

THE EFFECTS OF VOUCHERS ON TOURISM IN HUNGARY'S SOUTHERN TRANSDANUBIAN REGION

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Abstract:

In Hungary to motivate the domestic tourism the employers can give part of the payments in special vouchers to their employees, which can be used at touristic services. In this paper I wish do investigate the usage and effects of this coupon regarding accommodation hospitality. The observed location is one of Hungary's less developed region, the Southern Transdanubian region. My aims are to determine which properties are related to the voucher usage and how can improvements be made to increase tourism. For the analyses standardized questionnaire was used which was asked by people living in the selected region using online and traditional methods. The resulted quantitative data was analyzed using statistical calculations such as average, deviation, variance and frequency. Results showed that domestic tourism is preferred due to lower expenses. The voucher system has small effects and its advantage is mainly utilized by the pension accommodations. Although the vouchers motivate tourism, they do not seem to have an effect on the number of trips taken nor on the nights spent at an accommodation.

Keywords: hospitality, tourism, accommodation

1. INTRODUCTION

The economical, touristic and infrastructural condition shows large deviation even in a relatively small country like Hungary. The aim is to find solutions which can be used to close up the less developed regions. This study investigates the effects of a tourism motivating system, concentrating on only the Southern transtanubian region. The motivation is based on a voucher method. Employers can give part of the payment to the employees in vouchers which can be used for touristic services such as accommodation, restaurant, spa, leisure centers and others. The tax is lower on the payment given in vouchers than given in money, therefore the take-home wages are higher for those choosing the vouchers, which compensates for the drawbacks caused by the limited acceptance of the vouchers. In 2013 the old vouchers were rolled out and replaced with a more complex system where the vouchers are replaced with a special credit card. Furthermore the available amount is divided into three sections: accommodation, hospitality and leisure, the amount of money transferred to each section must be selected in advance and cannot be rearranged after the transaction is completed by the employer. This paper analyzed the old voucher system while data collection was still available, future investigations can only collect primer data from the new system. Furthermore this study gives a good base for further investigations where the effect of the old and new system can be compared and suggestions for improvements may be made. Although there are papers dealing with the old voucher system they do not concentrate on regions and the date are out of date due to events such as the economical crisis started in 2008, Arabic revolutions which caused a changes in the touristic destinations.

1.1. Global Events

Over the last 5 years there were two mayor events which influenced tourism. One is the economical crisis which started in the end of 2008, and the other is the Arabic revolutions. The economical crisis forced many to cut down on their expenses, which in most cases meant, that people traveled less and seek for cheaper trips (Mladenović & Zlatković, 2009). The Arabic revolution made many popular North African destination an unsafe place for visitors, which meant that these visitors looked for other safe destinations (Mohamed, 2011). Some of the North African destinations were also popular in Hungary (Press release, 2007). It is unknown whether these conditions had any effect on the domestic tourism in Hungary especially on the southern transdanubium. To make up to date conclusions previously collected secondary are not a good choice and might be misleading, therefore it is needed to perform a new research.

2. METHOD

Primary data collection was used for the study. Using standardized questionnaires a total number of 51 people at the Southern transdanubium were asked. Most of the questionnaires were filled out at the city center of Pécs (European cultural capital in 2010) and also online questionnaires were used to reach larger sample number. The resulting quantitative data was analyzed using statistical methods such as average value, deviation, variance, frequency, cross table, T-test and F-test. The calculations were performed using computer software. The statistical confidence to check significance is defined at a recommended 95% for the analysis (Sajtos & Mitev, 2007).

2.1. Assumptions

With the investigation the intention was to verify or disprove the following presumptions, and to learn more details about them.

Assumption No.1.: The domestic visitors seek for the cheaper and lower classified accommodations, for domestic trips

Assumption No.2.: The voucher system increases the number of domestic trips

Assumption No.3.: The acceptance of the vouchers influences the choice of the accommodation

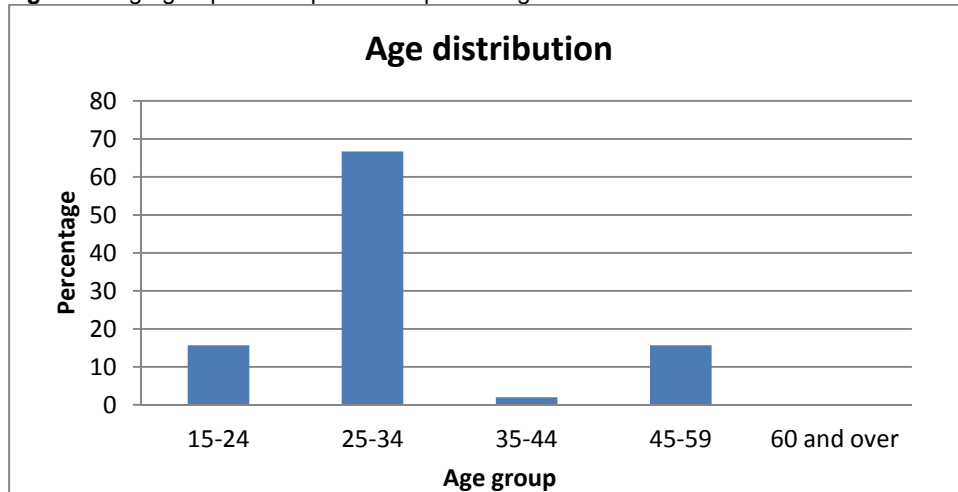
According to the stated assumptions the content of the questions can be defined, to which I would like to get answers during the quantitative research. These questions are the following:

1. What type of accommodations and what type of services are preferred by the domestic visitors?
2. What kind of effects does the voucher system has on the domestic tourism?
3. Which factors influence the accommodation selections and the number of nights spent at the accommodation?

2.2. Sample description

During the quantitative research 51 valid questioners were recorded. The age of the questioned people were divided into 5 groups. Only those, how are over the age of 15 were allowed to fill out the questioner, therefore the first age group was between 15 and 24 years. 15.7 percent of the questioned people belonged to this group. The second age group was between 25 and 34 years. This was the most common age group, as 66.7 percent belonged to this group. The third age group was between 35 and 44 years. Only 2 percent were represented from this age. The fourth age group was between 45 and 59 years. Equally to age group one 15.7 percent belonged to this age. The last age group was for those how reached the age of 60, however no one represented this group. An overview of the age groups and represented percentages can be seen in figure 1.

Figure 1: Age groups and represented percentage



Source: Personal research, edited by Ágnes Brix.

Analyzing the educational state 66.7 percent has high level education (MSc/BSc or MA/BA). This rate is higher than the national average, thus it can be said that is research manly represents the habits of the younger and highly educated population group.

Although most of the questionnaires were filled out at the city centre people living in the rural areas also filled out some questioners. Out of the total questioned 7,8 percent live in rural settlements and the rest 92.2 percent cities.

The family state was also questioned. About half of the questioned people, 47.1 percent, were single and the rest 52.9 percent lived in a relationship or marriage. The number of children was not so even only 19.6 percent had one or more children.

To summaries characteristics of the gathered sample the following statement can be made which apply to the majority:

- The age is between 14 and 35 years
- They are single or liven I a relationship whit no children
- They are highly educated
- Live in the Southern transdanubium in cities.

3. RESULTS

The domestic trips are more frequent than the abroad trips. There is a relatively large number of people, 31.4 percentage, who does not travel abroad annually. Comparing these results with the domestic data results are more fortunate, because only 5.9 percent does not travel inland annually. The largest majority, 27.5 percentage, travel abroad only once a year and the smallest minority, 7.8 percentage, travel abroad three times a year. Among the domestic trips the most popular,47.1 percentage, choice is the travel more than 3 times annually, and the least popular is to not travel annually (5.9 percentage).

The domestic trips are preferred by 51 percentage of the questioned people. As an explanation most wrote that the domestic trips are less expensive than the abroad trips. Those how preferred the abroad trips explained their choice, that there are more interesting things to see.

The most favorable leisure destination is the seaside. 76.5 % market it as a preferred destination. The second most popular programs are the cultural events. 47.1 % market it as a preferred destination. The thirds most popular options were the wellness facilities. 45.1% market it as a preferred destination. In the questionnaire more than one answer was allowed to be marked in this question, this is why the cumulative percentage may exceed the 100%. The investigated region is rich in wellness and cultural programs which may be used to increase tourism.

3.1. Assumption No1.

The first assumption stated that the domestic visitors seek for the cheaper and lower classified accommodations, for domestic trips. To verify this statement the chosen accommodation type and the number of domestic trips are compared. This way it can be seen which type of accommodations is preferred and what relationship does it has with the number of trips.

On a domestic trip the 4 and 5 star hotels are used very rarely, no one marked this answer. The most popular accommodation is the pension. 38.5 % marked this answer. The pension is followed by the wellness hotel (26.9%) and by the 1-3 star hotels (23.1%). The campsites only reached 11.5% which show that the interest is low towards them.

As mentioned earlier almost half of the questioned people (47.1) take a domestic trip more than three times a year. This is followed by the lower number of trips 1 to 2 annually.

When looking at the relationship between the accommodation and number of trips taken, slightly different properties are shown. The pension is only in the first place for those who take one or two trips annually. Those who travel three times a year prefer the wellness hotels (60%). The ones taking more than three domestic trips a year prefer to stay in a 1-3 star hotel. These relations are presented in table1.

Table 1: Relationship between the number of domestic trips and accommodation type

Number of domestic trips per year	Chosen accommodation				
	Camping	Pension	Wellness Hotel	1-3 Star Hotel	4-5 Star Hotel
1	11,1%	33,3%	22,2%	22,2%	11,1%
2	10,0%	50,0%	10,0%	30,0%	0,0%
3	0,0%	20,0%	60,0%	20,0%	0,0%
4 and over	4,2%	25,0%	12,5%	37,5%	20,8%

Source: Personal research, edited by Ágnes Brix.

According to the shown tendencies, the assumption is verified as for the most popular domestic trips the cheaper accommodations such as pensions and 1.3 Star hotels are preferred.

3.2. Assumption No.2.

The second assumption stated the voucher system increases the number of domestic trips. In this assumptions the effect of the voucher system on tourism is investigated. To verify the statement the preferred destination and the usage of the voucher is compared.

More than half (56.9%) of the questioned people do not receive vouchers from their employer. Among those who do receive vouchers, 72.7 percentage spend it on accommodation and 28.3 percent spend it on culinary goods.

Among those who do not receive vouchers the abroad destinations are preferred by 51.7%. This his higher compared to the people who receive vouchers, as among them 45.4% preferred the abroad destinations. However this difference is not significant according to the Chi-square test value (0,657)

(Szűcs, 2004), thus this does not show any relationship between the presence of the voucher and the preference towards domestic destinations.

To continue the analysis the number of domestic trips and the presence of the voucher is investigated. Comparing the mean values, those with voucher take 2,91 trips a year and those without voucher take 3.14 trips a year. The Chi square test value (0.533) shows that this difference is not significant. Therefore the comparison also shows no positive effect on the domestic tourism.

Analyzing the number of nights spent at an accommodation, the results show that the most popular length of stay is between 5-7 nights (49%). Among those with voucher this value dropped down to 45.5 %. The only lengths where the vouchers performed slightly better were the 2-4 night (31.8% compared to 27.6%) and the 8 night and over (13.6% compared to 10.3%), but even these differences are very small. The results are shown in table 2.

Table 2: Relationship between presence of voucher and number of night spent at an accommodation

Number of night spent at an accommodation	Voucher		Total
	With	Without	
1	9,1%	10,3%	9,8%
2-4	31,8%	27,6%	29,4%
5-7	45,5%	51,7%	49,0%
8 and over	13,6%	10,3%	11,8%

Source: Personal research, edited by Ágnes Brix.

The investigation showed no significant effect between the usage of the voucher and the number of domestic trips taken, thus the second assumption is disproven.

3.3. Assumption No.3

The third assumption stated the acceptance of the vouchers influences the choice of the accommodation. To verify the statement the preferred accommodation type and the voucher usage is compared. In the questioner there was a question which asked the importance of the ability to pay with the voucher. The answer needed to be given on a scale 1-5, where 1 corresponded to not important and 5 corresponded to very important. Clearly is only important for those who receive vouchers. The relationship between the importance of voucher acceptance and accommodation types is shown in table 3.

Table 3: Relationship between the importance of voucher acceptance and accommodation types

Accommodation Type	Importance of voucher acceptance	
	Mean	Std. Deviation
Camping	2,00	1,414
Pension	3,12	1,409
Wellness Hotel	2,89	1,537
1-3 Star Hotel	2,33	1,397
4-5 Star Hotel	2,00	1,549

Source: Personal research, edited by Ágnes Brix.

Voucher acceptance is least important at the campsites and at the 4-5 star hotels. In the case of campsites the reason most probably is that the interest towards them has decreased to a minimum over the last decade (Petykó, 2012). For the 4-5 star hotels the reason could be that the wealthier visitors are their main costumers who do not have or do not pay any attention to vouchers.

The pensions seem to benefit the most of the voucher system as this was the accommodation type with reached the highest value in table 3. The value is over the neutral 2.5, thus it can be said that for the quests how wish to stay in a pension the ability of paying with the voucher is important. This also applies to the wellness hotels, but not as much as the value is just above 2.5 and the deviation is

relatively high (1.537), which means for some the voucher acceptance is very important, but also there are many who don't pay any attention to the vouchers. The 1-3 star hotels reached a mean value of 2.33, which means it is rather not important than important to accept vouchers.

Another relation can be investigated for this assumption. Table 4 shows the relationship between the presence of the voucher and the chosen accommodation type.

Table 4: Relationship between the presence of the voucher and the chosen accommodation type.

Voucher	Chosen accommodation				
	Camping	Pension	Wellness Hotel	1-3 Star Hotel	4-5 Star Hotel
With	4,5%	36,4%	22,7%	22,7%	13,6%
Without	10,3%	31,0%	13,8%	34,5%	10,3%

Source: Personal research, edited by Ágnes Brix.

Those who have vouchers prefer the pensions at first place with 36.4%. The wellness hotels and 1-3 star hotels only come second with 22.7%. Among those without vouchers the priority changes, at first place the 1-3 star hotels stand with 34.5%. The pensions only come second with 31% and the wellness hotels are placed third with only 13.8%.

The camp sites and 4-5 star hotels are placed least in both groups, thus the voucher does not seem to have any major effect on them.

Although some differences were observed when analyzing the result the Chi-square test did not prove that this difference is significant. Therefore the results need to be treated carefully.

The results showed that the vouchers usage has advantages for the pensions, which verifies the assumption. However this result is not significant according to the Chi-square test thus it may not be true in case of large samples.

4. SUMMARY

In this study quantitative research was used to investigate the effect of a special holiday voucher system. The aim was to show its motivational properties on the domestic tourism, and analyze the properties of its usage in the Southern Transdanubian region. The results showed that the domestic destinations are mainly preferred due to the lower expenses, and the most favorable accommodation type is the pension. This investigation did not show that the presence of the vouchers had any noticeable effect on the number of domestic trips nor on the length of stay. The results showed that the acceptance of the voucher is most important to those who prefer pensions. It was also shown that those with vouchers preferred the pensions more, and those without vouchers preferred the wellness hotels less. However this difference is not significant.

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