). A marketing mix means product-price-distribution-promotion. Communication is one of the components of the marketing mix. Marketing communication means on the one hand to inform and familiarize on tourism and services, on the other hand, listen to the demands of participants in tourism and respond to them (Rajt & Zámečnicková, 2005).

Tourism product is all that is offered in the tourism market and the ability to meet the needs of visitors and create a comprehensive set of experiences. It is a set of services that produces and offers a destination (primary offer) and businesses and tourism institutions (secondary offer). From the point of view of the visitor, it is always a package of services characterized by mutual conditionality and complementarity; the customer usually compiles the product itself, combining different services with regard to the non-material nature of the services can not be tested in advance; therefore, their information is important (Gúčík, 2001).

The product is all that is offered in the market in order to meet the needs and wishes. The product can be a product, a service, but also experiences, events, persons, places, properties, organizations, information and ideas (Jurková

& Ferencová, 1995). Creating a product or service has a decisive role in tourism. This is especially the harmonization of various factors. Such factors are unchangeable factors (eg. location), the requirements and wishes of the market and the combination of products in the so-called package own and foreign services (eg. a destination as a whole, the main and ancillary services of the hotel).

These factors may cause short-term changes in the product offered by the tour operator with regard to product range, quality, service and production. In this sense, there is a significant innovation of the product, the creative innovation of the offer in order to gain benefits compared to the competitor. The fact that demand is mostly on the package of services and not on individual services forces various service providers to cooperate. Due to differences between the current state of management in tourism and marketing strategies of individual entities tourism sector, it appears necessary to consolidate them, or strengthen them (Vystoupil et al., 2007).

The term **disparity** in relation to the spatial dimension can be understood and defined as a structured phenomenon, formed by a system of elements, links and relationships that manifests itself by the accumulation of phenomena that affect the development of a particular area in a given space. In general, the term disparity expresses inequality, diversity or disproportion of different phenomena. The term regional differences expresses differences, inequalities of signs, phenomena, or processes whose identification and comparison has a rational meaning (cognitive, economic, sociological, psychological) (Kutscherauer, 2007). An important sign of regional structure of Slovakia are regional differences (the regional disparities), which are also reflected in the tourism sector and hence the scope of the travel agencies. At the time of transformation of the political, economic and social spheres, regions with different positional, natural, demographic, economic and social potential, infrastructure facilities and different ability to respond to market economy conditions have developed differently (Rajčáková & Švecová, 2015).

## 2. Study Purpose and Hypotheses

The article is focused on the evaluation of efficiency, service and tour operatmarketing. An important factor is also the personality of the manager and his theoretical skills turned into practice. Recently, however, we faced with the fact that the knowledge acquired at school in theory are often not applicable in practice. The aim of the contribution is to evaluate the current functioning of tour operator on a specific example of tour operator with national competence and foreign background. In the paper we follow the scope of tour operator in relation to travel agencies that offer its products. We evaluate the spatial expansion of individual agencies within the regions of Slovakia.

In this paper we evaluate particular strengths and opportunities, identify possible threats and weaknesses. We evaluate tour operator balance sheet for 7 years of its operation, the profit for each year in correlation with the number of clients (period 2011-2017) and the number of clients according to the regions of Slovakia. The tour operator database was processed during 2017 in the months of June to September. Given the very large number of source data in this paper we present part of processed results. Filtered data were processed by mathematical-statistical methods in the form of graphs.

At the beginning we set three hypotheses, which are based on current statistics (last 2017):

- H1: The number of customers depends on political stability in destination and the safety of air transport. This is a factor that tour operator can not influence.
- H2: Number of clients in Slovakia affects diversity of departure points. This factor can be influence by tour operator. Thus, the spatial aspect of travel agencies also depends on the location of the airport (possible departures to destinations).
- H3: The structure of clients shows that the final destination is mostly in Egypt, so the formation of the product as well as other activities of the marketing mix will mainly focus on this destination.

## 3. Methodology

### Study Setting and Data Collection

The fact that tourism is an important factor in the development and growth of the economy is also pointed out by the UNWTO (World Tourism Organization). It monitors the profit from tourism that it grows on average by 4% per year (over the past 7 years). A comparable sequence of uninterrupted solid growth has not been recorded since the 1960s. Tourism represents 10% of world GDP, 7% of world trade and 1 of 10 jobs [http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/annual\\_report\\_2016\\_web\\_0.pdf](http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/annual_report_2016_web_0.pdf)). An important role in the efficient operation of tour operator is also the product. Tourism in individual regions of Slovakia has a major impact on regional development overall. It is an important factor in regional development. It participates eg. the creation of new jobs, particularly felt by the inhabitants of less developed regions of eastern Slovakia.

Gúčik (2011) defines the product as a comprehensive set of experiences, so when its creation, the producer must first recognize the customer's core needs that the product should meet and then propose the expected product and find ways for its further expansion. The product must be in line with its price to meet the customer's expectations.

Three levels of product are distinguished in marketing: general product - the core of the offer of specialized services (shipment, overnight) and the variable primary destination offer, the expected product that the customer actually meets and the producer of the services is different from the competition (hospitality, environment, atmosphere, quality, brand), the wider product provides an additional experience (surprise, discount for guest, greeting to a holiday). This is a good starting base for the tour operator.

#### 4. Structure and typology of a tour operator

Depending on the subject of activity and position in the distribution process, tour operator are organizers of touring product combinations - "package". They represent the wholesale position in the distribution process. Studied tour operator is a transmitting entity dealing with the "outgoing tourism". According to the scope and nature of services it is a fundamental, that is, those that perform services in full.

In terms of time of operation, it is entity with year-round activity and according to its size, it is a medium-sized entity (15 employees). From the number 294 of tour operator, most of them are small (up to 5 employees) in Slovakia. The size of the tour operator is also related to the universality and portfolio specialization (<http://www.sacka.eu/archiv-aktualit/>). Small tour operators mostly deal with one segment of the market, operate in one region and have a simple and transparent organizational structure. The middle size of tour operator except for director in addition has a dedicated staff providing marketing activities, sales of tours to dispatching. Separate is the creation of a program offer and the provision of services from the sale of individual tours.

##### 4.1 Tour operator services

*Accommodation* for clients is provided on the basis of their permanent foreign partners, or purchases from intermediaries who have extensive local contracts. Since the accommodation is non-storable, its non-use is an economic loss. A huge advantage is that if a tour operator has its own accommodation facility. The tour operator has fixed accommodation - its own hotels. It has 16 hotels with 7041 rooms and about 17,000 beds. It also has mobile accommodation facilities - 10 boats with a capacity of 650 cabins, which contain about 1400 beds. All hotels have restaurant facilities in the form of "all inclusive" except for one hotel where there is half board and one hotel where there is a choice of half board or "all inclusive".

*Transport* is one of the basic conditions of a tour operator. In this case, air and water transport. Significantly to air transport contribute low cost airlines. Contract with air carriers tour operators concluded with carriers ensuring regular or "charter" flights. It buys the capacity of the aircraft, regardless of the actual occupation, or in the case of several smaller tour operators together.

*The guide services* are associated with the repeated transfer of groups or individual participants of tour operator, organizational and technical provision of the agreed services, including timely and factual observance of the program and provision of information for payment. Tour operator has 8 local delegates speaking Slovak. It is a technical guide (pendl) who accompanies clients from the city going to the place of accommodation, the delegate who works at the place of accommodation and the animator who organizes the program also at the place of accommodation.

*The insurance services* are provided by the tour operator for its clients or by the clients themselves. Insurance is not included in the tour price. Every tour operator must have insurance against insolvency. They must have insurance coverage of at least 25% of the planned annual revenue from sales of tours or, if the sales are to be lower than in the previous year, to a minimum of 25% of the previous year's sales (<https://www.soi.sk/sk/prava-cestujucich.soi>).

##### 4.2 Analysis of tour operator balance

The tourism market is unstable and there is a constant demand for new destinations and activities, so tour operators have to expand their product lines with new components, to find new market segments that suit their offer. Strategic planning in the current business environment helps the business (tour operator) to identify changes in the external environment in a timely manner and to adapt the necessary measures in the future direction and management (Kotler, 2001).

The German tour operator is not the only one offering this product, but the SWOT analysis (Tab.1) shows several advantages over other travel agencies in Slovakia. In Slovakia it has the lowest product price and the largest number of clients leading example in Egypt.

*Situational analysis* as part of marketing planning is aimed at studying the weaknesses and strengths of an already established travel agency. The information is used to prepare a marketing plan and update the strategic business

plan. The sequence of steps from market analysis may change, because in the past we have customer information and key competitors. The analysis is taking into account the past and potential clients. The marketing strategy of a case tour operator is a single-market strategy ("niching") with a small market share. The strength of this approach is to specialize and focus on the needs of a specific target market to meet its needs better than competing firms. The essence of "niching" is the immediate elimination of competition or conflict with leading companies (tour operators) in the field. The biggest competition in this area, we consider only three tour operators in Slovakia which offer similar products. In this case, it is a strategy to achieve the specific advantage of lower total costs by achieving **efficient production** with economy. This strategy can be selected, provided that the tour operator is large or medium size, preferably with nationwide coverage (this case study), or has a lower rate of direct contacts with customers and uses modern techniques for the realization of certain operations (eg. flight reservations).

**Tab. 1: SWOT analyze of tour operator**

Strengths	Weaknesses
Long-standing tradition of tour operator operating on the market (20 years) with a nationwide scope	Use of non-EU airlines
Quality service before, during and after tours	Unused market potential
Foreign background	Insufficient promotion
Own hotel network	Low websites quality
Variety of departures	
Local delegates speaking Slovak	
Opportunities	Threats
Upgrading web resources, increasing of promotion	Bad management
Corporate clients	Political instability target destinations
The possibility of new destinations expansion	Aviation failure
Create your own air fleet	
Qualified workforce	

Source: Own analyse, 2018

The main difference between the sales and marketing concept applied in practice is that if a tour operator applies a sales concept, it first creates the resulting product and then convinces the customer to buy it. The main objective is therefore to adapt customer requirements to their offer. Marketing works by the opposite system. If we can properly identify customer needs, create quality products with acceptable prices, distribution, quality and effective promotion, it is clear that these goods and services will be very easy to sell (Torma & Derco, 2007). The marketing mix of services to the traditional four elements (product, price, place, promotion) adds another "4P" typical for this area (packaging, programming, people, partnership) (Nemčanský, 1998). In our case, the *product* has tradition and quality. The *price* is based on the "customer-demand schedule", according to this method the tour operator increases the price when the demand increases and decreases if it drops regardless of the cost of the service. It also uses the form of penetration pricing, so it has a very low cost product, which leads to new clients (relative paralysis of competition). As well as the psychological price will activate the customer and raise with him interested in the product being offered. This is "Bata" system of prices. As well as uniform prices ("all inclusive") set out uniformly, without distinction and dependence on the scope of services.

*Place* (distribution) - the aim is to sell the best services to potential customers. Tour operator to plan, prepare and manage administrative tourism packages, usually their "package" do not sell to its customers, this ensures travel agencies. In this case, tour operator has a department for direct sales to clients. This tour operator has its own booking system, which minimizes time disportion.

*Promotion* - all marketing activities reflected in promotions to stimulate consumer purchase and increase the efficiency of tour operator business. Choosing the right media for effective marketing communication depends on the offensive's goal, the available funds and the size of the subject. The promotional mix of tour operator is therefore a combination of the main components: catalogs, sales promotion, personal sales, salesplace, trade fairs, and public relations. This tour operator uses a strategy of "Pull" (pressure) at which the promotion takes place towards the travel agency, which it sold to end customers. Tour operator sends out always in the first week of the year catalog consists of 58-page of 15,000 copies through UPC. As part of the promotion of tour operator (business trip), where it presents the product to its business partners (travel agencies), or presstrip for the purpose of advertising (for journalists to create a PR article). It participates actively every year the fair ITF Slovakiaitour. At the easy and engaging website there is the actual offer price of tours and news. This exhibition takes part in most of the big and small tour operators and travel agencies from Slovakia and abroad.

*Packaging & Programming* (creation of packages and programs) in this case - "Honeymoon".

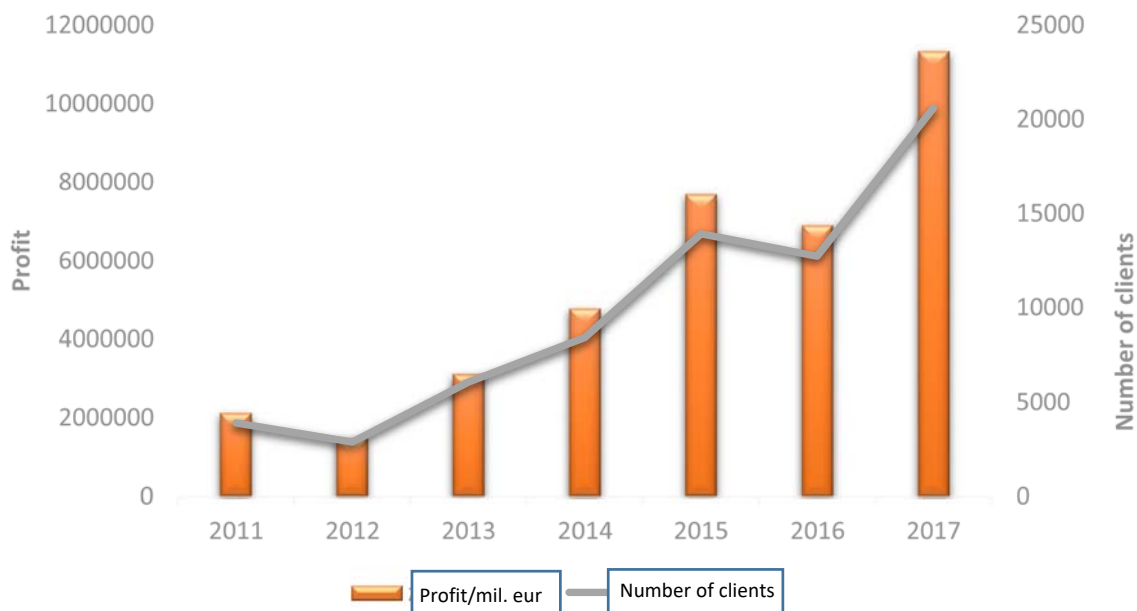
*People & Partnership* (people and collaboration), where success and efficiency depend on the cooperation of service providers, intermediaries, carriers. Customer satisfaction often depends on the activities of other organizations over which the tour operator has no control (for example, the individual travel agencies that the programs offer, the airline). In practice, however, dissatisfied client in this case, contact a tour operator and filed a complaint. Each tour operator must have its own general business conditions in accordance with valid legislation. This is used by subject ŠOI (State Trade Inspection), which should find an alternative solution.

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Development and balance of a tour operator

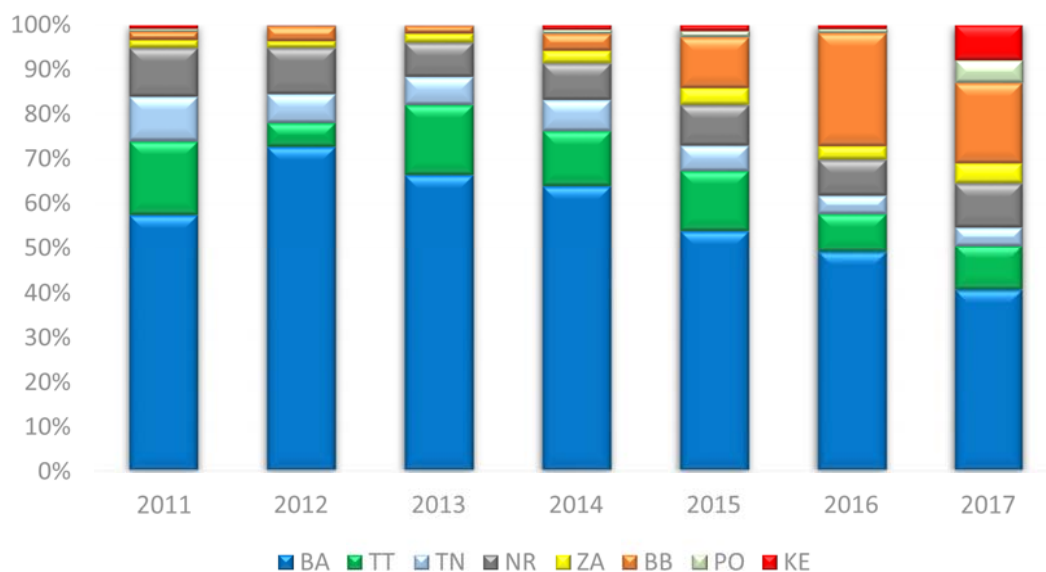
Tour operator focuses on recreational tours, predominantly residents with the possibility of optional trips and sightseeing trips. By type of transport is that air tours, short-term abroad. According to segmentation of the market, it is "leisure travel", ie leisure time for knowledge, relaxation and entertainment. These are standard tours prepared for an anonymous customer and are in the promotional catalog. Tour operator was established in 1998 in Germany. Since 2005 also in Austria. The Slovak branch has been operating since 2010 and it has been added in other countries: 2007 (Switzerland), 2013 (Hungary, Slovenia), 2017 (Czechia, Poland). The main objective of tour operator is to maximize turnover, expand the current favorable market position and expand its branches and destinations. Its development in Slovakia can be monitored for the entire period of its existence (Fig. 1). Since 2011, profit and the number of clients have increased, with the exception of 2012 and 2016. Because the tour operator is specialized in Egypt (88% of the total programs offered), growth affects the political stability in the region. In 2011, there was a revolution in Egypt, leading to the demise of President Mubarak. In 2015 it became an accident, which crashed Russian plane in Egypt in the Red Sea. There was a military coup in Turkey in 2015. Of the total turnover, Egypt has the largest share of sales, the rest being Turkey (5%), Greece (3%), Bulgaria and other countries (2%). The tour operator operates all year round, because for example Egypt and Turkey have favorable climatic conditions throughout the year. The strongest is obviously season (June to September) when departing on vacation 500 of clients a week, then it's the month of October with 300 of clients, May with 150 and from November to April are 50 of clients per week. Increase in client numbers and therefore profit is related to good and effective management and marketing.

**Fig. 1: Development of turnover for the period 2011-2017**



Source: Own research, 2018

Another large advantage is that the tour operator offers a variety of departures. From 2011 to 2013 was the departure point of Vienna, Linz and Graz, and later (from 2012) began to fly from Bratislava, where 90% of clients selected this departure destination (Fig. 2). In 2015 it was added the departure point Sliac, allowing the clients of Central Slovakia to travel more comfortably to the holiday destination. In 2017 was added departure point of Košice, which strongly affected the Prešov and Košice region. The tour operator thus enabled efficient and comfortable transportation to clients throughout whole Slovakia.

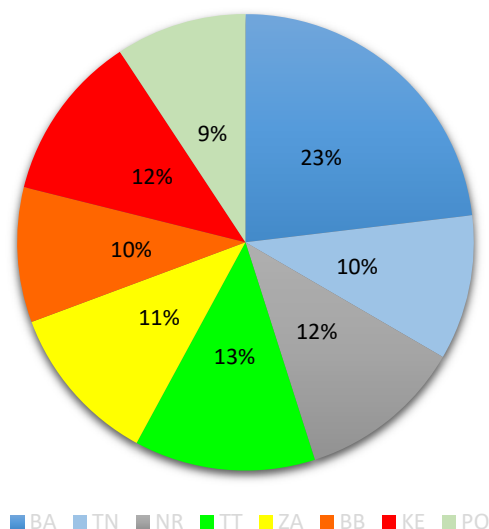
**Fig. 2: Client numbers by region SR for the years 2011-2017**

Source: Own research, 2018

## 5.2 Disparities of Slovak regions and travel agencies

The most travel agencies in Slovakia are in the Bratislava Region (Fig. 3), which is mainly related to the location of the capital city and the immediate vicinity of M.R. Štefánik Airport. The second factor is that a large number of departures are also located from nearby Schwechat Airport in Austria, so there is good accessibility. In this region there are 162 agencies that offer products of tour operator, which represents by 23% of the total. Within the districts of the Bratislava Region, most of the agencies are in the capital Bratislava (125). The Trnava Region has the second largest representation of agencies after the Bratislava Region (90), representing by 13%. The strongest is Galanta (18), Piešťany (17) and Trnava (16). This region also has good access to both airports. Equally 12% has Nitra and Košice region. Nitra is in the hinterland of Bratislava with the availability of up to 1 hour to the airport. Most agencies are located directly in the regional capital Nitra (40). Košice Region has the biggest representation by agencies in Košice city (39), where is also situated the airport. Košice and Prešov region include the largest area, but even though the number of agencies are lagging behind other regions of Slovakia. The Žilina region has 80 agencies (11%), most of them are in Žilina (21) and in Liptovský Mikuláš (15). Banská Bystrica (67) and Trenčín region (72) reached 10% of the total number of agencies. Most of them are in Banská Bystrica and Zvolen, which have good access to Sliač Airport. Within the Trenčín region, the largest representation of agencies is the town of Prievidza (20). We recorded the smallest number of agencies in the Prešov region (9%), exactly 65, which is also associated with worse accessibility to the airport and high unemployment rate, higher number of Roma population. This area is one of the least developed slovakian regions (except Poprad, which is in relation to the tourism in the Tatras). Most agencies in this region is currently in Poprad (16) as well as in the regional capital Prešov (15).



**Fig. 2: The number of travel agencies by region SR**

Source: Own research, 2018

## 6. Conclusion

Of the total amount (294 tour operators) in Slovakia are only three real competitors because they offer a similar product but with other services. This tour operator is among the stable offices with a long tradition of operating on the market (20 years) of which more than 7 years on the Slovak market. It has its own accommodation and catering facilities, its own fleet, high quality services, and its own local delegates speaking the Slovak language. As one of the few offers a variety of departures. All these factors, together with sound and good management and marketing affect the positive balance and its progress in the future. The curve of the turnaround has a growing trend, with the exception of two smaller contraptions (Egyptian Revolution and Air disaster). In the longer term, this growing trend should continue. The two decreases mentioned by the tour operator could not affect, but all other attributes does. A great opportunity for the future, among other things, expanded to include new destinations, create your own air fleet, as currently the most significant issues seems precisely this fact. As the tour operator does not own the aircraft, it does not guarantee exact departure and arrival. During the season it is one of the biggest problems of most complaints. There is a rule that the trip is a mixture of services, that is, if the wrong one service affects the perception of the whole trip respectively holidays. Therefore fail to meet the expectations of the client, which means the complaint, loss of customers, negative advertising and so on. Finally, it is also a skilled workforce directly in the central tour operator. Employee requirements are high. They are also suitable for the graduate, but at least three months of training is required to bring their theoretical knowledge into practice. This is one of the major problems of current practice. Apart from the fact that the candidates have almost no practice in the field, they do not have enough language and communication skills. At least a partial solution would be cooperation of various fields of study (ie schools) with a particular tour operator or travel agency at least. The benefit would be to participate in individual activities, tasks and language courses, which is carried out by the tour operator.

Based on the research, we can state that all the established hypotheses have been confirmed. The number of clients really affects the political situation or destination stability (Egypt, Turkey). The result is also based on the evaluation of customer satisfaction with prices and services of tour operator which are the subject of continuing research. The second hypothesis was related to the expansion of departure points within Slovakia. Clients other than Vienna can also use the airports in Prague, Katowice and Slovakian in Bratislava, Sliač and Košice. Clients can also travel comfortably from eastern Slovakia. The third hypothesis was also confirmed, as most clients (88%) currently travels to Egypt, therefore the entire marketing is based on this product.

Even on the basis of this research, we can say that Slovak clients are increasingly using the tour operator services in Slovakia and choose from a wide variety of products even distant and less traditional destinations. For this reason, it is important to quality of service and overall good management of tour operator. The result is an ever increasing trend of clients will prefer Slovak tour operator and not foreign.

There are significant regional disparities in Slovakia, which are also reflected in tourism and thus in the localization of travel agencies. Disparities are most noticeable particularly between western and eastern regions. Western

Slovakia is developed thanks to the position of the capital Bratislava and through connections to neighboring Austria and the Czechia. There is insufficient infrastructure in Eastern Slovakia (especially the absence of highways), it has a worse availability, a higher share of the Roma population, a higher unemployment rate, which also affects the development of tourism in individual regions. Compared to the Žilina Region (which includes the Liptov region), which has the international character of tourism and belongs to the top regions. The region has a developed tourism infrastructure mainly due to the High and Low Tatras. Despite this there is a representation of travel agencies offering foreign stays less than in Western Slovakia region.

Despite the location of Sliač airport in the Banská Bystrica region, the number of agencies in this region is lower compared to other regions of Slovakia, probably also because the airport is located on the marginal location and only Banská Bystrica and Zvolen have a good access. The Banská Bystrica Region is one of the less developed regions, especially the districts of Rimavská Sobota, Veľký Krtíš, Poltár and Žarnovica. This region also has a high unemployment rate and thus a low number of jobs.

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