

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TOURISM AND QUALITY OF LIFE - RESEARCHES AT LAKE BALATON

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Abstract:

Nowadays tourism and quality of life have an important role, more research is being done on these topics. Tourism is a sort of activity, during which visitors can gain experience and can actively take part in their actions. This kind of experience can intensify through repeated travelling, can contribute to satisfaction concerning life and, hereby, according to Veenhoven, travelling can lead to the awareness of happiness. The Lake Balaton tourist region plays major role in Hungary's tourism: it is the second most visited tourist region. Many researches were made in this area e.g. the Hungarian Tourism Plc. and the Lake Balaton Regional TDM Alliance did some research in the high season of 2012 about the travel habits and satisfaction of the Hungarians and foreign tourists. My PhD dissertation is about the relationship between tourism and quality of life mainly at Balaton Uplands, investigated among touristic services and resort owners. This research is still running, therefore I haven't got enough fully completed questionnaires, but I will show some related result from former international research. From the previous researches it is clear that Lake Balaton is an important tourist destination, and most of the tourists like and recommend this area to other people. It is important because if you are satisfied and gain a lot of experiences you will be happier and more satisfied with your life and travel often to get more positive experiences.

Keywords: tourism, quality of life, Lake Balaton, research, satisfaction

1. INTRODUCTION

Quality of life has an increasingly important role especially nowadays. From the second half of the 20th century more people started to use this term in strategies and speeches. After that more countries have been dealing with it, as they realized that this factor has to be measured and it is important to increase it in order to make the residents' life better.

The research topic tourism and quality life is getting more and more attention. At the beginning of the 21st century more researchers started to examine these two factors in Hungary (worldwide from the 1990s).

In 2007-2008 there was a research in Hungary (Kovács, 2007), where the goal was to develop a methodology to measure the impact of tourism on quality of life which was the TRQL index (Tourism Related Quality of Life Index). In 2012 in the high season the Hungarian Tourism Plc. and the Lake Balaton Regional TDM Alliance conducted research at Lake Balaton about the travel habits and satisfaction of the Hungarians and foreign tourists. In 2012 there was another research (Hungarian Tourism Plc., 2013) which examined the travel habits of the Hungarians.

At Lake Balaton which is the second most visited tourist region in Hungary there has been some research in connection with tourism, but not yet on the relationship of tourism and quality of life. From July 2013 I have been starting my field research to examine the relationship between tourism and quality of life at Lake Balaton with quantitative methodology among touristic services and resort owners. At the moment the research is not completed therefore I haven't got enough fully completed questionnaires to show final results yet, but there are some interesting findings and statements from just completed international research (KNOWNET¹) which some questions are connected to my research.

In this paper I would like to show the relationship between tourism and quality of life and some research at Lake Balaton and how interesting and important these topics are nowadays.

2. QUALITY OF LIFE AND TOURISM

2.1. Interpretation of quality of life

The concept of quality of life was first used by Pigou, in 1920, however, it became widespread only in the 1950s. To determine what quality of life is we cannot find a uniform definition, it has been defined many times, e.g., by Godfrey (2002), Veenhoven (1996), Diener (1995). It occurs in the determinations that such factors are needed to the quality of life or to the increasing of it which contribute to people's social, economical and environmental welfare, therefore the improvement of these factors has to be emphasized.

The improvement of quality of life was appearing from the second half of the 20th century. At that time it was recognized that the economical and consumer race can often be harmful from the point of view of people's personality development.

Two trends are used for searching the quality of life: the Scandinavian approach (objective indexes are needed, such as income, qualifications) (Erikson, 1993) and the American trend (depending on subjective factors, based upon the individual's own experience) (Campbell, 1976).

The Rahman model is the best way to describe the relationship between quality of life and happiness, which has input and output side. Eight factors are on the input side which are the following: family and friends relations; emotional well-being; health; material well-being; belonging to local community; work and activity; personal safety; quality of environment. On the output side you can find the number of happy life years, index of life satisfaction and the index of inequality -adjusted happiness. The benefits of input and the interaction of the above mentioned eight areas may result in good quality of life (Kovács, 2007).

¹ KNOWNET is financed under the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) of the European Union. It aims to encourage the competitiveness of European enterprises. ENT/CIP/10/B/N04S00

The health, family and friends relations, work and activity are important motivations of the travel (Kovács-Michalkó-Horkay, 2007), which mean the following tourism products: health tourism, VFR (visiting friends and relatives) and conference tourism. For these factors separation from the living environment is essential to have different experiences in the visited place from those in everyday life, thus promoting the improvement of happiness and quality of life. The models of quality of life are linked to basically three major areas of science: sociology, psychology and health (Kopp, Pikó, 2006).

2.2. Definition and impact of tourism

The current definition of tourism is the following: *"Tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited."*²

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industry, it has one of the top three places in the contribution to the world GDP. *"The direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to the world economy grew by 3.1% in 2013, contributing US\$2.2 trillion to world gross domestic product (GDP) and 101 million jobs. 1.4 million additional jobs were generated directly in the sector in 2013, and in total, 4.7 million new jobs were created as a result of tourism activity. The total contribution of Travel & Tourism to employment grew 1.8% in 2013. Travel & Tourism's contribution equates to 9.5% of total economy GDP, 1 in 11 of the world's total jobs, 4.4% of total investment and 5.4% of world exports."*³

In Hungary the direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP was 4,1% and the total contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP was 10,6%. In 2013 Travel & Tourism directly supported 227,500 jobs (5.8% of total employment) and the total contribution of Travel & Tourism to employment, including jobs indirectly supported by the industry, was 10% of total employment (394,500 jobs).⁴

Tourism has an impact on economy, environment and society. The economic impact of tourism can make the population's life easier if we consider the touristic incomes. It creates jobs, which generates income, as a result, the local standard of living can be raised, so they can travel in the future. Another feature is a great labor demand, which helps in reducing unemployment but can distract from other sectors, which is a negative factor. It ensures income for workers in the tourism sector, revenue in the form of various taxes (e.g. local tax) to the central budget and foreign exchange revenues are generated for the country as well. It can solve economic problems and stimulate the growth of other economic sectors. The environmental impact has both positive and negative sides. The positive side is to get to a new beautiful natural environment, landscapes which enjoy protection like national parks, while on the negative side there are territorial concentration (some places in the world try to limit the number of tourists, because of the sustainability e.g. Seychelles Island or Machu Picchu), reckless development and urbanization.

From the view of social impact, the most important concept is to get to know another culture, which can contribute to the improvement of the quality of life and the preservation of the cultural heritage (monuments, world heritage, which are significant attractions in the tourism market).

Tourism has positive and negative aspects. Positive effects involve an attraction: first, there needs to be an attraction so it is worth investing in this area, jobs are created by investments and workers get income. The investments may also attract an additional investment by which the general and tourism infrastructure can also develop. Because of the investments the region will develop, regional co-operation and clusters can be formed. On the negative side of tourism there is fluctuation especially in the Balaton region in Hungary (high season is in summer and the number of ice cream vendors, restaurants, and seasonal factors dramatically increases), inflation (at seasonal attractions and great events), regional differences, territorial concentration, amortization of attractions, differences between tourists and residents (lifestyle, culture) (Jandala, 1994).

² <http://torc.linkbc.ca/torc/downs1/WT0definitiontourism.pdf> (downloaded: 28.03.2013.)

³ <http://wttc.org/research/economic-impact-research/> (downloaded: 28.03.2014.)

⁴ http://wttc.org/site_media/uploads/downloads/hungary2014.pdf (downloaded: 28.03.2014.)

2.3. Relationship between tourism and quality of life

As previously discussed, beside the quality of life and tourism and their impact we have to speak about the relationship between these two factors.

Research on quality of life began to come to the forefront in the second half of the 20th century, especially for the tourism sector it began in the early 2000s in Hungary.

Tourism is a sort of activity, during which visitors can gain experience (mainly positive) and can actively take part in their actions. This kind of experience can intensify through repeated travelling, can contribute to satisfaction concerning life and, hereby, according to Veenhoven (2003), travelling can lead to the awareness of happiness.

For travelling we need three things: motivation, leisure time and discretionary income.

Many people undertake travelling to break away from the usual environment in order to spend their leisure time suitably, gain experience that can become the source of their gladness and that can contribute to the favorable indexes of quality of life. Experiences gained during travelling can be mostly found in two tourism products: leisure tourism and business tourism. By leisure tourism we seek our own experiences (physiological needs), in relation to business tourism (sense of honor) where success related to work leads to the fulfillment of the experience. So travelling has significant physiological effects in connection with regeneration or the consumption of a variety of tourism products if a settlement has a high level of general and touristic infrastructure that can help to improve the quality of life of the local people. Unfortunately, the opposite may also occur because the crossing of the load-bearing capacity leads to the deterioration of quality of life. In international literature from the 1990s researches in connection with tourism and quality of life can be found, in Hungary from the 2000s. (Michalkó, 2010).

In recent years the interest towards researching quality of life has gradually increased in Hungary, the expression quality of life or improvement of this factor appeared in more and more strategies. In our National Development Plan the objective was to improve the Hungarian people's quality of life. With the development of quality of life-oriented strategy the experts initiated the creation of TRQL index (Tourism Related Quality of Life index) (Kovács, 2007). The tourism-related quality of life has two parts: first, in a tourist destination the impact of tourism on the residents' quality of life. Second, a person's active participation in the tourism industry (or the lack of this) and its impact on life satisfaction, quality of life. The development of TRQL index was started in 2006, in 2007-2008 researches were being conducted in three different guest range towns (Siófok, Gyula, Eger).⁵ The researchers tried to map the relationship between tourism and quality of life along the following five factors: 1. visiting/visitor's motivation; 2. characteristics of travelling; 3. impact of tourism; 4. characteristics of tourism/destination; 5. travelling as assessment of activity (Kovács, 2007).

With my colleagues we have done research in connection with tourism and quality of life with the titles "Impact of cultural activities on tourism" (Gondos, Hercz, 2012) and "Relationship between quality of life and guest satisfaction in the Hungarian hotel industry" (Gondos, Magyar, 2011).

2.4. Lake Balaton

Lake Balaton is the largest lake in Hungary and in Central-Europe and the second most popular tourist region (arrivals: 15,5%, guest nights: 20,3%) after Budapest and the Central Danube Region (arrivals: 42,3%, guest nights: 38,0%). In 2012 the number of guest nights at Lake Balaton was 4,4 million (2,7 million domestic, 1,7 million international).⁶

⁵ Napi Turizmus, 2007. Boldogító turizmus, A turisztikai szakma honlapja, 2007. december 13. (downloaded: 12.02.2010.)

⁶ Hungarian Tourism Plc. Tourism in Hungary 2012 with final data from HCSO (downloaded: 29.03.2014)

Figure 1. Hungarian regions



Source: http://bestofhungarytours.com/index.php?lang=en&page=wellness_in_hungary (downloaded: 29.03.2013)

Since the end of the 19th century it was clear that the development of Lake Balaton had to be built on tourism, so tourism and related services meant the way out from the backward state. About 90% of tourism was realized in coastal territories, unfortunately this industry can not solve every problem in this region e.g. unemployment. The major potentials of this region include high quality wine and vineyards with adequate cooperation, furthermore the reduction of the seasonality of tourism, the extension of length of stay of tourists as well as the increase in tourists' spending (Buday, 2008).

The most wanted tourism products are: holiday tourism, cultural tourism, wine- and gastronomy, health tourism, active tourism and conference tourism.

The supply of the lake concentrates mainly on mass tourism which can change slowly, but nowadays tourism products appear according to the needs of each target group (wine tourism, gastronomy, health tourism). Unfortunately, the length of the high season is not too long, about 5-7 weeks, which is primarily due to unilateral tourism supply.⁷

There are many strategies, conceptions, programs which deal with the development of this area (e.g. tourism products, cooperation, sustainability, TDM Alliance, competitiveness) and the increase in the quality of life mostly appears in tourism. There is a new effort supported by the Hungarian Government as well as the TDM Organizations located in the Balaton Upland. The new strategies became more complex and they put more emphasis for the integration of small villages resources situated around the most visited areas around the lake (e.g. terroir type agricultural products, local entrepreneurs, based on these specific traditions and knowledges).

2.5. Researches at Lake Balaton

There are many researches which focused on Lake Balaton and its image, milieu, travel habits and guest satisfaction.

In 2006 a research was completed (Rátz, - Michalkó, 2008) with 800 people and revealed that the touristic milieu of the Hungarian sea is not determined by the water but the buffets mean the dominant landscape element.

The people in the research were asked to recall their summer days spent at Lake Balaton and evaluate them on a 1-5 scale in which they indicate how much emphasis is linked to the listed factors

⁷ Balatoni Integrációs Közhasznú Nonprofit Kft. : Balaton Kiemelt Üdülőkörzet Hosszú Távú Területfejlesztési Konceptió 2020-ig, 2009

(133 pieces) in their memories. (Only those persons have been interviewed, who vacationed at least once in five years preceding the survey).

On a scale from 1 to 5 the following factors got the highest value: swimsuit (4,41), thongs (4,31) and the heat (4,24). The least characteristic factors are: high- heeled shoes (1,82), casual wear (1,82) and suit clothes (1,46). So in the milieu of Lake Balaton the items which are related to typical summer activities are in dominant position.

The milieu of the destination strongly influences the opinions of the affected people in their travel decision, however, tourism behavior in the visited places and return inclination can too be detected (Rátz, - Michalkó, 2008).

Experiencing the tourism milieu depends on personal experiences and perceptions, this factor plays a basic role for recurrent tourists, who can be reached with a much lower marketing expenditure. However, because of their spending inclination and length of stay they are very welcomed guests (Lau – McKercher 2004).

Another research was carried out in 2009 whose topic was "The image of Lake Balaton in the Hungarian population, trends and changes" (on behalf of Hungarian Tourism Plc.) and can be compared with results of a former research of 2005. There were qualitative (2-2 focus groups in Budapest and Győr) and quantitative (1000 respondents) researches.

Associations (according to qualitative respondents) connected with Lake Balaton are clearly positive and a large degree of similarity is observed between each age group and the place of residence. The most marked images are connected with summer and freedom. Nostalgia plays a significant role, the name of the lake means childhood memories to a lot of people. In addition, in 2005 a pronounced element was the presence of German holidaymakers who disappeared from the lake-image until 2009. From the quantitative research also positive images have been revealed (970 persons mentioned positive associations). Most respondents associated with holiday, carefree holiday, so it seems that many people connected the lake to the summer (the fourth most mentioned association was "summer"). Based on the answers, to many people the lake means relaxation, rest, "doing nothing" that provides silence, peace and idyll. In many mentioned factors nostalgic elements and memories (childhood, youth, vacations, school trips, camps, Germans) appeared. From the most active recreational opportunities at the lake bathing and swimming have been identified, some of them were associated with fishing and water sports. From the tourist attractions they mentioned the beautiful scenery and the beautiful natural environment (Hungarian Tourism Plc., 2009)

In every second year in Hungary research is done on Hungarians' travel habits. The latest was carried out at the end of 2012. 63,1% of the Hungarian households participated in a multi-day travel and they visited domestic destinations in the largest proportion (54,4%). The higher the education level and the better the financial situation of the respondent of the household is, the more likely that travelling occurred in the household in one year. 25,1% of the domestic travel was targeted at the Lake Balaton tourist region. The largest proportion (38,9%) of the domestic travel was in the high season (July-August). In case of Lake Balaton and Lake Tisza waterfront travel dominated, in case of other regions the holiday motivation and the primary goal were visiting friends and relatives. The main domestic travel destination in 42,8% of the cases was Lake Balaton (length of stay: 1-3 nights, 4 or more nights also in the first place). In main domestic travelling the households were very satisfied with their main travelling (86.9 point satisfaction index). 79% of the participants of the main domestic travel plan to revisit the place of the main holiday in the following three years (Hungarian Plc., 2013).

In 2012 (from May to September) there was a research at Lake Balaton whose topic was travel habits and satisfaction survey at Lake Balaton. The aim was to examine the opinion of the Hungarian and foreign tourists (especially German, Austrian, Czech, Polish, Russian etc.) who travelled to the lake with holiday purposes and the results may provide a stronghold for further development of tourism products, services, image and communication in this region. The methodology of research had two parts: on the one hand qualitative research (interviews with experts) and on the other hand quantitative research (satisfaction study among tourists at Lake Balaton and online self-completion questionnaire with the help of Lake Balaton Regional TDM Alliance). The topics of the questionnaire were travel habits (who they are, lengths of stay, home country, where they travelled, motivations, travel preparation, satisfaction).

According to the interviewed experts there are significant differences between the waterfront and the outlying settlements in terms of economic, social and infrastructural development. In recent years positive changes can be observed, surrounding areas 10-20 km from the shoreline are increasingly recognizing that one of the possible ways of the development may be reached by the involvement in tourism at Lake Balaton.

According to the tourists, the change of image at Lake Balaton can be presented as follows: according to 59,7% it is unchanged, 28% said: Yes, it was slightly more positive, 6,7% said: Yes, it was much more positive, according to 5,1%: Yes, it is slightly more negative, and less than 1% considered that it has become much more negative.

90,% of the tourists were satisfied (60,5% were satisfied and 29,9% were very satisfied). The domestic tourists had a higher level of expectation than foreigners. If the weather is not good for swimming the tourists had a higher level of expectation than in good weather.

In experts' interviews according to domestic tourists the position of the region is good, in this area there are positive changes in the last few years (improvement of the water quality and development). According to foreign tourists the popularity of the region declined, because improvements had not kept up with the growth in demand; there are new and popular destinations such Bulgaria (the biggest rival is Croatia) and a change of generation occurred as well, young people do not come to the lake to have nostalgia.

The attitudes of the Hungarian population in connection with domestic tourism (according to former research, age 18-49), if it is domestic leisure travel, the respondents associate mostly with Lake Balaton. If they hear the word "Balaton", they remember carefree, worry-free vacations, cooling water, swimming. According to foreign tourists the answer to this question is great holiday, great lake, Hungary and Hungarians. In the satisfaction hierarchy there are four factors which are considered very favorable: socio-psychological factors (safety, hospitality, peace and quiet), Hotels and environmental factors, hospitality (Hungarian Tourism Plc., 2013).

These researches at Lake Balaton are different than mine and can not compare to each other. I wanted to show some example to see the variegation of researches in this are and I also wanted to make another research in new approach at Lake Balaton which can be specific in Hungary and which you will see in the next point.

3. TOURISM AND QUALITY OF LIFE AT LAKE BALATON

My PhD dissertation is about the relationship between tourism and quality of life mainly at Balaton Uplands, investigated among touristic services and resort owners. I started the research in July 2013 and it is still running, now I haven't got enough questionnaires, so I can not draw a significant conclusion from the results. I sent more than 1000 e-mails to the touristic services, TDM organizations, Balaton Regional Marketing Directorate, and now I have 56 questionnaires.

In the case of touristic services the questions are in connection with sustainability, competitiveness, liquidity, financial situation, human resources features, as well as their role in quality of life.

In the case of resort owners the questions concern travel habits (summer house, inland, outland), most wanted tourism products, relationship between tourism/tourist and resort owners.

In addition, I would like to interview some leaders of touristic services, members of associations, organizations to have a comprehensive picture about the current and future situation at Lake Balaton.

I hope I will have enough questionnaires until summer and be able to make publications about the results.

In the next point I show some former result in connection with my research topic, the quality of life. Competitiveness, sustainability, innovation and quality are necessary in Hungary and in Central-European countries, that's why these topics were the most important in my research.

3.1. Role of sustainability and competitiveness of SMEs in the tourism sector

EU funded project KNOWNET⁸ provided Hungary with an excellent framework to take a snapshot of the Hungarian tourism sector SMEs. The survey was designed to collect data regarding awareness of funding opportunities, relationships with professional organizations, attitudes towards sustainability, internship placement opportunities and impact of company policies on employee quality of life. Data are comparable across several countries (France, Belgium, Italy, Austria, Slovenia, Hungary, Romania and Turkey) as all project partners conduct the polling using the same questionnaire. The 8 organizations participating in the project employ the same research methodology enabling comparative analysis with reference to the following features of SMEs: competitiveness, liquidity, financial situation, innovation, human resources features, as well as their role in quality of life. The research aims were to get to know as much as possible about the Hungarian SMEs in tourism sector and get best practices. Subsequently, this information could be used to identify areas for improvement and make recommendation that can lead to revenue growth.

We had 100 fully filled questionnaires in this research. Online questionnaire was sent out to members of Hungarian Hospitality Association (VIMOSZ - Turisztikai és Vendéglátó Munkaadók Országos Szövetsége), and has also been posted in the online version of the newsletter of Tourism Bulletin (readership of over 20 000 thousand subscribers). House of SMEs, one of the leading social sites for Hungarian SMEs agreed to distribute the questionnaire to its members as well.

In the last part of the questionnaire we asked if the companies provide their employees improvement of quality of life conditions.

Organization of voluntary programs (excursions, company Christmas party, ...), and the adequate number of employees, the number of "yes" responses was higher, while giving fringe benefits (cafeteria, bonuses, 13th month pay, ...) measuring the employee satisfaction, and in the case of in-house trainings the "no" responses were dominant. The explanation could be that the fringe benefit and in-house training factors need to ensure greater financial investment in comparison with the first two. The biggest difference between number of "yes - no" answers we have found in the case of in-house training and giving fringe benefits (cafeteria, 13th month pay ...), perhaps because this requires a large financial investment from the company.

The family-friendly features assessed on a scale of 1-5. The average score of the responses was 3.82, with 0.94 (25%) standard deviation. The mode of responses is 4. The ability appropriate application of employees was rated by 4.25 average points, with 1.01 (24%) standard deviation. The mode is 5. Companies visibly strive to provide employees with some kind of benefits in order to drive up employee satisfaction and keep up morale (Gondos, T. Nagy, Gergely, 2012).

4. CONCLUSION

As we can see from the research, tourism, image, milieu, travel habits, guest satisfaction and quality of life have an important role. At Lake Balaton, which is the second most visited tourist region in Hungary, there is more and more research done on travel habits and guest satisfaction. Associations connected with Lake Balaton are positive and the most marked images refer to summer and freedom. Nostalgia plays a significant role, the name of the lake means childhood memories to a lot of people. Now my research is about tourism and quality of life in this area. As I noticed and spoke to some workers of touristic services during the filling of the questionnaire, some of my questions are taboo topics they don't want to answer (e.g. revenue, human resources, situation of the enterprise). However, I think these questions are important to know more about the enterprises. I hope from the interview I will get answers and can draw significant conclusions and prepare a publication about this topic.

Research on quality of life plays an increasingly important role, so questions pertaining to this topic were included in the survey of KNOWNET project. Job satisfaction and workplace appreciation are factors that greatly influence quality of life. Unfortunately, the answers we received indicate that

⁸ KNOWNET is financed under the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) of the European Union. It aims to encourage the competitiveness of European enterprises. ENT/CIP/10/B/N04S00

workplace appreciation does not materialize through remuneration, but rather through non-financial employee incentive programs. Employees of SMEs do not get the same benefits as the employees of a larger company (for example large hotel chains), even though the importance of such benefits is major. These could increase the per capita discretionary income of SME employees, which could be funneled back into the economy via consumer spending on travel for example. Positive effect associated with specific experiences of a travel trip influence tourists' overall sense of well-being (life satisfaction).

Some SMEs in the Balaton Uplands conscious drive to be proactive and committed to the ideas of sustainable development, corporate social responsibility, innovation, and providing quality products/services beyond the simple price competition. Sometimes sustainability can be the only way to produce quality products, and find the right balance in the ever changing markets, so competitiveness, sustainability, innovation and quality have to be the main points in these cases.

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