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THE ROLE OF TOURISM IN RURAL AREAS OF HUNGARY

ROLA TURYSTYKI NA WĘGIERSKICH TERENACH WIEJSKICH

Key words: tourism, index, economy, rural areas

Słowa kluczowe: turystyka, indeks, ekonomia, tereny wiejskie

Abstract. Studied by many researchers, tourism has become a major income-generating sector of the economy. Tourism often creates potential and acts as an engine of local economic development for many rural areas however, it is not established in all areas. The utilization of tourism potential in rural areas is sometimes considered to be the “only and last resort” to generating economic growth, even though it is frequently not enough to solve long-lasting and serious problems existing in such areas. Thus, when developing the sector, it is necessary to examine the conditions of a given area.

The aim of this study is to discover the touristic possibilities of rural areas and, with the application of certain indicators, quantify and define the long-term potentials of the sector.

Introduction

Tourism is one of the highest income-generating sectors that has influence on other economic and social processes as well. With the increase in the solvent demand, it can contribute to the creation of sustainable touristic service. At the current programming period, there is EUR 5 billion available for developing agriculture, rural environment and the rural areas in Hungary. It facilitates the changes of the economic structure, started already, and slows down the break-off of the rural areas to be able to start the economic and social catch up. Funds available for the touristic services can improve the competitiveness of the regions, in case they are used efficiently.

Tourism is an interdependent industry intertwined with various dimensions, including the environment. Most dimensions greatly define and influence the status and the development potential of tourism, however tourism has a huge impact on the environment. The major five dimensions mentioned above are as follows [Puczkó-Rátz, 1998]:

- economic environment,
- socio-cultural environment,
- political environment,
- technological environment,
- natural environment.

Tourism cannot be separated from the abovementioned dimensions, therefore tourism may impact the environment in several ways, e.g. job creation, infrastructural development, contribution to GDP, moderation of regional inequalities, restructuring the economy as well as increasing tax, income etc. [Nagy, Tóth 2008]. However, it is worth highlighting the importance of certain prerequisites necessary for the achievement of economic development, which are not always found in certain rural areas in the required quality or quantity.

The strongest connection of the tourism is with the accommodation services and the recreation services. It is a fact that the tourism is one of the most important industries. There are some countries where the tourism gives the main contribution to the GDP. The tourism is able to generate direct effects to the domestic economy and indirect effects to the cultural and social dimension.

The development of tourism has to be a socio-economical influence, which brings together the community, involves the small entrepreneurs to the economical circulation, activates the local education, establishes unique attraction, raises the local heritages, creates equal opportunities for

the inhabitants and brings the gap between the less developed and well developed areas [Goda, Nagy, 2010].

One of our objectives in this research was to examine these region's details and to see whether these indicators show any concentration in Hungary. This article is a very short part of our research, a kind of short study.

Material and methods

Data collection. The dimensions listed in the Introduction were used in the process of data collection as a basis of carrying the study out. The research is based on secondary statistical data analysis and comparison. Sub-dimensions from the five major dimensions were defined to help create categories from the indicators. 20 indicators were selected for the study. The data source was the TEIR database. The territorial units examined were the NUTS 3 regions used by the European Union statistical system, Eurostat. Therefore, the research was carried out for 19 Hungarian counties and the capital, Budapest. The indicators reflected county figures mainly from the year 2010. The sub-dimensions which were created are as follows:

- economic indicators,
- employment and education indicators,
- infrastructural indicators,
- touristic indicators,
- environmental indicators.

The distribution of indicators among sub-dimensions is not balanced, but it was not a precondition of the study.

Statistical and mathematical calculation. After creating categories from the selected indicators, they were homogenized with suitable mathematical methods and indices were created. The average of the indices was calculated. They had the same weight, since they all had the same significance and were called the touristic index of counties. The types of the indicators are expounded above.

Mapping the results. The results of the study were displayed on a map helping to visualize the territorial differences between the categories.

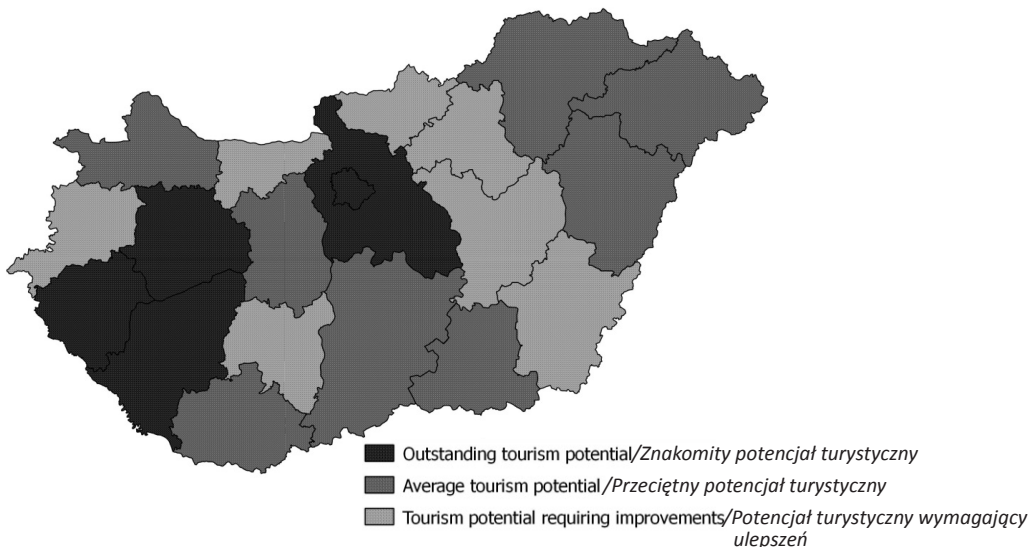


Figure 1. Tourism infrastructure potential index in Hungary

Rysunek 1. Indeks potencjału infrastruktury turystycznej na Węgrzech

Source: own elaboration based on TEIR data 2010

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie danych TEIR 2010

Conclusions

While creating the tourism potential index for counties, three categories were defined. The first one covers areas with “outstanding tourism potential”, the second one includes counties with average values, while the third category includes areas which need to catch up with certain tourism aspects.

Based on the indicators, it can be stated that Budapest and Lake Balaton have a defining role in Hungarian tourism. This is nothing new since it has long been known that tourists prefer these areas the most. Of course, Budapest’s figures are the most outstanding, followed by Pest County, surrounding the capital, and Somogy County in Southern Transdanubia.

It can also be concluded that the development level of tourism throughout the country is unbalanced and there is no territorial concentration either. Counties with average figures are located in various parts of the country and they are not linked to each other. There is no need for huge investments in such areas to improve tourism potential.

Based on the figures, it can be stated that counties in North-East Hungary have very similar indicators, out of which Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County and Hajdú-Bihar County performed at a similar level. However, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County had poorer values, being the weakest in its category. This means that it is closer to falling into the third category and lags behind compared to other counties.

This study has shown that currently there are 7 out of 19 Hungarian counties requiring the implementation of certain improvements to the tourism sector in order to catch up with other counties. For more conclusions to be drawn, it is necessary to conduct a more detailed examination of the sub-dimensions created by this study, so that more knowledge on the efficient use of touristic potential is acquired. The study has revealed that Nógrád County has the poorest figures not only in its category but in the whole country. Among others, it requires a complex development strategy for it to be able to increase its touristic role.

Summary

The primary aim of this study was to discover the tourism potential of rural areas in Hungary. This is due to the fact that in many development concepts, tourism has played an exaggerated role in theory without any truth in practice. Another aim of the study was to quantify and define long-term development paths.

All in all, it is worth noting that tourism in itself is not enough to generate economic growth, since such growth is related to several economic, social, and infrastructural factors that can both help and prevent the performance of tourism.

Nógrád County is a perfect example, since it proves that the income-generating role of tourism cannot be realized without a minimum level of economic performance required for the development of tourism. Therefore, before developing tourism in such areas, it is necessary to create a stable economic balance which forms a strong basis for the development of tourism. Thus, tourism carries a lot of potential for a country’s economy but it must never be the only solution to its growth.

Finally, it can be stated that the tourism conditions of Hungary are mostly favourable, but still not enough to maintain and develop the economies of certain rural areas.

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Streszczenie

Celem badań było przedstawienie możliwości turystycznych terenów wiejskich oraz ocena długofalowego potencjału tego sektora na podstawie wskaźników. Turystyka generuje największe wpływy i w niej dopatruje się dużego potencjału, uważając ją za motor napędowy dla rozwoju lokalnej gospodarki terenów wiejskich. Wykorzystywanie potencjału turystycznego terenów wiejskich postrzega się jako jedyne i ostateczne rozwiązanie, prowadzące do generacji wzrostu ekonomicznego. Nie wystarczy to jednak do rozwiązania długotrwałych i poważnych problemów dotyczących te terenów. Dlatego, inwestując i rozwijając ten sektor należy dobrze poznać dany region pod względem jego możliwości turystycznych.

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