

MINING HERITAGE IN THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF THE VYSOČINA REGION: RESIDENTS' AWARENESS AND PERCEPTION OF TOURISM VALUE

Blanka Šimánková Hornová, Tomáš Čihák, Stanislava Pachrová

Department of Travel and Tourism, College of Polytechnics Jihlava, Tolstého 16, 586 01 Jihlava, Czechia

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Abstract

Historical mining activities have significantly shaped the cultural landscape of the Vysočina Region in the Czech Republic. Numerous relics of medieval mining remain preserved and represent an important resource for tourism development. However, residents' awareness and engagement with mining-related sites remain under-explored.

This paper aims to analyse residents' awareness of selected mining heritage sites and their perception of the tourism value of this heritage in the Vysočina Region. The study draws on a questionnaire survey of 996 respondents conducted among residents of the regional centre Jihlava and several smaller municipalities historically connected with mining. The analysis is based primarily on descriptive statistical methods and focuses on residents' awareness, personal visitation of mining heritage sites, and their attitudes toward the use of these sites in tourism. Data were collected between May 2024 and December 2025 through a structured questionnaire distributed online and in person.

The study provides insights into residents' awareness of mining-related sites, including their personal visits, and into how residents perceive mining heritage as a tourism resource across different locations. The results contribute to a better understanding of how local communities relate to mining heritage and may inform destination management, heritage interpretation, and community-based tourism strategies in post-mining landscapes.

Key words: cultural heritage tourism; cultural identity; destination management; residents' attitudes; post-mining sites

Introduction

Historical mining activities shaped the cultural landscape of the Vysočina Region, leaving extensive post-mining sites linked to silver, iron, antimony, and copper extraction since the Middle Ages (Derner et al., 2019). Today, this heritage forms an integrated system of mines, watercourses, and settlements – a key resource for cultural heritage tourism, shifting from production to recreation, education, and regional identity (Conlin & Jolliffe, 2010; Berkenbosch et al., 2022).

Mining heritage strengthens cultural identity and local pride, directly influencing residents' attitudes and their word-of-mouth (WOM) promotion of sites to visitors (Gursoy et al., 2002; Pachrová et al., 2017; Styliadis, 2018;). Residents who are aware of and attached to local attractions are more likely to recommend them, thereby enhancing destination attractiveness through authentic communication.

Although the significance of mining heritage for regional development is frequently emphasized in both academic and policy debates, there remains a relatively limited understanding of residents' awareness and perceptions of specific mining sites (Conlin & Jolliffe, 2010; Sharpley, 2014). In the case of the Vysočina Region, the situation is further complicated by the spatial dispersion of mining sites, varying degrees of their preservation, and diverse levels of tourism development. While some locations are integrated into local projects, regional tourism products, or interpreted within broader historical and landscape contexts, others remain on the margins of public attention and are used mainly at a local scale (Graham et al., 2000; Woosnam & Aleshinloye, 2018; Čihák et al., 2025). Within this context, it is essential to understand the extent of residents' awareness of key mining sites, their personal experience with visiting these places, and how they perceive their tourism value.

This article aims to analyse residents' awareness of selected mining heritage sites and their perception of the tourism value of this heritage in the Vysočina Region, emphasising cultural identity and WOM potential. The results contribute to understanding local community relations and inform destination management, heritage interpretation, and community-based tourism strategies.

Material and methods

The study employed a questionnaire survey among 996 residents of Jihlava and nine smaller mining-linked municipalities in the Vysočina Region. Data were collected from May 2024 to December 2025 via CAWI (Microsoft Forms, disseminated through social media, email, and local newspapers) and complementary PAPI methods in public spaces.

Quota sampling ensured proportional representation of the population by age, gender, and education. Sample distribution is shown in Table 1.

Tab. 1: Sample distribution by municipality and respondents' characteristics

Municipality	Number of respondents	Characteristic	%	N
Jihlava	698	<i>Gender</i>		
Bartoušov	21	Male	46,9	467
Česká Bělá	34	Female	53,1	529
Fryšava	24	<i>Age</i>		
Kadov	22	15–19	21,8	217
Přibyslav	73	20–34	13,6	135
Sněžné	33	35–49	22,3	222
Štěpánov nad Svratkou	31	50–64	18,9	188
Stříbrné Hory	30	≥65	23,5	234
Vyskytná	30	<i>Education level</i>		
Total	996	Primary	25,2	251
		Secondary	52,4	522
		Higher	22,4	223

The questionnaire featured closed-ended questions: dichotomous (awareness of mining sites), multiple-response (visitation), and two 5-point Likert-scale items (pride in visitors; willingness to recommend). Data were processed in Excel using descriptive statistics, aggregated by Jihlava vs other municipalities, and visualised via stacked bar charts for clarity.

Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, ensuring full anonymity.

Results

This section presents selected results from the questionnaire survey, focusing on residents' awareness of mining heritage sites, their visits to selected locations, and their attitudes toward their use in tourism. The analysis is based on four key survey questions: knowledge of mining-related sites, personal visits, pride in tourism in the area, and willingness to recommend these sites to visitors.

Figure 1 presents the level of residents' awareness of mining-related sites and their reported visits to such sites in Jihlava and other municipalities. In both cases, the results indicate a relatively high level of awareness and visitation. In Jihlava, 80% of respondents reported awareness of mining-related sites, and 93% reported visiting at least one such location. A similar pattern can be observed in other municipalities, where 82% of respondents reported awareness and 88% reported at least one personal visitation.

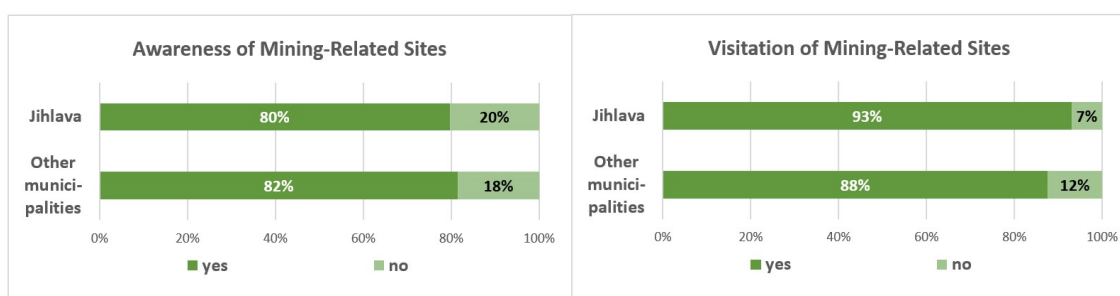


Fig. 1: Respondents' awareness and visitation of mining-related sites

Interestingly, the proportion of respondents reporting visits slightly exceeds those declaring awareness of mining-related sites. This apparent inconsistency may be explained by the fact that some locations (e.g. commonly visited places or museums) are not always consciously perceived by respondents as part of the mining heritage. The results thus suggest that mining-related sites are not only relatively well known among residents, but are also actively used, even if not always explicitly recognised as elements of mining heritage.

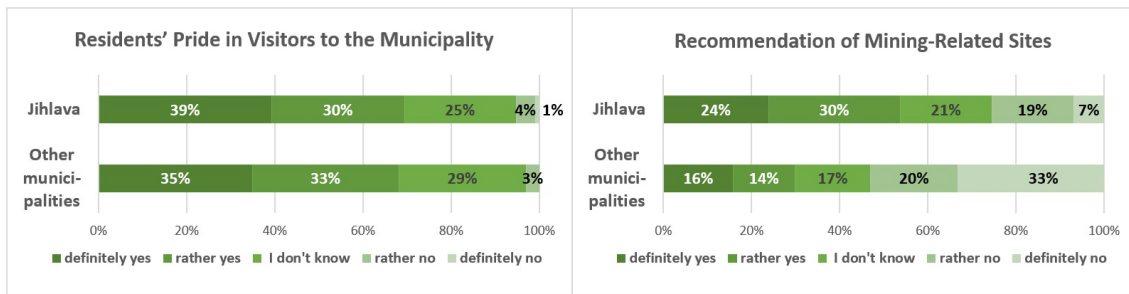


Fig. 2: Residents' pride in visitors and recommendation of mining-related sites

Figure 2 presents residents' attitudes toward tourism, as reflected in their pride in visitors and their willingness to recommend mining-related sites. In both Jihlava and other municipalities, the results indicate a generally positive attitude toward tourism. A substantial proportion of respondents report feeling proud when their municipality is visited, with positive responses (definitely yes and rather yes) prevailing in both groups (Jihlava: 69%, other municipalities: 68%).

At the same time, a more differentiated pattern emerges in the case of recommendation behaviour. While residents in Jihlava show a relatively balanced distribution of responses, with prevailing positive responses (54% definitely yes and rather yes), respondents from other municipalities demonstrate a higher share of neutral and negative answers, including a notably higher proportion of "definitely no" responses (33%). This suggests that although mining heritage is broadly accepted as part of local identity and is associated with positive attitudes toward visitors, this does not automatically translate into active recommendation behaviour.

These findings highlight the importance of cultural identity and personal experience in shaping residents' willingness to promote mining heritage through WOM communication. While pride in place appears to be relatively strong across the region, the readiness to recommend specific sites varies, particularly in smaller municipalities. This may reflect differences in the visibility, accessibility, or perceived attractiveness of individual sites, as well as varying levels of integration of mining heritage into local tourism offers. In this context, Jihlava's role as a regional centre appears particularly significant. The results suggest that mining heritage is more strongly embedded in cultural identity in Jihlava, where higher levels of visitation and recommendations to visit mining-related sites can be observed. This may be related to the more intensive presence of heritage interpretation, cultural activities, and public visibility of mining history, which contribute to residents' everyday experience and the reinforcement of this identity.

Conclusion

This study illuminates residents' high awareness of and visitation to mining heritage sites, alongside their perceptions of these sites as valuable tourism resources, with notable differences between Jihlava and the surrounding municipalities. With great regional pride in visitors (68-69%) yet differentiated recommendation behaviours – higher in Jihlava (54% positive) – the findings reveal how cultural identity and personal experiences shape community engagement. These insights enhance understanding of local relations to mining heritage and offer actionable guidance for destination management, heritage interpretation, and community-based tourism strategies in post-mining landscapes.

The analysis has limitations. It relies on descriptive statistics, precluding deeper variable analysis, and features uneven respondent distribution dominated by Jihlava, limiting local comparisons. Minor inconsistencies between awareness and visitation reflect varying understandings of mining heritage.

Future research should employ advanced statistical methods, target individual municipalities, and examine cultural identity and word-of-mouth in residents' attitudes toward mining heritage tourism, especially for community-based development.

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Souhrn

Historická těžba formovala kulturní krajinu kraje Vysočina a zanechala středověké pozůstatky, které by mohly sloužit jako turistický zdroj úzce spjatý s místní kulturní identitou a postojem místních obyvatel k cestovnímu ruchu. Tato studie zkoumá povědomí a vnímání turistické hodnoty vybraných lokalit hornického dědictví ze strany místních obyvatel prostřednictvím dotazníkového průzkumu mezi 996 respondenty z Jihlavy a devíti menších obcí spojených s hornictvím (květen 2024 – prosinec 2025; CAWI/PAPI). Deskriptivní analýza se zaměřuje na povědomí, návštěvnost a postoje k cestovnímu ruchu. Výsledky ukazují vysoké povědomí a návštěvnost napříč lokalitami (návštěvnost často převyšuje deklarované povědomí, což naznačuje podvědomé využívání dědictví). Obyvatelé vyjadřují velkou hrdost na návštěvníky, ale ochota doporučit je nižší – zejména v menších obcích –, což naznačuje, že pozitivní identita nezaručuje aktivní propagaci formou ústního podání. Jihlava vykazuje silnější integraci kulturního dědictví prostřednictvím vyšší návštěvnosti a doporučení, což zdůrazňuje roli regionálního centra. Zjištění zdůrazňují roli kulturní identity a zážitků při formování postojů a nabízejí poznatky pro management destinací, interpretaci kulturního dědictví a komunitní cestovní ruch v post-těžebních regionech.

Contact:

Ing. Mgr. Blanka Šimánková Hornová, Ph.D.

E-mail: Blanka.SimankovaHornova@vspj.cz

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