

## **INVESTIGATION OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL POSSIBILITIES TO INCREASE TOURISM IN A LESS DEVELOPED HUNGARIAN REGION**

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### **—Abstract —**

This study investigates the untapped possible sources in one of Hungary's less developed region. There are many natural and cultural sources, which can be used to boost the local tourism, with the help of an appropriate marketing communication plan. To select the optimal touristic products for this task, Hungary's more developed regions and also foreign examples can give help. In 2010 Pécs wasn't voted as cultural capital without a reason. There are plenty of historic, cultural and natural attractions which can be used to draw visitors into the region.

**Key Words:** *Tourism, Attractions, Region marketing,*

**JEL Classification:** M31

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

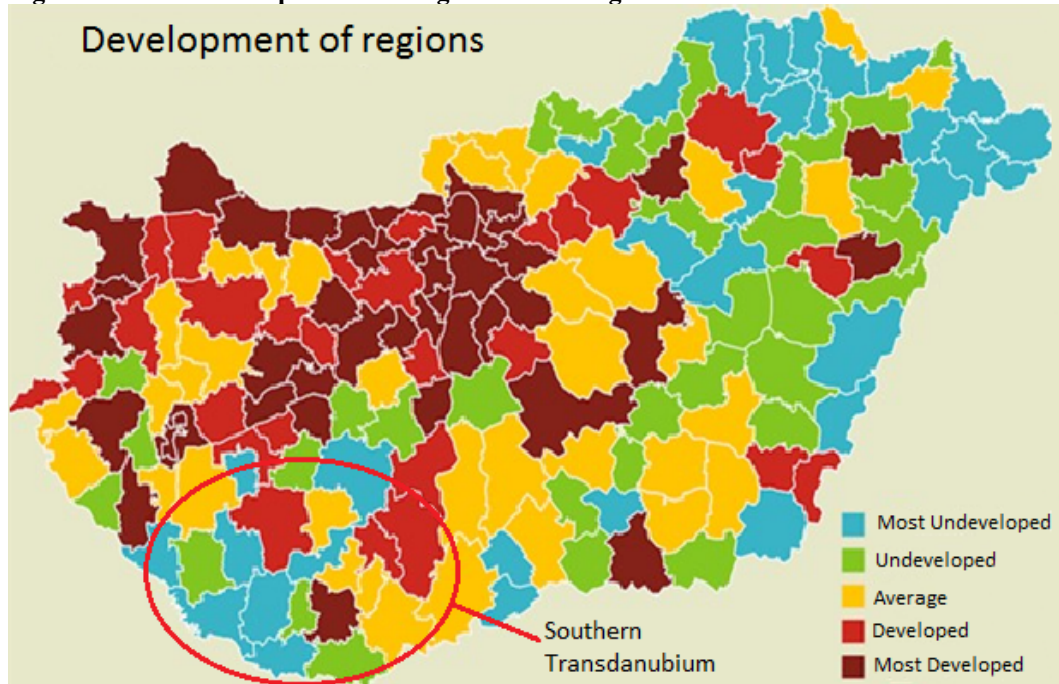
In Europe especially in Hungary it is a common problem that the developments are concentrated within a radius around the capital city. This means that a region with good economical indicator, large tourism, excellent employment rate and infrastructure is created. However the less fortunate regions where there is small industrial interest and poor infrastructure is present are struggling to break out. This problem first occur to the European Union with it's expansion in 1981 and 1986. This generated the need to work out integration program plans (CEC 1997) for regions in Scotland, France, and Belgium. Since then many other development plans were established, to help the old and newly jointed countries.

In Hungary most of the problems were masked until 1989 when the political system changed. Although many regions were poorly developed the problem was not considered seriously until accession negotiations with the EU began. Expert emphasised the development of agriculture, due to its multifunctional properties. Studies found (Dorgai, 1998:31-7) that agriculture plays a major role in the regions economics, the employment of local people and in the development and reservation of the environment. On the other hand there are studies representing diversification which state that agriculture does not have the power to fulfil the integration functions appropriately, thus other activity should be treated whit high priority in the development. The wealth being and employment of the rural population can only be solved by the combined activity of the industrial activities, supporting tasks, trade, tourism, and several other economic activities. (Papócsi, 1999:13). Some literature suggests that instead of agriculture, tourism is more suitable for the integration tasks.

## **2. SUBJECT**

There are several less developed regions in Hungary. In this study the Southern Transdanubium region is investigated. This region has many special properties. Concerning townships and cities it has the greatest density. Most of the rural population are involved in agriculture. Infrastructure is poor there is only one motorway which ends at Pécs. The transportation is slow due to the large number of villages and cities which border the main roads. Industrial activity is low there are basically no large international producing companies present. Unemployment is high and the ratio of highly educated people is low.

**Figure 1: Development of Hungarian small regions**



Source: Dorgai, 2010

The region contains several cultural treasures mainly from the Roman era, but numerous Turkish and national monuments are also present. Over the last few years the wellness, spa and wine tourism was emphasised in the marketing strategy. In 2011 Pécs (largest city in the region) was chosen as European cultural capital, which gave a boost in the city's cultural development. Most of the city squares were renewed and cultural sections were built. Buried paleochristian tombs were excavated and open to the public. Unfortunately this opportunity did not reach beyond the city's borders, thus similar touristic developments were not performed elsewhere in the region.

A previous study (Brix, 2012), which investigated inland travelling properties, showed that the most popular length of stay is between 3 and 7 nights. Pécs on its own does not have enough high quality attractions to engage everyone for the desired length, thus many visitors seek a different location for their holidays. This study aims to investigate further possibilities, which can help to increase tourism by offering a more complex and wider range of attractions for the potential visitors.

### **3. METHOD**

Using secondary sources the cultural and natural attractions are investigated. For the secondary sources: Journal articles, Books, Electronic document, Conference papers and Organisation publications are used. The aim is to gather information relevant of the Southern Transdanubium region, which can be used to improve tourism, and therefore the development of the region.

Primer sources are also used from a previous quantitative research (Brix, 2012). Standardised questioners were used to investigate travelling habits. 109 persons were asked form all age groups.

### **3. ATTRACTIONS**

The Southern Transdanubium region gives home to the Hill of Mecsek which provides excellent hiking possibilities due to the numerous built out paths. In winter skiing is possible although currently there is only one ski lift in working order, which is closed from the public. The hills limestone gives home to caves, and the most beautiful part of it is open for the public. There are also numerous historical buildings; some of them are still in use at their original purpose. An example is the church at Manfa, which was built in the XII. Century.

Taking advantage of the wildlife hunting or fishing tourism can also be considered. There are quite a few natural and man made fishing ponds available for the sportsmen.

Previously heavy mining took place, but since then the mines have been closed. These abandoned mining areas can be used to give home to special events. An example for this is the truck trial competition which was held at a mining are near Pécs in 2000.

Tourism in the rural regions can be grouped into the following categories: (Fehér and Kóródi, 2008)

- Thermal tourism
- Castle, seat tourism
- Gastronomy tourism
- Craftsman tourism
- Equestrian tourism
- Ecotourism
- Hunting Tourism

### **3.1. Thermal tourism**

Thermal tourism is built around natural thermal spring-water. Therefore the locations are limited. There are numerous advantages of thermal spa facilities. As the water is warm and does not require heating. The season can be extended and not limited for the warm summer day. The water coming from deep below contains large amount of minerals, thus can be used for medical purposes also. The selected region is rich in thermal spring-water the most famous places are Harkány, Héviz and Zalakaros. The potential opportunities and the low development state was realised (Budai, 2001), and since then several developments were performed. With the help of the government and the EU the thermal tourism was treated with high priority.

Most of the thermal spas have been renewed and efficient marketing was used to advertise them, therefore this attraction does not require further special attention.

### **3.2. Castle tourism**

Hungary had many castles and seats, but during the Second World War most of them were destroyed and the ruins were used to rebuild other damaged buildings. The few that remained unharmed were used by the army or by the communist organisations that did not pay attention to the cultural values. This long lasting destruction lead to the current state when out of the 2000 mansions only 23 operates as a museum and only 10 of them is equipped whit original antique furniture. Almost half of the still standing castles are now protected by national heritage, which helps to preserve the current state but also prevents some type of developments. The most popular usage of a mansion is to convert it to a hotel (Horváth, 1998). Smaller mansions with relatively low number of rooms can not operate economical, thus using them as accommodation is not an option. The best solution is the open them as historic houses and arrange tours for the public. A good example for this kind of usage can be studied in the UK where there were over 12 million visitors in 2011 according to the Historic Houses Association 2011/2012 annual report.

The most critical cross section for the development is the lack of financial sources. The current owner cannot afford to restore the buildings to their original state, furthermore there are currently very few governmental tenders which could help this process.

### **3.3. Gastronomy tourism**

The gastronomy in the Southern Transdanubium region is currently limited to wine tourism due to the famous wine producing regions. Wine tourism is the second area beside the thermal tourism, which importance was discovered earlier and efforts were made to produce a high quality product for the visitors. There are five main wine-trips (Szabó, G. 2003) in the region: Villány-Siklos; Mohács-Bóly; South-Balaton; Szekszárd; Tolna. To increase tourism several wine festivals are held annually, which is a great method to introduce the wine culture to the younger generation also.

The wine tourism is constantly developing as the demand for quality products and services is constantly growing. Gastronomy has also started to increase in these regions, but beside the wine, there are no special products concerning food.

### **3.4. Craftsman Tourism**

Traditional professions can also be used as touristic attractions. By teaching and presenting special craft methods to visitors a more direct experience is offered the public. Furthermore it is a good way to preserve the rural traditions. Involving the visitors in the process of weaving a basket, making a clay pot, making embroidery or doing smith work offers more than a museum, as they can experience the work behind a product.

The main advantage of this attraction is that it does not require any natural or manmade historical background. The workshop can be built up anywhere even in tents on festival, using relatively small budget. The most important element is the wise crafts man. It seems as an ideal attraction, however in Hungary despite the wide range of variety professions, craftsman tourism is always paired with some other touristic service. (Fehér and Kóródi, 2007)

Most of the current activities, programs are short 1-2 day events. There are very few permanent locations where craftsman work can be observed and participated by the visitors, thus it can be a good opportunity for villages, regions to expand the range of the available attractions.

### **3.5 Equestrian Tourism**

Hungary has always been an equestrian nation, and the Southern Transdanubium region is no exception. The equestrian tourism includes activities as hobby horse riding, sport events which are not according to international rules, horse shows, and all other activities which are related to horses and paid for by the visitors. For

the foreign visitors the most appealing activity is the off road horse riding, as Hungarian laws allow unlimited horse riding in the countryside (Danszky, 2011). Special events such as the National gallop showed that there is lot of potential in the horse tourism which can pique the interest of scores of people. In a study (Danszky, 2011) the interest towards equestrian tourism was investigated. The results showed that the interest towards horse riding is higher than average although not as high as towards wellness facilities. Furthermore the results showed that the highest interest among the horse activities is the horse riding training. The level of advertising was marked as low.

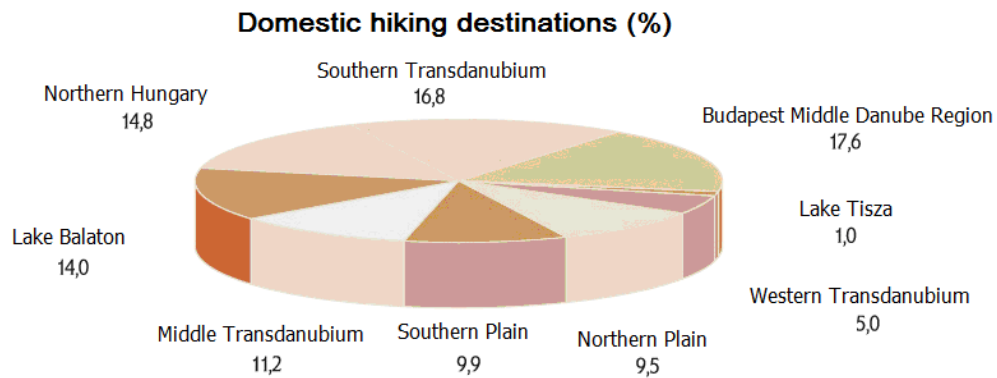
In the selected region the horse potential is around average (Fehér and Kóródy, 2008), thus with the appropriate marketing plan results can be achieved.

### 3.6. Ecotourism

More and more people are drawn away from the nature due to urbanisation. Among these people the demand toward the natural environment is present, thus the need for a short escape to the nature from the city life can be observed. The aim of the ecotourism is to observe, learn and enjoy the natural environment without making damages to it. (Gráfik, 2000) The most popular activities are hiking, bird watching, and nature informational programs.

The main area for the Ecotourism is at the Hill Mecsek, and at the five landscape protection areas at the southern locations. The Southern Transdanubium region is already the second most popular destination for the hikers. See figure 2. for details.

Figure 2: Domestic hiking destinations (%)



Source: Magyar Turizmus Rt. /M.Á.S.T., 2005

Due to the natural sources this area has good potential, as there is already a wide visitor number present this activity should be treated with higher priority.

### **3.7. Hunting Tourism**

Hunting is no longer a mean of sustenance. Hunting activity is present to maintain the ideal species ratio and also to serve as a hobby, sport for people. Hunting isn't one of the most popular activities, most of the members are from the older generation, the young generation show little interest (Bíró et al 2005).

A more popular activity is fishing, which is a more widely chosen activity for all generations. There are quite a few natural and manmade ponds available for fishing which satisfy the demand.

Hunting and fishing does not attract large amount of visitors as it is not an entertaining activity for the vast majority. Apart from the accommodation there is little need for other services. Due to the speciality of the activity further development and marketing probably won't achieve significant results for the region.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Southern Transdaubium is a less developed region (see Figure 1) with plenty of potential. Tourism is a good integrating activity to help the development of the region. The region is strong concerning wine and thermal tourism as these areas were supported with high priority in the last decade. Visitors are interested at destinations which offer attraction for at least 3-7 days, this requires a complex program, which requires to highlight other touristic areas as well. The most common reason for travelling is to relax and to visit cultural program, sites (Brix 2012), thus a good option is to support castle tourism as there are quite a few beautiful mansions in the area, although most of them are in terrible condition at the moment. Another cultural program is the craftsman tourism, the region currently has no outstanding background for it, but this activity can be created relatively easy.

Hiking and horse riding are two other areas which can help to create a more complex service. These areas serve good opportunities for the visitors who would like to escape into the nature for a while. The landscape protection areas provide and excellent location for these activities. As the routs are already built out only a good marketing is required.

To achieve good results further investigations are required to determine the particular places, tools and services.



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