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**CONNECTIONS BETWEEN RURAL DEVELOPMENT
AND RURAL TOURISM
IN THE NORTH-GREAT PLAIN REGION**

PhD Dissertation

THESISSES

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1. OBJECTIVES OF DISSERTATION AND HYPOTHESIS

Having simultaneously areas with significant development difference in the economy is a rudimentary problem in every societies. Split of the country in this sense cannot be sustained neither from society, nor from individual respect, it can be a source of serious social tension. In our country rural development-undevelopment often arises as urban-rural antagonism. In Hungary parallel agroeconomical transformation and System Change brought changes. To be able to adapt, to solve economic and social difficulties caused by this change, a change in attitude were also needed. All researchers have the same viewpoint about Hungarian rural areas. Physical and social characteristics of rural areas can be described by the followings:

- low population density and supply level,
- high proportion of fields, meadows, pastures, lawns, forests and water-face correlated to urban territories,
- low income-producing ability and negation power,
- high level of agricultural and forestry employment,
- close correlation between lifestyle and nature
- appearance of holiday and recreation functions.

(SARUDI, CS. 2003.)¹

Rural development leans on local resources and facilities with which appropriate level and rate, ensures operation and life of a given area. We cannot prepare patterns to liquidate disadvantageous situations, all areas have different opportunities and threatens forming them. Those resources have to be developed what can be found in a sufficient level and quantity in a given region and what can be operated by local economic actors and local communities.

¹ SARUDI CS. (2003.) Térség és vidékfejlesztés. Agroinform Kiadó, Kaposvár, 217.p

If conditions are given for agricultural production then it should be developed or should be conducted to grow, but if conditions for development are given for other sectors, then it should be mobilized. Though for almost all rural areas the conditions are given for doing activities connected to nature, hence it makes sense and right to call it nature closed activity when we talk about the notion of rural area. Those kind of activities are agriculture, forestry, hunting, fishing, medicinal plant collection, food production and tourism.

Arrangements of few decades EU's rural development policy examined and took into several factors into rural development's toolbar what were studied and summarized by researchers dealing with region. It occurred that there is no general method, but successful solutions can be equally effective in areas with similar facilities. Hence forming in specificity similar groups from colorful and heterogenic sets of rural areas is essential, that is how base of similarity can be mapped and how their development can lead to similar outcomes.

Nowadays tourism is one of the featured area of rural development. During the five years we joined to the European Union several project sources were available for rural actors, individuals, enterprises and for municipalities which created development facility in a direct or indirect way. Importance of tourism roots in its complex impact on life of affected areas. Besides its directly measurable economic advantages, its effect on community forming, culture and territorial image is also notable.

After the system change, Northern Plains Region progressively lost his previous economic position, in point of economic and social indexes has one of the last position between regions. It seems natural to everyone that for areas having unique natural properties, it does not cause any difficulty to exploit this advantages of uniqueness in tourism, to increase benefits coming from conscious developments. The question is, what are the chances for tourism in those

areas that are economically disadvantageous, or possibly lack of unique natural or architectural blandishments.

Competitiveness, sustainability, innovation and integration became the buzzwords of rural development. Integration in rural development raised a question: What can be a driving force what can unite and achieve the interests and objectives of those who are mostly concerned in rural development. It seemed that tourism can also undertake the role of integration. Opportunity is also given for Northern Plains Region to develop rural areas with the tools and facilities of tourism.

1.1. Research Objectives

1. A literature review of rural development and tourism in the sense whether rural tourism can help to realize the objectives of rural development.
2. Give an overview of tourism of Northern Plains region and its sub-regions according to potential and performance of different rural tourism forms by sub-regions in the subregions of the region. Analysis of the relationship between subregional economic potential, rural tourism potential and performance between 2003-2006, developing similarly performing subregional groups, creating subregional types in virtue of performance of rural tourism and the existence of rural tourism forms. Creating groups out of similarly performing subregions for finding similar development opportunities.
3. Cognition the demand for activities related to different tourism forms and understanding consumer attitudes towards rural tourism.
4. Give an overview of the presence or evolving possibilities of regional brand in each subregions in virtue of subregional communication and consumer image about the region.

1.2. Hypotheses

1. Tourism performance measured by spent nights is below the national average. Taking into consideration the sustainability of tourism, it would be a realistic goal to develop tourism in this region.
2. In the region there is a coherence between the performance of different sub-regions and the economic development of the given sub-region. The tourism performance of subregions which are economically developed than the average or developing better than the average, is developing better than the average.
3. Close interaction can be observed between the different forms of rural tourism.
4. Consumer popularity of different forms of rural tourism are at a low level.
5. There is a coherence between the low level awareness of the region and low level (under the national average) of tourist demand for the subregions of the region. Subregional awareness and tourism performance is better in case of subregions were regional marketing tools used better in order of tourism. Marketing approach appears in the performance of subregional tourism.
6. Among the sub-regions of the region similar groups can be formed by indicators showing the position of tourism. For these groups same development strategies can be formulated.

2. DATA COLLECTION AND RESEARCH METHODS

It indicates the interdisciplinary nature of the research that both collecting data and their analysis give the possibility to use methods of different sciences. I started to write the dissertation with studying the national and international literature. There are two directions in my research: systematize the notions of region and rural development and connecting the notions and forms of tourism to rurality. I studied tourism literature with comparing characteristics of rural areas and the competitive operation conditions of tourism.

I collected secondary data to come to know the tourism of Northern Plains Region, the source were basically Territorial Statistics of Central Statistics Office (KSH) Information Database. Data for tourism were provided by databases of national and regional directorates of organizations who deal with tourism management and marketing.

Among desk research methods with the help of multivariate methods, with principal component analysis there is a possibility to compact the information content of data. Out of multivariate methods I used factor analysis and cluster analysis. There is no internationally accepted practice for measuring subregional tourism potential and blandishment potential of different tourism forms. I demonstrate the methods determining the relative position of subregions when I analyze the different forms of tourism.

As to field research methods I used observation, large-sampled standardized questionnaire, deep-interviews, and focus-group interviews. Questionnaire survey, were asked in two periods: 2005 and 2009. In the first case the sample contained 250, in the second case 325 elements.

When I decided about the limits of my research out of possible domestic territorial or administrative units I have chosen Northern Plains Region as a planning and statistical region. Basic units of the research are the subregions of the

region occasionally municipal-level data were also used. The research interval is between 2003-2006 period. It makes no sense to choose the earlier period because of actuality and the change in subregional classification, before 2003 there were 150 subregions and the change in the counties of the region was also remarkable. I were not able to choose the later period because subregions were reclassified again in 2007 and some regional statistics were also published later.

Adherence to rurality made it necessary to eliminate those sub-regions which cannot be handled as rural subregions. Debrecen and Nyíregyháza sub-region is not included in the research because high population density or rather proportion of population living in areas with lower population density do not fit to rural category.

Because of the numerosity of rural tourism forms and tourism products, it was necessary to narrow the scope of products involved in the research. Tourism trends and the characteristics of the region designated the areas which were worthwhile or necessary to be involved in the research, hence the research concerns the followings: rural tourism, gastro-tourism and health tourism.

I made field research with written standardized questionnaires to get to know the opinions, attitudes and knowledge of microregions of participants in tourism. Processing of questionnaires were done by SPSS version 14.0. I also used field research to get information about sub-regional marketing communications and brand potential.

3. THE SCOPE OF DISSERTATION'S RESEARCH AND FINDINGS

3.1. Organization, Conceptualization

I summarized the essence of rural development using notions of national and international literature and I defined it in the following way: Rural development is an approach and series of actions which makes it possible to develop rural societies, their economy and environment with the agreement and assistance of people living there and with mobilizing, activating internal sources and acquiring external sources.

3.2. Coherence between rural development and tourism development

I looked for common features in rural development and tourism development and expected requirement for development. These are sustainability, competitiveness and integrated implementation. In connection with these notions I came to the conclusion that sustainable rural development and its integrated implementation sometimes can be an obstacle to the pursuit of competitiveness. By the subregional sustainability indicator in Northern Plains Region, the region can increase its competitiveness without jeopardizing its sustainability of rural development.

3.3. Coherence between sub-regional economic development and tourism

When analyzing the tourism of subregions the question arises whether the capacity or performance of tourism is weaker than the average in economically underdeveloped areas. I answered the question by analyzing statistical data. During my studies I used static and dynamic analysis. To analyze statically the economic development in 2006 I used

personal income tax per capita data. To analyze statically the performance of tourism I examined the number of guest nights, to analyze statically the tourism potential I studied the number of accommodations in the same period. For dynamic analysis I studied the change of these indicators between 2003 and 2006.

The analysis pointed to the fact that above-average economic potential does not results unambiguously above-average tourism potential or performance. Based on these analysis the hypotheses stating that above-average economic potential results above-average tourism potential must be rejected or longer periods must be observed. In short-term this relation does not exist. Results of dynamic analysis are similar.

Relationship between economic development and development of tourism potential or performance is not ambiguous either, but there is a closer coherence between dynamic indicators. When tourists choose a destination, the touristic supply of the given destination plays a more important role than its economic development. It gives hope for detrimentally situated subregions as to the success of possible touristic innovations.

3.4. *Specificities of rural tourism forms, forming groups*

I examined the different forms of tourism separately. Rural tourism potential and performance can be measured with the number of private accommodations and the number nights spent at private accommodations. By these indicators I made an order among sub-regions. I examined the correlation among the order set up by different indicators with the help of Spearman's coefficient. The measurement results show that the calculated correlation coefficient is -0,19866, hence it can be stated that ranking by then order of tourism performance does not depend on the tourism potential of the subregion. Rural tourism potential of a subregion does not depend on the potential of the private accommodation. Naturally without accommodation a

subregion cannot have performance, but there is no strong correlation between the two indicators. Gastro tourism and health tourism are the key tourism forms in the region. I defined the size of different tourism forms by subregions with collecting primary data. I formed groups taking into consideration the presence of different tourism forms by subregions. It can be stated, that gastro tourism on its own is not capable to notably increase the tourism performance, but the presence of other facilities helps to exploit it better.

3.5. Examining popularity and recognition

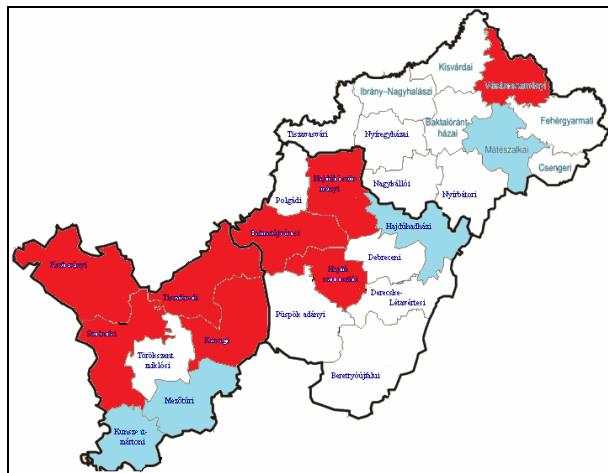
The questionnaire survey pointed out that the prestige of rural tourism forms are not strong enough among tourists. I examined the popularity of different tourism forms in the context of age and residence. I analyzed the awareness of sub-regions in the region. Popularity of rural tourism did not changed significantly in the last four years. Citizens between the age of 26-35 adjudge the different forms of tourism above the average. The most popular form of tourism is wellness. Smaller areas of the region are moderately known, the most known are Tisza-Lake and Jászság, the less known is Sárrét. Visualizing different subregions with symbols can help to be perceived as brands.

3.6. Brand potential and tourism performance

The area's brand potential can significantly improve the tourism performance in a given area. I used primary research data to map the brand potential of subregions in Northern Plains Region. On the basis of these I observed which are the subregions having notable brand potential, or brand suggestive signs can be perceived and which are the ones where brand potential is not significant.

In those sub-regions where brand potential is notable, the performance of tourism is also higher than the average, because sub-regional touristic attractions are basis for brand potential.

1. figure Brand Potential of Northern Plains Region's subregions



Not significant

Appreciable

Significant

Source: own editing

3.7. Rurality and tourism

Comparability of subregions makes it necessary to form an indicator containing much statistical data information. This indicator should be eligible for comparison and should contain all the information by we would like to do comparison. I formed groups with the help of cluster and factor analysis. As a result of my calculation I defined that the sub-regions of the region can be grouped well along tourism and rurality. Out of the used indicators two factor can be created, I call them tourism and rurality factor. The 25 subregions can be ordered into 6 clusters. By the characteristics of the regions there is a possibility for further developments.

I. cluster – the “most rural” subregions

Four sub-regions- Balmazújváros, Berettyóújfalu, Csenger and Fehérgyarmat subregion forms the 1. cluster. Strong rurality, high unemployment rate, low population density is common in these regions. Because of Hortobágy, Balmazújváros subregion has an above the average tourism factor regarding tourism performance and potential. Rate of rural tourism is noteworthy in these sub-regions.

II. cluster – Area of “developing towns”

This cluster consist of Ibrány - Nagyhalász, Jászberény, Kisvárda, Törökszentmiklós, Mátészalka sub-regions, where economic development is above the average, there are less rural sub-regions. Jászberény and Törökszentmiklós sub-regions are the most developing ones. Their towns have a real regional central function, but their effect on their neighboring villages are not strong enough.

III. cluster – cluster of the “proportionate”

Subregions of this group - Baktalórántháza, Derecske-Létavértes, Mezőtúr, Nyírbátor, Polgár, Püspökladány, Tiszafüred, Vásárosnamény subregions, has balanced characteristics as to their rurality and tourism. Only Tiszafüred subregion matches less to other subregions because of its above the average tourism indicators. Effect of belonging to Tisza-lake tourism region and the growing interest for excellent eco-touristic facilities can be perceived in the tourism indicators of the sub-region.

IV. cluster – area of “spas and thermal water”

Hajdúszoboszló is so much determining in the tourism of the region, that none of the subregions in the region can approach its tourism potential and performance. Awareness and attraction of the subregion is much more international not just regional. Its rurality indicator is average.

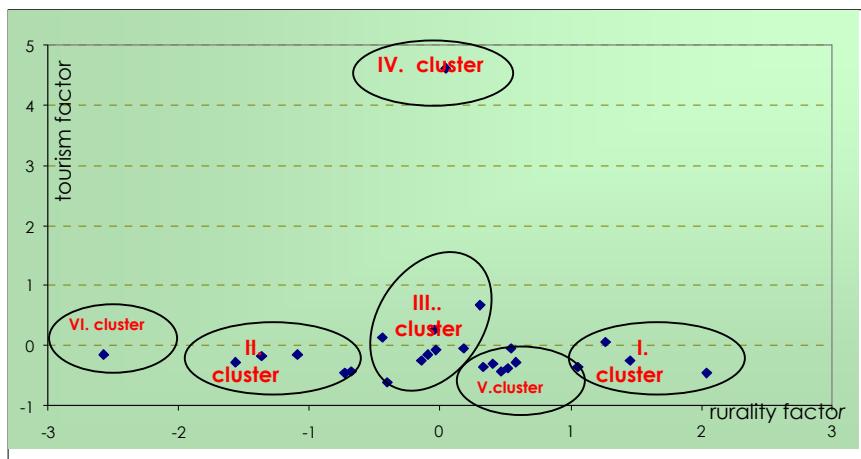
V. cluster – cluster of “odds”

In the sub-regions of the cluster – Hajdúbószörmény, Hajdúhadház, Karcag, Kunszentmárton, Nagykálló, Tiszavasvár sub-region – Tourism is markedly present, particularly it has chances in health tourism. Only because of Hajdúhadház subregion's weaker indicators seems the cluster to have weaker performances. Its rurality is average.

VI. cluster – the “city-centric” subregion

The cluster consist of one subregion: Szolnok subregion. In its rurality index population density is high, that is the less rural area because of relatively low unemployment rate and lower number of agricultural enterprises. Its tourism is an average, neither excellent natural, nor created attraction appeals a large number of tourists.

2. figure Position of Clusters created from subregions of Northern Plains region



Source: own editing

4. NOVEL RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

Examining the coherence between rural development and rural tourism in Northern Plains Region I formulated the following novel scientific results:

1. Analysis of coherence between economic development and tourism position in subregions of Northern Plains Region by statistical data and quantification of tourism sustainability in the region. Subregional data collection and analysis have not been done yet in Northern Plains Region with this content and context. I made economic development comparable with per capita personal income tax, and size of tourism with the number of accommodation and overnight stays 1000 per capita size. As the result of this comparison I came to the conclusion that in the subregions of the region economic development is not a determining factor in the performance of subregional tourism. The second hypotheses has not been verified, that subregions having above the average tourism also have above the average economic development. It can be stated, that tourism potential and performance can develop above the average where economic development is under the average. Examining the sustainability of tourism I found that numerical size of tourism does not achieve the internationally deemed critical level.
2. Exploration of characteristics of different tourism forms in Northern Plains Region. I use rural tourism as an umbrella term, as a set of tourism forms. I chose the examined tourism forms by regional peculiarities and measurability. I defined the existence of rural tourism, gastro tourism and health tourism in the subregions I created not significant, appreciable and significant categories. A coherence is presumable between different tourism forms: rural tourism itself cannot present a significant attraction in the sub-

region, but in subregions where other attractions are significant rural tourism is also better than the average.

3. Examining public image of rural tourism, popularity of different tourism forms and awareness of the region with field research methods. I examined people's opinion about rural development, popularity of different tourism forms and awareness of the region with standardized written questionnaire. I founded that neither the rural tourism form's general popularity nor the awareness of the region is enough for the point of development of the region's rural tourism. The region can have a chance to catch up with domestic tourism average or above the average performing areas by significant and conscious developments.
4. Examining method of brand potential and subregional marketing communications affecting tourism potential, and comparison of brand potential with examined and analyzed tourism positions. Link between marketing communications and existence of the tourism forms and their strengths.
5. Forming groups out of the sub-regions of the region by their tourism and rurality to define further development directions. I ascertained that as to salient tourism potential of Hajdúszoboszló subregion, all the other subregions are almost at the same level as to their tourism factor. Only difference between them can be defined by rurality factor.

5. FURTHER RESEARCH ORIENTATION

- By virtue of statistical data dissertation patently analyze the extent and economic effects of tourism in Northern Plains Region. This gives an opportunity to limit the research by time and tourism forms. The procreated database can be complemented fluently with the data of following year, hence continuity of the research can be warranted.
- My dissertation examines the situation and extent of three rural tourism forms in the region. Existence and measuring the extend of additional tourism forms – ecotourism, rural castle tourism, active tourism - can give a complete view about the tourism of Northern Plains Region.
- My paper emphasizes the necessity of different cooperation forms and enhancing co-operations in the region what can have an effect on establishing further co-operations.
- Revealed contiguity in my dissertation give a good basis for testing the effect of Leader+ programs and working out new programs.

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