

WONDERFUL AREA OF HUNGARY: COUNTY NÓGRÁD

Beatrix LENKOVICS¹, Adrienn TÖTTÖSI², Zsuzsanna LELOVICS²,
Tibor FARKAS³

¹Budapest Business School, College of Commerce, Catering and Tourism,
H-1054 Budapest, Alkotmány u. 9–11.

²International Institute of Nutrition Research, H-7633 Pécs, Építők útja 20/b.

³Szent István University, Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, H-2100 Gödöllő, Páter K. u. 1

ABSTRACT

The share of rural tourism, tourism in Europe is still insignificant, but there the interest is increasing. More people realize that after overwork everyday a metropolis or the beach are not necessarily suitable for recreation, because there are contaminated and crowded. If we look at the other side, difficult to make a decision the villages, which start to organize, that enhance the profitability of rural tourism. Tourism as a source of income has some contradiction; one of these is the seasonality. The earning potential run to few months, this fact is so stimulates, therefore the host men meet the real and putative needs of guests. A few-day event to move large masses, make known the name of the town with this has a positive impact on attendance at the rest of the year, too. The nearby fifty towns, where Palóc people lives, located at the foot of the North Hungarian Mountains. The popularity of the still living traditions encourages the residents to preservation and care of tradition. We see countless examples of this in Nógrád County, these are among others, Hollókő, Kazár, Bánk, Mihálygerge. Strengthening the tourism may boost the economy of the county, as seen in other regions, subregions, and counties of the country. The support of local governments and entrepreneurs is essential. Nógrád, although the country's second smallest county in size, yet is full of amazing natural formations, historic monuments, and attractive events for visitors. We intended to demonstrate the positives and negatives of rural tourism. We used the example of Nógrád County.

Keywords: rural tourism, festival, Nógrád County

INTRODUCTION

After the Regime people have more possibility for leisure, there were more demands for travel. The reason for this was including visa facilitation. It helped the current trends, such as increase in leisure time and discretionary income, demographic changes, and the search for authenticity, etc.

Recently, the infolded crisis had an impact on service sector, and on tourism, too (traffic loss, revenue loss, job loss). Thereafter we observed a long term regeneration process, which is predicted to continue. It would be, that more and more people admit to the fact, that the key to development of the high quality tourism to build.

The share of rural tourism, tourism in Europe is still insignificant, but there is no question that the interest is increasing. More and more people realize that after everyday overwork a metropolis or the beach are not necessarily suitable for

recreation, because there are contaminated and crowded. Nowadays, the natural and cultural values of villages are more popular. Many people looking for romance and rarity of an idealized countryside, others are attracted by the beauty of the landscape and silence, and clean air, too. In Hungary was organized form of recreation before the transition, this kind of recreation disappeared, thereafter many families had no other option only the rural tourism.

If we look at the other side, difficult to make a decision the villages, which start to organize, that enhance the profitability of rural tourism. Tourism as a source of income has some contradiction; one of these is the seasonality. The earning potential run to few months, this fact is so stimulates, therefore the host men meet the real and putative needs of guests. The pizzerias, tennis courts, pensions harm to the landscape, cultural attractions, and unique. A few-day event to move large masses, make known the name of the town with this has a positive impact on attendance at the rest of the year, too. Appearances of large masses are a serious burden on the village (pollution, noise, crime).

Festivals

In the last few years, number of festivals organized directly to tourists grew exponentially in the international market (*GSZT*, 2010). Studies appointed that the more of the average neat income of the household, the higher rate it occurs that they choose a journey where a festival could be held (*Szhyok*, 2010). But what kind of outing could we call a festival? There have been born so many phrasings and viewpoints.

“Every series of events—cultural, art, gastronomic, sports or other, that is organized around one or more themes, set up regularly, in one or more locations, having an announced program—that’s aim to offer an accentuated high-standard, transmitting and expanding values, quality at the same time entertaining, spare-time public experience for its audience.” (Hungarian Festival League) (*Smidt*, 2009).

Festivals could be categorized according to numerous factors. By the period of festivals, we can speak about one and more days-long, a week long or a month-duration as well. We could differentiate local, regional, national or international festivals according to their zone of attraction.

Frequency of organization is also an important criteria: there are one-off outings and periodic as well. Significance of the latter’s is that periodic programs have serious brand-erector effects, even a one-time thing (jubilee) can be set up consciously as later as a hallmark event, being a starting point of series of events with similar thematic.

By the Hungarian Festival League, festivals are categorized by genres:

- Artistic festivals (music, theatre, dance, literature, graphic art and handicrafts, movie, video, photo, multimedia, folklore, circus, other), pure amateur artistic and “lineage competitions” (reader of poetry, cholar, shot, firemen’s orchestra and others).
- Gastronomic festivals (food, drink, crops, gastronomic tradition-promoting).
- Other, not artistic festivals (landscape or natural value-specific, traditional, historical field-specific programs, castle games, feast-related, ecclesiastical or profane traditions, carnival, marry-making, fiesta, nature, environmental protection, promotions related to a brand).

In the course of thematic grouping, the international scientific literature treats festivals as collective concept and grand programs completed with festivals. The latter consisting the next categories: carnivals, artistic festivals (dance, theatre), religious festivals, circus, sport events, mega-events (Olympic games, cultural Olympics and related festivals), cultural grand programs (for example: European Capital of Culture) (*Sulyok and Sziva, 2009*).

According to European tendency, growing role of festivals can be found on the next fields:

- mediation of culture,
- intensifying national identity,
- in the development of regions and settlements,
- in the rising of tourism.

Significance of festivals is running through three threads:

- artistic: training of audience, expansion of offer, saving values,
- social: community-building, reaching disadvantaged, presentation and maintenance of local spiritual and built-up heredity, intensifying tolerance, teaching to environmental-consciousness,
- economical: tax incomes, employment (artists, collaborators, suppliers, etc.), expansion of settlements, tourist value-enlargement, creating image.

Festivals are varicoloured and diverse; all together with local public events, there are several thousands of programs, series of events like these annually. In 2010, the number of festivals in Hungary attracting bigger audience was 300-400. In this period, the number of audience of registered festivals reached 4.8 million people. Total cost of registered festivals almost reached 8 billion HUF (*Elekes et al., 2010*).

Smaller local festivals

Festivals often serve the reinforcement of local culture and habits and also give options for publics for enhancing their cultural identity besides these, help and promote local artists in getting ahead; in addition opportunities are created for a short term, high level artistic creative work. Primarily gastronomic and folklore festivals are characteristic in smaller towns and in villages.

Till music festivals could be described often as “global” events (for example merely internationally admitted performers), gastronomic festivals could help in presenting and selling local products.

Nógrád County

Almost one and a half hundred settlement lived by Palócs mainly by the foot of the North Hungarian Mountain Range, the sharp and rangy mountains of Cserhát, Mátra, Bükk; can be found in the territory of Borsod, Heves and Nógrád, primarily.

Nógrád consisted of 131 settlements in the beginning of 2008, six of them were city (Salgótarján has a right of a county). This is the smallest county of Hungary, with a territory of 2546 km² and the population is 210.2 thousands, the 2.1% of the whole country. Population density is 83 persons/km², that is smaller than the country average (108 persons/km²). In 2010, the population was 204,917 people,

this will be probably decrease with 2000 people during 2011. Regarding the population of Salgótarján, the second smallest county town, as well as there can be found only 10 more towns as Rétság in the country (*Szalai*, 2009).

It is a favourable destination, besides touring options there are a list of historical memories in calm environment waiting for tourist who want to relax, hunters, fishermen, lovers of special wines and admirers of water and winter sports. The prehistoric findings of Ipolytarnóca have international fame, the hive rocks in the Southern edge of Bükk and also the Plateau of Bükk. In these mountains there are mammals, birds and plants that have an increased protection.

On the operational territories of National Parks, there are 11 landscape protected district and 17 environmental district that are under nationwide protection. In 1995, the European Council donated European Diploma to the territory of the prehistoric findings of Ipolytarnóca.

Palóc people

It is very important to mention Palóc population in this topic. The Hungarian peasants understood as Palóc people who live in the Mátra, in the Nógrád Basin and Ipoly Valley north from Bükk. The common features of folklore, the extended family system and the settlement structure that reflects it that remained during the first half of the 20th century, the Roman Catholic religion and also the dialect that uses two types of “a” sound connects mostly the inhabitants of “Palóc Land” (Highlands). By the ethnographic collections outcropped a very rich and strong folklore in this area. The world of myths, the customs connected to the nuptials and to the high days are extremely rich. The gastronomy of the ethnical group said to be unique within the county as well (*Selmeczi*, 2008). Food made from a variety of pulp and flour had/ has a major rule in the nutrition of Palóc people. One of the favourite dishes is baked pulp also known as ‘görhe’ or ‘male’. In the theme of traditions we have to mention the settlement, Hollókő. The present state of the village was established after the fire in 1909, thatch was replaced by burned clay but the ancient architectural forms were preserved. Later a porch was built with a balustrade made of board. In most places the torches, that are called “hambitus”, climbed with grapes. In 1987 the village was added to the World Heritage Committee of the UNESCO (*UNESCO*, 1987). The small community that lives here wears the folk costumes and keeps alive the forgotten popular customs. They do it within the confines of different events such as Easter, when they await the tourists with “sprinkling”, egg painting and other traditional activities.

Festivals of Nógrád

There are many festivals in Nógrád, primarily link to gastronomy, but at least associated with the appearance of traditional foods and drinks.

Such events among others the:

- Louis Armstrong International Jazz Festival
- Nógrád International Folklore and Gastronomy Festival
- Gödör Festival
- Tóparty Festival

- Palacsinta (Pancake) Festival
- World Heritage Day
- Dió (Walnut) Festival
- ÉTER Festival 2011
- Somoskői Vár Festival/Castle Festival of Somoskő
- Szent István napi várjáték/Castle Tournaments of Saint Steven's Day
- Szüreti Fesztivál(ok)/Vintage Festival(s)
- Kőleves Fesztivál/Stone soup Festival
- Salgótarjáni Bányarém Fesztivál/Snag Festival of Salgótarján
- Málna Fesztivál/Raspberry Festival

“Recall the tails of our childhood! Prepare the famous and magical soup of the stone from the cave that hide the fabulous treasures of Kis-kő and of the some secret flavouring.” The appeal in this year says this about the *Kőleves (stone soup) Festival* that held in Szilaspogony in the last 5 years (*Kőleves*, 2011). The gastronomic event inspired by the folk tale won the “Most popular program in the County” category in 2007. The major step in the cooking competition: Kőleves (Stone soup) can be made from anything, the only compulsory rule at the beginning of the cooking is to plunge the volcanic stone from the Kis-Kő Mountain, the soup is named after it, the to the cold water of the soup.

In 1996 at the open-air stage of Rárós the 1st Nógrád Folklore Festival opened, since that it is hit the road in every year and visits the cities and villages of Nógrád County. In 2000, the festival crossed the state border as a herald of the common Europe and found friendly welcome in Nagykürtös, Losonc, Füle, Ragyolc, Vidina and also in Divény. Since then the event has the right to wear the name Nógrád International Folklore Festival, that presented the folklore culture of Hungarians and Slovaks in more and more settlements—Szügy, Mihálygerge, Pásztó, Palotás, Egyházasgerge, Salgótarján, Hollókő, Bánk, Balassagyarmat, Szécsény, Somoskő, Kazár, Ipolytarnóc—in both sides of the Ipoly up to now. Ten years is not a long time, but enough to built a tradition of an event which has achieved appreciation in Hungary and also abroad (*Nógrád*, 2011). In 2011 the event widened with a gastronomic day and got the name *Nógrád International Folklore and Gastronomic Festival*.

Today the event is held in ten locations within the confines of Hungary-Slovakia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2007-2013, with Ukrainian, Georgian, Slovak, Italian, Serbian, Romanian, German and Polish participants and visitors.

The programme supports the common development of Hungarian-Slovak border region, and also the integration of the Hungarian-Slovak border region in economic, humane, environmental and transport aspects. The cross-border programmes that according to the INTERREG IIIA program materialised by the Structural Fundamentals resource (*Hungary-Slovakia*, 2007).

DISCUSSION

The potentials of the tourism in the region of Nógrád are immature. The sought of them was stagnant and had little interest. It has less popularity than the major

targets of tourism, such as Budapest and its surroundings and the Balaton Uplands, etc. By contrast, in the terms of tourism it has all the potentials to build a folklore filled, traditional holiday possibility.

Considering the socio-cultural effects of the festivals they play an important role in the development of the local communities, because compare them with other forms of culture they are socially more inclusive. Furthermore, the organizers and the population consider the festivals as a tool of utterance of diversity and identity. It is worth to mention that festivals have a positive impact in terms of renewal this may include the democratization of culture, the celebration of differences, revitalization and strengthening of the community and also the improvement of the quality of life. Festivals are usually temporary, fleeting and elusive experiences, if they are not repeated they are unable to maintain cultural continuity. Therefore, it is ideal that they are organized annually. Also a problem that festivals become more and more international and they loose their roots and relationship with the given location. The smaller community festival are characterized with that they are more attractive for the local population than the mega-programmes. However, generally they fail to attract tourists, and less likely that they are commercially viable in long-terms, unless they receive a comprehensive local support. Another problem may be the loss of authenticity, giving up the artistic integrity or the depreciation of culture. Many authors talk about the fundamental differences between community-orientated and tourist-orientated events, and raise questions about the sustainability of the latter one.

CONCLUSION

Festival tourism may have outstanding benefits in Nógrád County connecting it with the village tourism, but the tourist destinations have to avoid the oversupply of these programmes. Such a little space, like the area with the Palóc inhabitants definitely worth to stage unique, traditional based festivals to emphasis the exclusivity.

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Corresponding author:

Beatrix LENKOVICS

Budapest Business School

College of Commerce, Catering and Tourism

H-1054 Budapest, Alkotmány u. 9–11

Tel.: +36-1-374-6200

e-mail: lenkovics.beatrix@kvifk.bgf.hu