

Article

The Role of Cultural Life in a Small Town in Eastern Bohemia, and Its Potential Development of Cultural Tourism

Hana Sábliková

Department of Applied and Landscape Ecology, Faculty of AgriScience, Mendel University in Brno, Zemědělská 1665/1, 613 00 Brno, Czech Republic; sablikova.hana@seznam.cz; Tel.: +420-734-398-398

Abstract: The contribution of this paper is a discussion on the role of cultural life and the potential of cultural tourism in the small town of Choceň in Eastern Bohemia, which is not one of the first-class tourism localities in the Czech Republic. Despite this fact, there is a richness of natural and cultural attractiveness and the organization of varied cultural events. The goal of this research was to determine the assumptions of tourist attractiveness from the point of view of local actors, based on the hypothesis that the attractiveness of the city is closely linked to the attractiveness of tourism. Local actors are the ones who can recognize the genius loci of the place, which should have been considered in development planning. The literature review is mainly devoted to the role of culture, cultural tourism, and rural tourism. This research works with primary and secondary data, with the secondary data being based on location, selection, and implementation assumptions for tourism. The primary data were obtained using a quantitative questionnaire survey method for two target groups—local visitors and local entrepreneurs. This research shows that local actors are aware of their destination's potential and support tourism development. However, cultural events are more likely intended to meet residents' needs, not visitors. It is clear that small industrial towns are rather marginally devoted to the development of tourism. Yet, all local actors need to cooperate for further rural (and tourism) development.

Keywords: urban; small town; rural development; cultural tourism; Czechia



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1. Introduction

The transition from a productive to a post-productive (post-material, post-Fordist) society is turning more and more attention from purely economic factors of development to issues of quality of life. At the same time, quality of life is a complicated concept in which objective and subjective factors intertwine [1]. This also results in several different approaches to its evaluation [2]. Quality of life includes many aspects, one of which is culture, access to culture, cultural events, and social life. This factor turns out to be very important among the motivations of young and educated people moving to big cities [3]. On the one hand, cultural events enrich the life of cities and their inhabitants, but on the other hand, their externalities can be perceived negatively. This influence can be different for different target groups: residents, tourists, and entrepreneurs [4].

The Czech territory has a relatively dense network of small and medium-sized cities [5], providing basic urban services and transport connections for surrounding settlements, including developing job offers and services. Compared to big cities, the Czech countryside offers relatively favourable prices, easy accessibility, and high safety, but also a varied range of rural tourism activities. In recent years, gastrotourism, as well as renting country cottages or more modern tiny houses, has enjoyed considerable popularity. Staying in nature plays a very important recreational role; however, it is necessary to provide other attractive components. In the case of rural tourism, these are activities connected to the countryside, such as hipotourism, ecotourism, or the existence of any experiential service in the locality.

In this study, we chose the rural town of Choceň in the Pardubice region as a case study. This city and its surroundings are not very famous for cultural events. This selection allows us to analyse the importance of cultural events for quality of life without the study being burdened by external influences. We consider Choceň and its surroundings to be a rural microregion. The cultural heritage of rural areas is not always discovered by the public. Yet, realizing each region's potential for rural development is very important. However, defining rural development is very complicated [6]. The neoliberal economic point of view primarily connects development, and thus also rural development, with quantitative growth. However, this growth is running into its environmental, social, and political limits. In this study, we link rural development with improving the quality of life [7]. Wojewódzka-Wiewiórska, Kłoczko-Gajewska, and Sulewski [8] considered three rural quality of life levels: economic situation, living conditions, and mental health.

Domestic tourism has been brought more attention due to the COVID-19 pandemic [9]. As a result of anti-epidemic measures, cities with predominantly domestic tourism suffered much less than those that are more focused on foreign visitors [10]. This is also the case in the city of Choceň. Yet, the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly crippled cultural tourism. Attendance at these events in Choceň has still not reached pre-pandemic values. The city management strongly supports the cultural life in the city and believes that promotional activities are set up correctly, but the habit of the convenience of the residents persists. It seems that the anti-COVID-19 measures affected the performance of accommodation facilities only by a slight decrease in foreign guests between the summers of 2019 and 2020. The following year, 2021, surpassed 2019 in all respects. However, the number of guests and overnight stays is not significant in absolute terms.

Local people play a significant role in rural development by expressing their views and ideas. Residents create interest groups and associations. These associations usually have set goals and internal divisions, while their activities are either internal—within the group—or external—in cooperation with other organizations. The European Union's tool for the cooperation of public, nongovernmental, and business entities in rural areas is the LEADER activity, currently expressed as community-led local development, although recently a top-down approach has been surreptitiously promoted [11].

Tourism has been associated with humanity for millennia and can be seen as a biological heritage of the genus *homo sapiens*. The scope of its application took on significant dimensions with the development of transoceanic flights from the middle of the 20th century. Tourism has undoubtedly become one of the largest industries in the world over the past few years. Nowadays it is often developed using the transition post-productive process [12]; therefore, the question of sustainability and sustainable tourism arises much more often. Culture is one of the key concepts of a post-productive society [13]. The World Tourism Organization describes cultural tourism as “A type of tourism activity in which the visitor's essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience, and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination. These attractions/products are related to a set of distinctive material, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional features of a society that encompasses arts and architecture, historical and cultural heritage, culinary heritage, literature, music, creative industries, and the living cultures with their lifestyles, value systems, beliefs, and traditions” [14].

Tourism contributes not only to the familiarization of tourists with local cultural values but also to the cultural development of residents. Cultural events play a significant role [15]. In the case of tourists, we combine the use of cultural events with cultural tourism [16]. McKercher describes cultural tourism as a combination of tourism and cultural heritage [17]. Yet, despite cultural tourism often being associated with cities, it could play an important role not only in the economic prosperity of rural areas but in the sociological aspect of getting to know the locals and customs as well. Mahon and Hyryläinen [18] showed the importance of two rural cultural events in Ireland and Finland.

The definition of cultural heritage itself is a rather complex matter. Nowicka [19] describes cultural heritage as a basis of local identity, which has wider implications in

other areas, such as politics. The perception of cultural heritage as a developing process that does not depend purely on the historical value of the cultural object, but also on the needs of tourists, which of course are constantly changing and developing, also contributes to greater complexity [20]. A unified view on tourism contribution is hardly reached. In our understanding, we characterize tourism as all its forms that relate to a cognitive function [21].

The authors agree that rural tourism is linked to the countryside and takes place in the countryside. On a general level, the countryside represents a combination of free landscape and human settlements, which can be defined based on its main purpose of use. Rural landscapes and village settlements are the basic premises of rural tourism. Pourová [22] expresses herself, similarly, citing a parallel between rural tourism and rural settlements, also with a link to agriculture. Despite the considerable negatives caused by the impact of the measures against the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a significant opportunity for the development of rural tourism, especially for the target group of domestic visitors.

Tourism is often concentrated in larger agglomerations that offer a wide range of products and services. Gradually, however, more attention is also being paid to smaller towns and rural areas. Small towns can serve as centres of cultural tourism with a rich network of social contacts, service offerings, job opportunities, and transport links. While big cities and regional metropolises usually have a rich cultural infrastructure—theatres, concert halls, museums, galleries, and the like—small towns and their rural hinterland have, with exceptions, significantly more modest cultural amenities. Small towns are characterized by specific features of the quality of life, where social relations are closer, and life is simpler [23]. They also combine the advantages (but also disadvantages) of cities and the countryside. Although small cities are home to around a quarter of Europe's population, they have been relatively neglected by researchers until now. Moreover, they have often been considered a homogeneous structure [24].

The impact of tourism on residents can be perceived both positively and negatively. Little research has shown that tourism concentration in one area increases the loss of its authenticity [25,26]. On the other hand, many studies have shown a positive impact on the tourism destination regarding economic contribution, and community life as well [27–29].

The link between the tourism industry and local community stakeholders is essential for tourism development, more so with an acknowledgment of the interest of local communities. The involvement of local communities in the tourism planning process brings a sense of ownership in local development, maintains local identity, and contributes to the effectiveness of plan implementation [30]. Local communities or community-based tourism is seen as an advocate for sustainable tourism [31].

Quality of life relates to the subjective assessment of individuals, whereas wellbeing refers rather to objective life conditions [32]. This term is more elaborate in medical sciences, where it means the minimization of negative health factors and their influence on an individual's life. Asking about the relationship between quality of life and tourism, Kachniewska [33] identified three types of impact of tourism on quality of life: social and technical infrastructure, environment, and lifestyle.

2. Materials and Methods

The aim of this contribution is the analysis and evaluation of the potential development of cultural tourism in eastern Bohemia, specifically in the small city Choceň. Our research question is:

- What is the perception of cultural events and tourist attractions in the region among residents? And: Do cultural events contribute to enriching the quality of life of their residents?
- What factors do residents rate as potentially beneficial for the development of tourism in the given area?
- What is the willingness of local entrepreneurs to become involved in the city's activities and under what conditions?

As can be seen above, the theoretical part of this work was devoted to the study of high-level scientific literature and articles, regarding the conceptualization of small towns, and cultural tourism. The research methodology consisted of several additional substeps, which were the analysis of secondary data, the examination of assumptions (localization, selection, and implementation), and the analysis of primary data.

Secondary data were obtained from publicly accessible statistical databases, primarily from the Czech Statistical Office. Data were collected for 2019, 2020, and 2021 and/or 2022, based on availability. This descriptive analysis was necessary for the evaluation of quantitative indicators, with the help of which the position of the research area as a tourism destination could be stated and interpreted. Localization assumptions were investigated based on natural and cultural attractions at the destination. Selective assumptions included an analysis of information and promotional activities. The implementation assumptions were mainly focused on the transport infrastructure, the availability of the location, and the capacity of accommodation facilities.

Primary data were obtained based on the quantitative method of questionnaire surveys. For the needs of the research, a semi-structured questionnaire was chosen, which includes standardized or closed questions, but also open questions. Two separate questionnaires were drawn up, one aimed at residents and the other aimed at local entrepreneurs. The selection of the sample differed according to the addressed group. While for residents, it was based on willingness to fill out a questionnaire, which is referred to as a convenience sample, local entrepreneurs were selected on purpose.

With respect to the chosen methodology, the questionnaire for residents naturally entails risks associated with the anonymity of the respondents, which can, however, be avoided through the chosen criteria. In this case, criteria of the respondent's place of residence were set up to lower the risk. The questionnaire surveys were created via Survio.com and shared on the online platform of preselected pages of the social network Facebook. The surveys took place from December 2021 to June 2022. A total of 260 respondents opened the questionnaire for residents; however, the total number of received—and completed—questionnaires was 150. This represents a return rate of 58.6%. The questionnaire for stakeholders was shared with 45 subjects, and the total number of received and completed questionnaires was 7. The return represents 15.6%. The obtained data were evaluated using a contingency table and the most important information was then shown in a graph or table. The first questions of the questionnaire survey were intended for the needs of the sociological evaluation of the respondent. The respondents involved in the research belong to different age groups, education levels, and work fields.

3. Results

Territorial Delimitation

The Pardubice region is situated in the northeast of Bohemia. It includes the territory of four districts, namely Chrudim, Pardubice, Svitavy, and Ústí nad Orlicí. A total of 515,000 inhabitants lives in an area of 4519 km², which represents a density of 114 people per km². The administrative centre of the Pardubice Region is the city of Pardubice (88,520 inhabitants, 2022). The region itself combines rich natural beauty, and industrial and cultural centres and is an important logistics location, thanks to which it is interwoven with all transport routes, including the European railway corridor. It also houses an international airport. The chemical industry plays an internationally important role. Other strong branches of industry are general engineering, followed by the textile and clothing industry.

Of the 14 regions of the Czech Republic, the Pardubický region is rarely associated with tourism in Czechia, although it has a lot to offer. Just to name a few, the Pardubice region has two monuments inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List (Litomyšl chateau and National stud farm in Kladruby nad Labem), twenty national cultural monuments, and one archaeological monument reserve. Eight phenomena are registered on the list of intangible assets of the Pardubice region's traditional folk culture, and seven craftsmen have earned

the title of Bearer of Tradition for their handicraft products. East-Bohemian Museum is among the important cultural institutions.

This region is facing an insufficient number of visitors, which, however, is gradually starting to improve thanks to increased efforts and higher spending of money on tourism. In the statement of the development strategy of the Pardubice region for the years 2021–2027, the important role of organizing events is highlighted, not only in the big and well-known ones, which undoubtedly include the event Velká Pardubická steeple chase, but also in smaller and local events, which contribute to the spread of tourism around the region, and not only in its centre.

The region is in 11th place in terms of tourism intensity (2019). Domestic tourism is key for this region; however, in terms of the number of nights spent by foreign tourists, the Pardubice region even ranks 4th, when on average foreigners stay for 3.75 days, even though this region has the least accommodation facilities throughout Czechia. The most common group of foreigners are Slovaks, Germans, and Poles [34].

Municipality Choceň has a population of 8477 inhabitants (31 December 2021). I consider Choceň and its surroundings to be a rural microregion. The city belongs to the Vysokomytsko microregion, the Podorlicko subregion, which is also the first Czech slow destination, and the Pardubice region. A slow destination (or also slow travel) is characterized by an emphasis on more intense experiences of the visited location, instead of intensive travel from location to location. Slow travel is the new marketing concept of this region for 2019–2023, which also represents the image of the destination. The genius loci of Podorlicko lies in the beautiful nature of the ridges of the Orlické mountains with the valley of the rivers Tichá and Divoká Orlice, together with rich cultural monuments, historical buildings, and traditions. The region is famous for its noble residences, which have also been awarded at the European level. It has also won the European Excellent Destination Award for castles in Orlice, which are often also referred to as the Czech Loire. The town of Choceň itself, in Pardubice region, is an important railway hub on the banks of the Tiché Orlice river, 40 km from the regional centre of Pardubice (88,520 inhabitants, 2022). The first mention of Choceň dates to 1227; however, significant economic development took place in the middle of the 19th century because of the construction of railway lines. Over the years, Choceň has had many industrial enterprises, the textile and engineering industries were the most important.

The localization prerequisites for this work are selected based on the highest attractiveness, and therefore the possible potential for the development of tourism in the area. As already mentioned, the location assumptions are devoted to natural and cultural attractions. In addition, research shows that the combination of nature and the city is most desired by visitors.

Choceň can be proud of several natural attractions. A very popular local destination is, for example, the Peliny nature reserve (Figure 1), which is located near the city centre. The location is significant for its marl rocks, the walls of which have weathered into various shapes, which rise above the Tichá Orlica river. Currently, the reserve serves as a place for recreation, but also as a place for organizing cultural events. Another important nature reserve is Hemže–Mýtkov with marl cliffs, oak beeches, and a river arm. In the city, there is also an important landscape element of castle park with an area of more than 17 hectares. It is a vast park, which is used as a city park with an important linden avenue. The appearance of city park is English in style with a significant representation of deciduous trees, with some trees dating back up to 250 years. There are three other important memorial avenues in Choceň and several other locations with a significant amount of greenery (especially parks).

The cultural landmarks of the city certainly include the Choceň Chateau from 1562 (Figure 2). The south wing of the Chateau was left for the needs of the music school, while the north wing serves the Orlice Regional Museum. Then, there is the Church of St. Francis of Assisi and a three-story baroque bell tower next to the church. A late Baroque Marian column can also be seen in the square. In addition, Choceň is a town where high-quality functionalist architecture prevailed. Specifically, it is the villa of Josef and Anna Lásková or

Rudolf and Marie Prchalová. In the city, there is a newly reconstructed classicizing First Republic villa of František Schejbal and a Neo-Renaissance villa of Kubiček.



Figure 1. Peliny park. One of the areas for recreation and cultural events. Source: authors, 2021.



Figure 2. Chocení Chateau at night. Source: author, 2018.

The town of Chocení usually organizes around 11 cultural events a year, with the most visited events clearly being the Beer Festival (4000 visitors) and the Food Festival (1000 visitors), other events have hundreds of visitors. Other organizers organize an average of nine cultural and social events per year. In addition, dozens of different events from city associations (Culture House, museum, cinema, sports clubs, and Children's and Youth House) are organized and contribute to cultural life in the city.

Selective assumptions: in the given locality, three important areas of information and promotional resources can be distinguished. The first important one is the information centre, which is operated by the city of Chocení. Promotions are shared here for free and are not limited to the city of Chocení, but to its entire region. The second source is the city website on which promotional information about the destination (the town of Chocení, the Peliny Nature Reserve, the Orlické Museum, the medieval castles around Chocení, and others), the surrounding area (accommodation options, dining options, transport links, tourist routes, cultural events, and other) can be found, but also the sale of souvenirs. In addition, the Chocení newsletter is also published every month, which can be purchased

at the Information Centre of the city of Choceň, but also at city newsagents. The price of the printed newsletter is 10 crowns. However, it is also available in electronic form on the city's website, completely free of charge. Other means of sharing information about sociocultural and sports happenings in the city are placed on the social network Facebook by other actors, for example, the management of the town of Živá Choceň or the public group Choceň founded by a local regional consultant.

Implementation assumptions were analysed based on transport infrastructure, location availability, and capacity of accommodation facilities. The location of the city of Choceň is advantageous mainly due to the presence of a railway hub. From the city, you can easily reach not only the nearest villages, but you can also take a direct line to the largest Czech cities, such as Prague, Brno, and Olomouc. It is also possible to use a bus connection, which, however, is currently facing complications with the regularity of connections due to the lack of employees in the transport company. Public city transport does not operate here. Road transport is carried out only on Class II roads, specifically No. 315 and 317. The intensity of traffic is not so high due to the absence of significant road stretches. There are several parking lots in the city, mainly at supermarkets, at the Choceň castle, or for a fee in the square in the centre of the town. Many cycle paths pass through the city, namely cycle path no. 4228 to Brandýs nad Orlicí, and no. 4230 to Vysoké Mýto. The excellent transport accessibility and location offer hiking and cycling in the Eagle Mountains and the Bohemian–Moravian Highlands. It is also possible to undertake a boating trip on the river Tichá Orlice.

There are four collective accommodation establishments with 62 rooms and 141 beds in Choceň. Their performance can be seen in the Table 1.

Table 1. The performance of mass accommodation facilities in Choceň 2019–2021.

		2019	2020	2021
Guests	Domestic	1216	1236	1680
	Foreign	226	143	238
Overnight stays	Domestic	3681	3436	4174
	Foreign	493	343	567

Source: own proceeding.

It seems that the anti-covid measures have affected the performance of accommodation facilities only by a slight decrease in foreign guests between the summers of 2019 and 2020. However, the following year 2021 has already surpassed 2019 in all respects. The number of guests and overnight stays is not significant in absolute terms.

The primary data, obtained using a questionnaire survey, was defined as a subjective assessment of the positions of residents and visitors to cultural events. The first research question was:

“What is the perception of cultural events and tourist attractions in the region among residents?”

It can be stated that more than 60% of all respondents evaluate these events positively (27%) or rather positively (38%), while they predominantly consider this positivity based on their own cultural enrichment and personal contact with other individuals. Only 1% of respondents provided a clearly negative assessment. Around 17% of respondents also reported a positive benefit for entrepreneurs and municipalities, in terms of city image improvement and/or financial benefit to its location. However, it is obvious that cultural events are evaluated more from the point of view of a personal benefit than the public interest. In a specific assessment of the negative effects of cultural events, 47% of respondents were concerned with noise and litter.

For the analysis of the evaluation of attractive places (and events) in Choceň, Table 2 of individual areas (urban structure, monuments, urban greenery, etc.) was presented in

the questionnaire survey, in which the respondents were to indicate their evaluation on a scale of 1 (worst) to 5 (best). The mentioned areas usually received an average rating, on a scale of 3.

Table 2. Performance of evaluation of different types of attraction in the municipality Choceň, Pardubický region.

	1 (The Worst)	2	3	4	5 (The Best)
Music concerts and festivals	10	18	51	36	35
Dance events and balls	5	35	51	27	32
Sport events	9	13	40	35	53
Restaurant, café, gastronomy	4	17	47	48	34
City clubs and their performance	12	33	51	39	15
Museum/exhibitions	17	37	45	31	20
Urbanistic structure of the town	19	17	56	30	28
Monuments and historic buildings	8	30	41	40	31
City greenery/parks and forest	1	6	10	36	97
Church events, processions, pilgrimages	36	37	51	15	11

Source: own proceeding.

Detailed evaluation brought a closer look at inhabitants' satisfaction with 10 different types of cultural events and tourist attractive areas. The highest ratings were received by municipality greenery, parks, and forest. As mentioned above, Choceň municipality has various parks located within the city, and the statement "Town in the park. Park in the town" has been included in the city slogan. The second highest ratings highlight sports events, which makes sense, as the city offers several sports halls and a football and baseball stadium. The prevailing popularity of outdoor and sports activities can be related to the industrial character of the city. On the opposite side, the lowest ratings were granted to church events, processions, pilgrimages, and the urbanistic structure of the town.

In a close-type answer to the questionnaire, almost 50% of our respondents stated that Peliny park was the most tourist-attractive area in the municipality and its surroundings. The park area is very accessible as it lies close to the city centre, and therefore it is often used for recreation, mostly for walks.

Relatively interesting information was the finding that our respondents had no trouble evaluating the best cultural events and attractions in the municipality but mostly failed to state which cultural event they perceive as the worst one. In an open question, they very often stated: "I do not know" or "none". This is a relatively interesting finding regarding anonymity, where answers are often more critical when collecting answers in in-person interviews.

Focus on the second research question: "**Do cultural events contribute to enriching the quality of life of their residents?**" clearly showed that residents and nearby citizens of the municipality Choceň are satisfied with cultural events in their location. Most of our respondents evaluated the cultural event rather positively or positively. It should be noted that almost 30% of all respondents practice regular participation in cultural events, while 43% attend these events rather sporadically. What is quite interesting is the fact that people rated the environment of the selected area very positively, while when evaluating the cultural events themselves, they were very cautious with the highest positive rating. These data pointed to an awareness of the comprehensive quality of life in the municipality. Greenery and city parks are important aspects for rural municipalities for the positive reception of citizens, while cultural events actively contribute to shaping and enhancing interpersonal contacts.

Research question: **“What factors do residents rate as potentially beneficial for the development of tourism in the given area?”** The answers of our respondents met our expectations in terms of evaluating the potential for the development of cultural life in the municipality. Respondents in Choceň perceive the potential for development in the use of natural attractions. Choceň has the motto “Town in the park, and park in the town”, and the results of the questionnaire showed that people are aware of its value. Thus, more than 80% of respondents consider Choceň to be easily accessible by public transportation, which is highly sufficient for rural development and tourism development as well. Data from questionnaires, both for residents and local entrepreneurs, yielded a similar assessment in this case.

Research question: **“What is the willingness of local entrepreneurs to get involved in the city’s activities and under what conditions?”** Entrepreneurs’ willingness to participate in the city’s cultural and social events is obvious, as almost the majority of respondents (57%) indicated an interest in their support and positive effects on business. The stated reason for engaging in these activities is mainly financial gain and company advertising. Involvement in activities regarding the support of the city’s development is weak, with respondents stating such a reason as weak or neutral. Entrepreneurs do not want to participate in events mainly based on insufficient support from the city and lack of time and conditions. The lack of support is evident regarding requiring a participation fee/stall hire. There was also a clear consensus on improving communication between the city, organizers, and entrepreneurs, including information sharing and targeted outreach to local entrepreneurs. The second most frequently mentioned item was financial support, possibly promotional support from the city for entrepreneurs’ higher interest to participate in city cultural life. From a certain point of view, this investment of time and money can be considered as added value, which entrepreneurs would ideally like to have evaluated, either by providing facilities for free or by supporting the promotion of the company at the event.

Entrepreneurs (86%) also agree that there are enough services (accommodation facilities, catering facilities, parking spaces, and other offers) for the potential development of tourism in the destination. A closer approximation of the responses of entrepreneurs is added in Table 3.

Table 3. Business involvement and support of cultural activity in Choceň.

Questionary Question	Answer: Yes	Answer: No/Do Not Care
Do you see participation in these events as beneficial?	57%	43%
Do you participate in the city’s cultural events directly?	29%	71%
Do you participate in the city’s cultural events indirectly—through the delivery of your services/products?	71%	29%
Do you get any benefits (discounts, services) for participating in a cultural event in your city?	29%	71%
Would you support the further development of cultural tourism in your city?	71%	29%
Do you have the impression that the territory of your city and its surroundings is overloaded with tourism?	14%	86%

Source: own proceeding.

4. Discussion

Choceň is not among the first-class tourist destinations. Tourism is not the leading economic sector as it rather plays a supporting economic role, serve to integrate their catchment areas, promote local culture, support the shift to a post-material society, create a micro-regional identity, and improve the city image.

The results seem to confirm the findings of Lazzeroni et al. [35], who stated that the approach of the cultural industry, oriented towards individual branches of culture and their consumers, applies to large cities, while in small towns a territorial approach is applied, offering cultural activities of the city as a whole. The results are also consistent with the statement of Lysgård [36], according to whom cultural policy in small towns and rural areas is based more on heritage and tradition, and the ideas of participation and cooperation. Participation at cultural events in Choceň is not convincing that these are not primarily events for residents. It can be considered positive that business in cultural tourism is mostly in the hands of local stakeholders, and therefore the benefits remain in the region. Yet, it is dependent on how stakeholders seize the opportunities that tourism offers them. Cooperation and innovation can be key issues [37], as social capital might be crucial for further development. One of the goals could be an extension of the tourist season and rather offering a complex destination with vast activities.

According to research, entrepreneurs face many barriers such as, for example, excessive administration or insufficient funding [38]. In this research, the primary emphasis on barriers was placed on funding. Local entrepreneurs seem to perceive participation in cultural events as a burden. This is mainly because they must provide equipment, increase the workforce, and promote cooperation on an event. When evaluating the pros and cons, many entrepreneurs find it worthwhile to adapt to (probably higher) demands in their own company rather than directly participating in events. Of course, this can also be determined, to a certain extent, by the location of the business, while my questionnaire survey was mainly about entrepreneurs conducting business in the city centre and within close walking distance of the places where these events are organized.

A rich cultural and social life, in addition to the possibility of obtaining a career job, is one of the main motives for rural-to-urban migration. In large cities, social life is determined by the presence of cultural institutions of a higher order. What can small cities offer in this context? Their cultural and social life is based on events that a significant part of the population lives by. Several of them actively participate in its organization. Some of these events can also become attractions for tourists, but this presupposes other activities and investments, such as parking opportunities, accommodation options, advertising, etc. It will certainly be interesting to observe how this phenomenon contributes to the quality of life in connection with the transition to a postmodern society.

5. Conclusions

A small town with a standard cultural heritage was chosen to analyse the relationship between cultural events, quality of life, and the possibility of tourism development. The prosperity of Choceň in the productive period was based on an industrial and transport function with less developed services and tourism. The unemployment rate was 2.1% in July of 2022. In the educational structure (2021 population census), the shares of people with a high school diploma (34.3%) and apprenticeships (34%) are almost equal, while 13.8% of people have a university education. This corresponds to the production focus of the city. Choceň is therefore not exceptional in any way. Thus, the results can therefore also be compared to other small towns in Czechia.

Developing the tourism potential of a destination is usually not a matter of focusing on just one area, but rather a support of all its components. The five basic elements of tourism include attractiveness, activities, availability, accommodation, and equipment.

According to the research carried out, the great benefit of the city is its easy accessibility, both from the outside and from the inside. Considering the character of the small town, transportation around it can also be realised by hiking or cycling. The city is also very easily accessible by train and bus. The equipment is of a very high standard, with the city setting up a special job site to raise funding, thanks to which the city is constantly being modernized. Accommodation capacities are established by several entities and there is currently enough free capacity for the increase in visitors to the destination. In addition, the city has a considerable number of sports halls and playgrounds, including tourist routes

around the area, which, in addition to natural and cultural dispositions, contribute to the development of assets. At the same time, this increases the attractiveness of the destination.

To take advantage of the potential for further development efforts should be focussed on mainly attracting domestic visitors. The city is part of the first Czech region that bears the label of slow tourism. This is due to is the mild and friendly nature of the region, which encourages recreation and, above all, a break from the constant stressful workload. In this regard, Choceň could gain from offering services—especially accommodation and catering—and products, which would generate not only profits that would stay in the region, but at the same time, it would provide a greater opportunity to reach visitors with its cultural events. In addition, the post-COVID-19 situation has clearly shown that small towns should be mostly focused on domestic tourism. Moreover, the city could further aim to meet the needs of residents, but tourism would also gain added value.

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