CHARACTERISTICS OF TOURISM IN HUNGARIAN RURAL SUB-REGIONS

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Keywords: rural development, tourism potential, performance of tourism, tourism factor.

SUMMARY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

This secondary research on rural sub-regional tourism investigates the individual quantitative factors influencing it and the connections between them. The analysis concentrates on the economic and touristic potential of rural sub-regions as well as on the performance of tourism. Based on the method of comparison against the average, rural sub-regions were classified according to their possible strategies of tourism development. The tourism of rural sub-regions is fundamentally independent from the performance of their economies. Among multivariate analysis methods it is principal component analysis that demonstrates the most influential criteria and their interconnections. Based on this determination of the "tourism-factor", it is possible to classify sub-regions into four categories: "tourist paradise", "catching-up", "wasteful" (i.e. failing to seize their opportunities), and "insignificant". The development of sub-regions belonging to the same category can be based on identical strategies. This classification can be a useful starting point for concepts of rural development and the development of tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Diverse conditions and differentiated development in terms of resources and achievement, result in concentrated centres and disadvantaged peripheries. The problems of peripheral rural areas can only be solved if the right strategy of rural development if used. This strategy should be based on local businesses and should consider internal resources. The development of tourism can also be an important part of this strategy (*Fehér, 1999*).

Analysing the economic characteristics of rural sub-regions, the secondary research is directed towards tourism as a breakthrough opportunity in the future life of rural sub-regions. It focuses on the quantitative relations between the maturity and the development of economy and tourism. The study summarises the methods and results of a situational evaluation and development investigation, as a part of the research focusing on the relationship structures of tourism and rural development. *The goal of the research is to determine the connections between the touristic and economic potential and the touristic performance of rural sub-regions.*

It can be presumed that visitors prefer to visit richer areas (even if these are rural ones) and spend more time there, especially if the area's infrastructure exceeds the average. At the same time the positive economic influences of tourism can also

be experienced in those areas, which are more frequently visited by tourists. This also appears in the development of the economic and tourism potential, although these changes cannot be attributed solely to the influence of tourism.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The studied mass is the set of Hungarian rural sub-regions. The study is based on the data published in the regional statistics of the Central Office of Statistics (KSH) and the reports of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences from 2003 to 2004. The rural sub-regions have been chosen bearing in mind the ratio of urbanity and rurality. Between 1998 and 2002 the sub-regions were examined using a similar method. However data from the two periods cannot be compared because of the significant sub-regional rearrangement of settlements. Provinciality is determined by the ratio of urbanity/ rurality, a sub-region is defined as such if more than half the population lives in an area with less than 120 persons per km^2. Based on this ratio, 102 of the168 sub-regions in Hungary, are rural sub-regions (*Csatári, 1999*).

For the purpose of this study the specific figures for economic and tourism potential were determined as well as one referring to the performance of tourism. Static assessment of the factors consisted of *comparison with the rural average* and the selection and interpretation of sections of the categories created, in accordance with several characteristics (*Dudás – Kóródi, 2004*).

– Economic potential is shown by personal income tax per permanent resident (EUROSTAT, *Behrens, 2000* quoting *Nemes Nagy, 2005*). In both sub-regional categories those sub-regions were separated where the economy's development exceeded the rural average in the given years (*Faluvégi, 2004*), then by using dynamic assessment, those where the rate of development exceeded the average.

– Tourism potential is indicated by commercial accommodation per 1000 residents (*Puczkó – Rátz, 1998*), the method of examination was the same as used previously; statically, rural sub-regions with above average provision were selected, while those exceeding average development were assessed dynamically.

– The performance of tourism can be measured by the number of guest-nights per 1000 residents (*Kozma, 1998*). The principle of dynamic and static examination is the same as in the previous case, however the category of rural sub-regions developing at a rate above the average was expanded to include the category of those below the average rate of development that nevertheless realised growth in commercial accommodation.

– Those sub-regions, demonstrating different directional changes in their economy, ability to receive or number of guest-nights, were separated from the previous groups. The author assumed that there exists a well-defined relationship between these changes that could explain the various directional changes of tourism.

– Besides all of this, we need to determine which of the quantifiable characteristics of the economy are interdependent, and the factors they produce that provide opportunities for classification in the interests of modelling development methods. Among the methods of multivariate analyses, the principal component analysis is a suitable method for condensing the information given by the variables (*Szelényi, 2002*). With the help of this method the tourism factor can be calculated and we can classify rural sub-regions on the basis of their touristic position.

When evaluating the results of the study we have to count on some distorting factors: the economic processes are slow, and a 2 year-interval is short from the point of view of positional changes. In practise, the statistical rural sub-regions do not equate to the informal, spontaneously formed settlements' associations that collaborate based on their own interests. Small accommodations and non-commercial accommodations do not appear in the KSH's (Central Statistical Office) local statistics. Neither do the guest-nights spent in these accommodations.

ECONOMIC POTENTIAL, TOURISTIC POTENTIAL AND TOURISTIC PERFORMANCE IN THE RURAL SUB-REGIONS

Of 102 rural sub-regions, personal income tax was above the rural average (62,814 HUF per person) in 35 (34.3%). This ratio only relates to economic performance and not to the ability to perform, because potentiality and opportunity were certainly not fully exploited. Compared to the previous year's data one rural sub-region (Pécsvárad) became richer and rose above the average. At the same time four rural sub-regions (Nagykáta, Fehérgyarmat, Csongrád, and Őriszentpéter) became poorer and were put in the category of those below average.

Tourism can be connected with development, requiring dynamic assessment and the determination of those rural sub-regions, which are able to keep up with the average rate of development. There are 51 rural sub-regions that developed at a rate above average (50%). Among the 35 more developed rural sub-regions, 21 (60%) developed at a rate above average. The latter data shows that those able to take advantage in richer rural sub-regions can initiate further development and so these can be categorised as *dynamic* sub-regions. In terms of falling behind it is necessary to assess the 67 rural sub-regions that are less rich, of which 30 developed at a higher than average rate and are termed *catching-up*. The rate of development is significant in the sub-regions of Pécsvárad, Fonyód, Sellye, Bélapátfalva, Celldömölk. The 14 sub-regions that are more developed than the average, but with a rate of development that is slower than average, may be defined as those *standing still*. The ratio of rural sub-regions that we can call *falling behind* is significant; the economies of 37 showed a below average level of development coupled with a below average rate of development. Of the 51 sub-regions that are less developed than the average, there are nine more developed and 15 less developed that are growing, but the rate of this growth is below average. Classification is significant for them.

Hosting capacity can be characterised in rural sub-regions by the number of bed-places available in commercial accommodation. Statically speaking 30 rural sub-regions have a greater than average (32 bed-places per 1000 residents) hosting capacity during the two time periods. There were no significant changes affecting the ratio of these categories during this time.

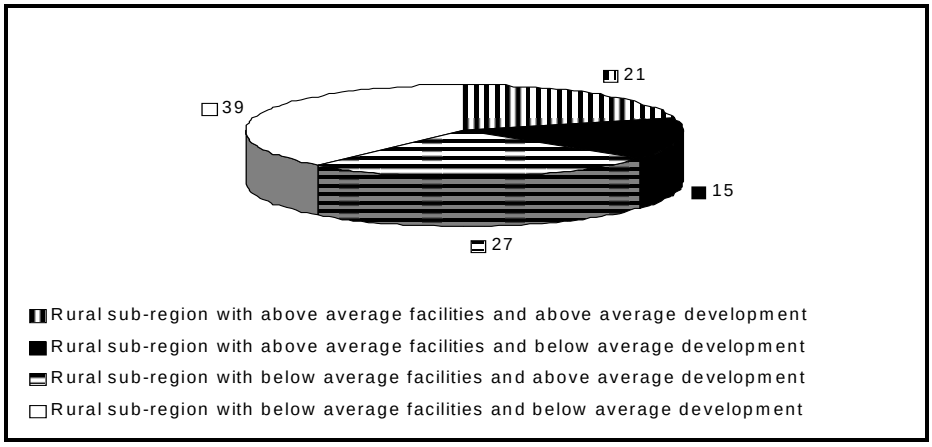
The dynamic study showed that there are 21 rural sub-regions where accommodation capacity exceeding the annual average is available and that capacity was also developed at a higher than average rate. These sub-regions are either located in resort regions or consider tourism to be a break-out opportunity and so make significant efforts in this respect. These include, for example, the rural sub-regions of Hajdúszoboszló, Kiskunmajsa, Karcag, Csongrád, Szarvas, Zalaszentgrót, Tokaj, Gyöngyös, Fonyód, Lenti, Heves, Tapolca, Csepreg, and Siklós. It should be

noted that the each opening of a guest-house or hotel provides a one-off impetus to accommodation development. However, if the development of accommodation is not continuous the rural sub-region may fall back into the category of below average development rates, the following year. Therefore static results are more suitable for drawing conclusions.

The rural sub-regions with below average accommodation capacity, but with an accommodation development rate exceeding the average, hopefully consider tourism as an opportunity for the diversification of rural economic activity. 27 rural sub-regions belong to this category. Accommodation capacity does not reach the average in 65% of rural sub-regions (Figure 1).

Figure 1

The maturity and development of rural sub-regions' hosting capacity (2003-2004)



Source: Own calculations based on the sub-regional data of KSH (Central Office of Statistics)

Comparing the development of the number of bed-places with the figures from previous years it can be stated that the average rural hosting capacity increased, as did the variance of individual rural sub-regions. The closing down of accommodation is accounted for, which reduces the average, although new accommodation increases it. This is why the ratio of sub-regions not reaching the average level of development is also higher.

Development of actual tourist traffic, the performance of tourism is indicated by guest-nights per 1000 residents. 25 rural sub-regions, offering above average accommodation in the two years, can statically be selected. Three of these sub-regions - Mosonmagyaróvár, Celldömölk and Kunszentmárton - achieved above average guest-nights despite below average capacity. In eight sub-regions capacity exceeding the average did not produce an above average number of nights: these are the rural sub-regions of Lengyeltóti, Kistelek, Szarvas, Balmazújváros, Vásárosnamény, Tiszavasvári, Csenger and Heves.

Between the two periods the number of rural guest-nights has decreased by 3.1%. For this reason, besides comparison to the average, it is important to highlight the sub-regions that offer a growing touristic performance. The first 10 in this order of ranking are the sub-regions of: Baktalórándháza, Dabas, Kistelek, Csurgó, Encs, Ibrány-Nagyhalászi,

Fehérgyarmat, Törökszentmiklós, Püspökladány, and Sárbogárd.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MATURITY AND DEVELOPMENT

An assessment of the 43 rural sub-regions showing a development rate above average in terms of guest-nights spent was the next step. The question was whether these sub-regions demonstrate economic development and an increase in accommodation capacity, above the average.

On the basis of all this four categories can be created:

– Development of tourism, economy and accommodation capacity is above average - 13 rural sub-regions

– Development of tourism, but only economic development is above average - 3 rural sub-regions

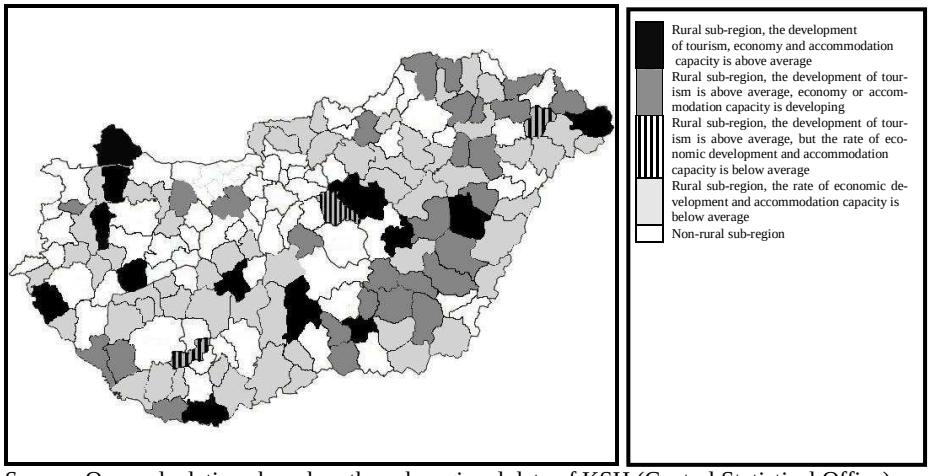
– Development of tourism, but only accommodation capacity is above average - 20 rural sub-regions

– Development of tourism is above average, but the economy and accommodation capacity is below average – 3 rural sub-regions.

As the cartogram shows (Figure 2) only 30.2% of the sub-regions experienced an above average economy and an increase in offered and occupied accommodation capacity. These 20 sub-regions meet absolutely the basic hypothesis. The number of guest-nights spent increased in parallel with a growth in the economy in 16.3% of the sub-regions, and in parallel with an increase in capacity in 46.5%. *Of these two factors the availability of services is more important for visitors than how rich the surrounding settlement and population is.* The sub-regions realising an above average number of occupied bed-places despite their development rates falling behind the average of 7.0% are the following: Sásd, Baktalórándháza, and Nagykáta. They managed to increase a below average number of guest-nights at an above average rate, which is much easier to do in absolute terms when considering percentage figures; although at the same time it is much harder to introduce a rural sub-region to the market and have its attractions acknowledged, in comparison to an already known and acknowledged one.

Figure 2

The relationship between the economic and touristic development of rural sub-regions



Source: Own calculations based on the sub-regional data of KSH (Central Statistical Office)

In 38 sub-regions the economy or hosting capacity, or both simultaneously, has developed in vain at a rate above average, as guests' willingness to visit and stay fell short of the average.

THE TOURISM FACTOR

The factors defining tourism in the studied rural sub-regions are numerous and interconnected to different degrees. The principal component analysis shows which factors are significant in terms of assessing the phenomenon, what system connects important components to each other, and whether there is any correlation between characteristics and location of the sub-regions. It can be determined which sub-regions have adequate resources for receiving tourism and which sub-regions achieved outstanding performance without undue weight afforded to any component, in other words, what tourism potential the sub-regions have in accordance with their studied characteristics. For principal component analysis the following quantitative factors influencing tourism were selected for the two years under examination:

1. *Demography* - population density, ratio of permanent population older than 60 years
2. *Employment* - ratio of employees working in the service industry as a percentage of actively employed people, businesses per1000 residents
3. *Economic potential* - annual personal income tax per1 resident
4. *Infrastructure level* - flats connected to the public water network as a % of total flats, households consuming pipeline gas as a % of total flats, the number of retail shops/1000 residents
5. *Accommodation capacity* - number of bed-places in commercial accommodation establishments per 1000 residents, catering units per 1000 residents
6. *Touristic performance* – guest-nights per 1000 residents

Since there is a complex relationship between the factors only the 6th component exceeds a cumulative variance share of 80%. In the case of the first factor the indicators related to tourism are present, however in contrast to the hypothesis, personal income tax as an indicator of economic potential is not, and neither are infrastructural or demographic factors.

From this point onwards, the examination was limited to just the six most interconnected factors: the number of businesses and retail shops per 1000 residents, the number of commercial accommodations and catering units per 1000 residents, the proportion of employees working in the service industry, and the personal income tax of one permanent resident.

The principal factors create a system between the mutual interconnections, of which two significant factors can be identified as characterising the tourism system of the sub-regions. The first factor includes criteria closely connected to tourism, demonstrating connections in opposing direction with about the same weight. The intent to receive guests appears as part of the willingness to engage in business and accommodation rental, as consumption by local residents and tourists in the number of catering units maintained by them, and in guest-nights spent. This factor indicates the position of tourism, as well as incorporating the given capacities, opportunities and performance.

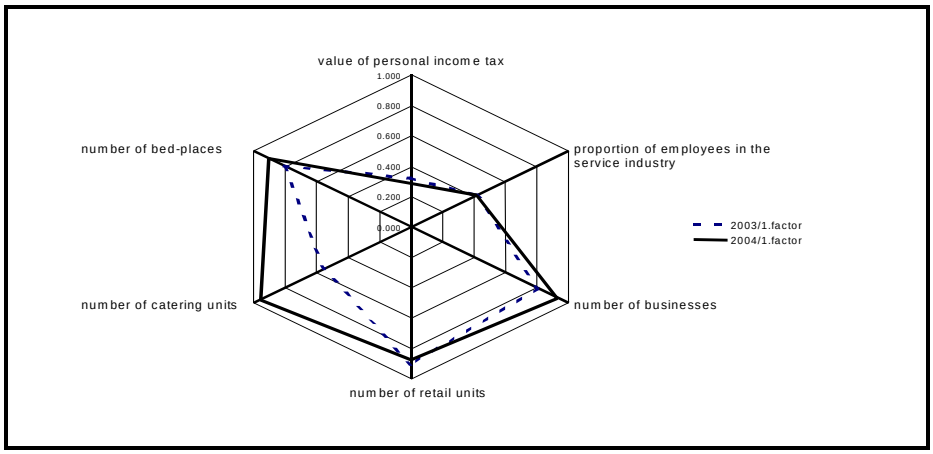
The proportion of the second factor is significantly smaller in the system of connections. Concentrated in this and tied to the serving of the local population, is the uni-directional relationship indicated by the interconnection of personal income tax and catering businesses. The relationship of this factor with tourism can be ex-

plained as follows: where permanent residents of a settlement visit catering venues frequently – indicating their quality – it provides an opportunity for further touristic development.

The same factors were also determined the previous year (2003) and prior to this going back to 1998, that is, that the criteria relationship system has not fundamentally changed. The hardly changing component weights prove the actual existence of the coefficients. Changes in the principal component weights of the tourism factor are shown in Figure 3. The interdependence of the criteria forming the tourism factor in the period under examination is unequivocal, which is why further analysis only applies to 2004 (Figure 4).

Figure 3

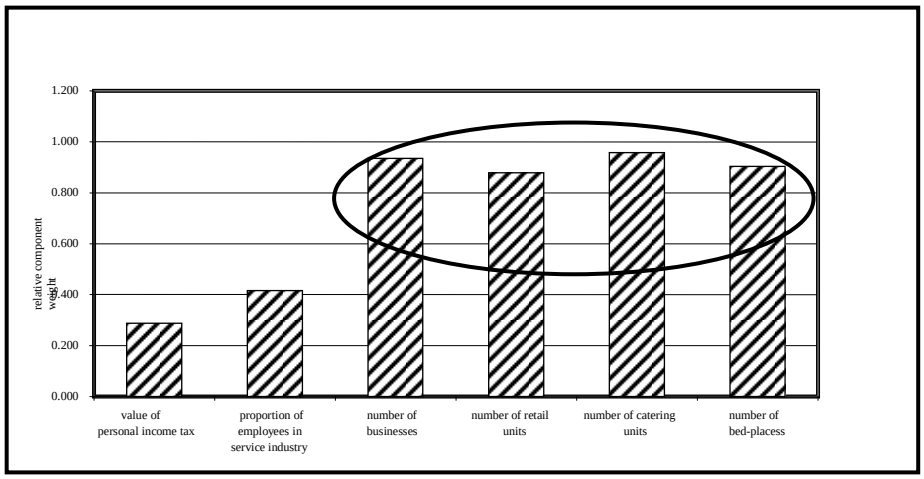
Change of the composition of tourism factors in 2003-2004



Source: Own calculations based on the sub-regional data of KSH (Central Statistical Office)

Figure 4

Composition of the tourism factor (2004)

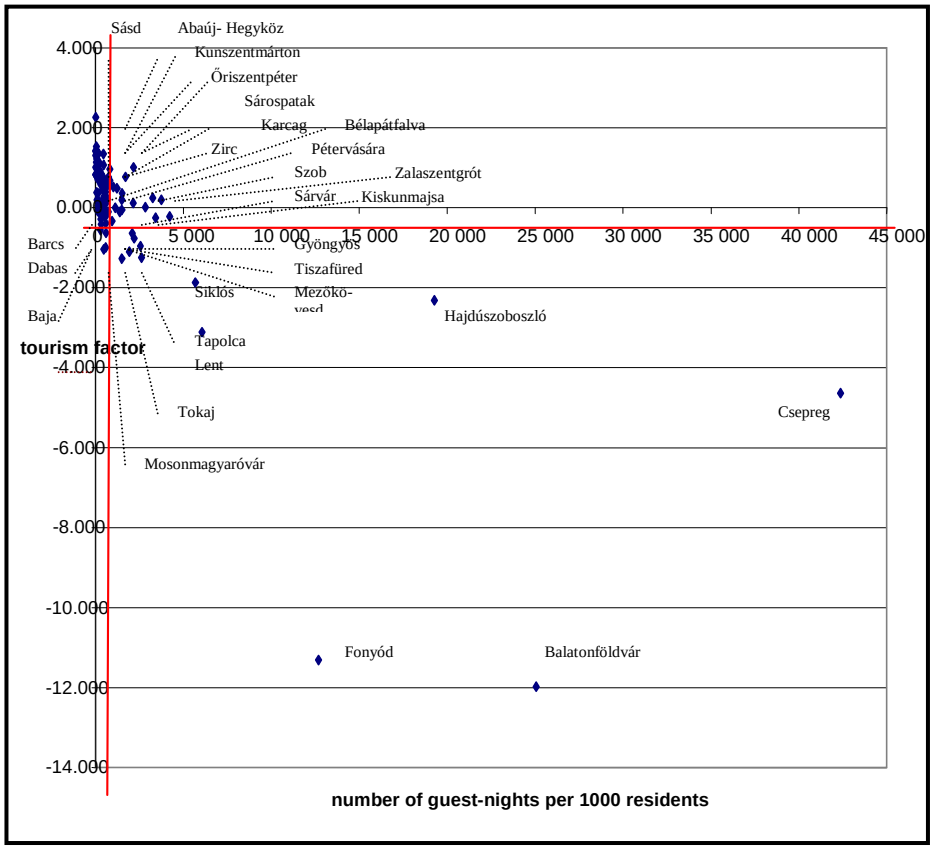


Source: Own calculations based on the sub-regional data of KSH (Central Statistical Office)

The performance of tourism is closely connected with the number of guest-nights. In the analysis of the factor that concentrates touristic position and of actual guest-nights spent, the next step was to examine those sub-regions falling outside the "point cloud" shown by Figure 5. In the first, second and fourth quadrates of the secondary coordinate system we can locate the sub-regions showing diverse connections with tourism.

Figure 5

Position of rural sub-regions on the basis of the tourism factor



Thus, in the first quadrate we find those rural sub-regions that achieved a good performance despite disadvantageous touristic conditions. These are the ones categorised as "*catching-up*": the rural sub-regions of Sásd, Abaúj-Hegyköz, Kunszentmárton, Zirc, Őriszentpéter, Kiskunmajsa, Szob, Sárvár, Kiskunmajsa, Zalaszentgrót, Pétervására, Bélapátfalva, Sárospatak and Karcag. In the second quadrate are sub-regions that are "*insignificant*" in terms of their touristic conditions and performance. In the third quadrate we have those "*wasteful*" rural sub-regions that possess above average touristic conditions, but have difficulties exploiting their potential: Dabas, Baja and Barcs. In the forth quadrate we find the rural sub-regions whose touristic factor is of considerable

weight and whose tourism performance of is also far above average. These are the "*tourist paradises*", the rural sub-regions of Csepreg, Hajdúszoboszló, Balatonföldvár, Fonyód, Mosonmagyaróvár, Tapolca, Tokaj, Siklós, Gyöngyös, Lenti, Mezőkövesd and Tiszafüred. From this classification, we can see that a strong touristic performance is justified by a rural sub-region's attractiveness and facilities, and not by its financial economy.

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