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**TOURISM SAFETY AND SECURITY IN HUNGARY IN THE
LIGHT OF CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS**

PH.D DISSERTATION

Thesis Book

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Table of contents

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Objective and structure of the research	2
2.1	Research questions	2
2.2	Hypotheses.....	4
3.	Research methodology	6
3.1	Survey	6
3.2	Sampling.....	6
3.3	Test methods.....	7
4.	Results of the research.....	9
5.	Theses.....	12
6.	Unique and novel results	14
7.	Future research directions	15
8.	Application possibilities	17
9.	References	18
10.	Publications	19

1. Introduction

The relationship between tourism and safety and security goes back much further than we might think, since one of basic requirements for tourism is that tourists can enjoy leisure or business trips in safe conditions.

The negative events of the last two decades (terrorist acts, natural disasters, epidemics) have brought about significant changes in world tourism, whose effects have been felt in the economy of disaster-stricken destinations in the short and long term, as well. According to a survey by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), one of the main factors influencing the number of international tourist arrivals is the growing concern and fear about public security and terrorism (UNWTO, 2016). Tourist destinations that consumers associate with a danger or a negative association for a long time after a disaster may experience a significant decline in the number of tourist arrivals. Tourist destinations that consumers associate with a threat or negative association for a prolonged period after a disaster may experience a significant drop in tourist arrivals. A previously positive image of a destination can collapse in a matter of moments, and rebuilding is a serious challenge to professionals responsible for managing a tourist destination. Today, security has become a prerequisite for competitiveness, whose creation and maintenance, as well as, the risk management poses a number of challenges for decision-makers (OWIYO - MULWA, 2018).

A terrorist attack or an earthquake are extreme examples of tourism security risks, and if we consider only these types of disasters, most tourist destinations could be considered safe. However, the research field of tourism safety and security can be interpreted in a much wider spectrum, and its examination is definitely justified in the case of all responsible tourist destinations, including Hungary.

In recent years (until COVID-19), more than 50 million foreign citizens have come to Hungary for one- or multi-day trips, who - together with the growing demand for domestic tourism - have based their security on the role of the state (CSO, 2018). In order that Hungary can maintain and increase its competitiveness and positive image in the world tourism market, the state must place greater emphasis on the elimination and reduction of risk factors endangering the safety of tourism than before. As tourism is a priority in Hungary's economic life (indirectly accounting for 10% of Hungary's GDP), the implementation of an applied research on the safety of tourists and the incorporation of the results into the practice of tourism management is currently filling a gap.

2. Objective and structure of the research

As a member of the “Tourism Security Research Workshop” of Bay Zoltán Nonprofit Ltd. for Applied Research, I had the opportunity to conduct a large-scale research, with the aim of giving a comprehensive picture of the tourism safety and security of Hungary, and of the real and potential risks to tourists which may be a guide in the future for taking strategic measures to support the maintenance of competitiveness.

The research basically helps to position Hungary in terms of tourism safety and security, to determine the weight of risk factors that may arise in a tourist destination in relation to Hungary, and whether the issue of safety leaves any imprint on the image of Hungary.

I start my research with a review of the relevant literature, which focuses on the theoretical approaches and concepts related to tourism safety and security (placement of safety and security in the tourism system theory, travel decision process, risk perception, destination image), and the history of tourism safety and security.

In the central, practical part of the research, I focus on the detailed presentation of the process of empirical research - the aspects of compiling the questionnaire, the methodology of sample selection, research methods - and the results.

2.1 Research questions

In the research following questions are examined and answered:

Q1: What are the factors that play a role in tourists' choice of destination, and how important is safety and security as an influencing factor?

In the literature review, it is shown that the travel decision is a complex process in which the choice of destination is a separate sub-process. Several studies have examined the factors that determine travel decision and destination choice. However, these studies focused mainly on one sending area each; in the present research, I analyze the data of tourists from ten source countries.

Q2: What are the “most sensitive” security areas in the Hungarian tourism?

As the first step in answering this question, I consider the categorization and narrowing of risks based on the domestic and international literature, then I identify security areas and perform risk analysis based on them. By answering this question, my aim is to outline the range of security areas and the risk factors that pose the greatest threat to the safety of tourists arriving in Hungary. The answer has as well as strategic and operational importance for tourism and law enforcement decision makers.

Q3: What is the sense of security of tourists in relation to Hungary, and what factors influence their subjective perception?

It is known from consumer behavior theory that the socio-demographic characteristics of an individual can significantly influence consumer behavior, decision-making mechanism, and perception. Risk perception is an area where consumers (tourists) may be more sensitive. By answering this question, I would like to present the influencing power of each socio-demographic characteristic (place of residence, education, age, nationality) and to reveal statistically verifiable differences between certain groups. In addition to socio-demographic variables, I would also like to analyze the impact of travel experience and travel conditions (number of fellow travelers, mode of transport) on risk perception. By examining the respondents' sense of security, we can also get an overview whether tourists consider their own or their source country to be a safer destination, which gives an opportunity to position destinations. Based on the research results, a more thorough analysis of the safest countries (marketing strategy and law enforcement) may also be recommended for tourism management professionals and law enforcement agencies.

In terms of research and evaluation of results, I would like to emphasize that the online survey was conducted in a relatively calm period (“free from disasters and terrorist attacks”), in November-December 2019, before the outbreak of the coronavirus and its media coverage.

Q4: How decisive is safety and security as a tourist attraction in Hungary's perceived image?

Most tourist destinations create a picture in our minds. This image can be positive or negative, with general or unique characteristics, which is influenced by a number of other factors (e.g. national culture, socio-demographic characteristics of individuals, marketing communication of the destination). By answering the this question, my aim is to reveal the main categories of the responses in terms of the perceived image of Hungary, and which are the most frequently identified groups. Further question occurs whether safety and security is a separate category or not. It is important to note that until the period of the questionnaire survey, safety and security was not integrated into Hungary's official image.

2.2 Hypotheses

As the research at Hungarian level is not only gap-filling, but also novel - in terms of the size and composition of the sample, and the content elements of the topic, the following assumptions have been derived from the theoretical overview:

- H1:** *Safety is the number one determining factor in tourists' overall travel decisions.*
- H2a:** *Socio-demographic characteristics have an impact on the assessment of Hungary's tourism safety, within that the age factor results in significant differences in assessment.*
- H2b:** *The nature and circumstances of the trip have an impact on the assessment of Hungary's tourism safety.*
- H3:** *Regarding the perceived risks, Hungary is a safe tourist destination, and destination-specific risk cannot be identified in an international comparison.*
- H4:** *As security as an association is not decisive in the perceived image of Hungary, security as a tourist attraction is not present in the perceived image of Hungary.*

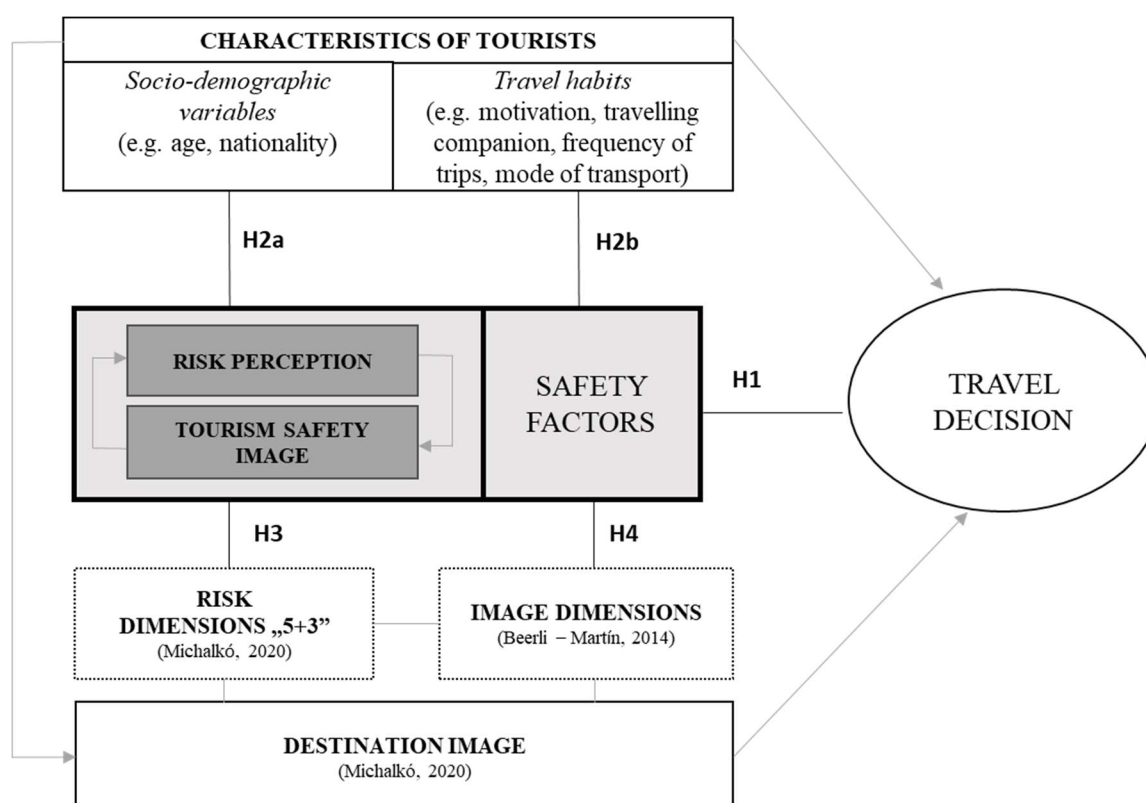


Figure 1: Theoretical framework of the research

Source: own compilation

The model (Figure 1) is based on the theoretical blocks detailed in the literature review, which focuses on the risks arising from tourism safety and travel. I marked the connections between the theories - tourism safety, travel decision, destination image - with lines (arrows depending on the direction of the effect). According to the model, the travel decision (as a dependent variable) is influenced by the characteristics of the tourists, the tourism safety of the destination (safety factor) and the image of the destination. Among the former elements, the direct and, if necessary, the indirect relation can be observed one by one. The characteristics of tourists as independent variables are present in the model, and the role of security as a dependent and independent variable is also manifested in the analyzes.

3. Research methodology

Evaluating the theoretical concepts related to tourism safety and tourist risk perception evaluated in the literature, I consider Michalkó's (2020) five safety-based models to be the basis of confidence for the empirical, methodological part of the research, which I supplement with three other areas (REISINGER – MAVONDO; 2005; KARL - SCHMUDE, 2017), along which I will examine and evaluate the tourism safety of Hungary:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. health safety | 6. (+) terrorism |
| 2. public safety | 7. (+) natural catastrophes |
| 3. consumption safety | 8. (+) psychological risk |
| 4. technical safety | |
| 5. orientation safety | |

3.1 Survey

As the research problem concerns tourists arriving in Hungary and domestic tourists, whose number is several million per year, it was clear that I wanted to collect the necessary information and data in the form of a questionnaire. Within this, I chose the online panel research method, the implementation of which was supported by the Bay Zoltán Nonprofit Ltd. for Applied research.

The online survey was carried out by an international market research company, Szonda Ipsos Ltd. on their own online panels based on the questionnaire conducted by me in November-December 2019.

90% of the questionnaire contained closed-ended questions, open-ended questions occurred only at the end of the questionnaire, due to the fact that after the closed-ended questions the respondent already had more insight into the topic, so the response time of the more time-consuming open-ended questions was reduced. quality has increased.

In the questionnaire, respondents expressed their opinions on a five-point Likert scale, based on nearly 60 statements (risk factors), which were formulated on the basis of international literature. Based on international research on tourism security risks (e.g. OZASCILAR ET AL., 2019; EMAMI - RANJBARIAN, 2019, ZOU - MENG, 2020), the scale system chosen is accepted and validated.

3.2 Sampling

Consumer perceptions of domestic and foreign tourists play a key role in the assessment of Hungary's tourism safety. The sample size was set at 500 Hungarian residents and 1000 foreign tourists.

I selected foreign and domestic tourists participating in the observation (questionnaire survey) by separate sampling, according to separate inclusion-exclusion criteria. The domestic sample was composed of Hungarian residents aged 18 years and over at the time of the survey and who had spent at least one overnight stay away from home for tourism purposes in the year preceding

the survey. The foreign sample includes foreigners aged 18 or over living in Hungary's TOP10 sending countries who have spent at least one overnight stay in Hungary for tourism purposes in the year preceding the survey.

For both local citizens and people from abroad, sampling was based on a non-random sampling technique: quota sampling.

For domestic respondents, the sample can be considered as representative for the Hungarian population in terms of gender, age and settlement type.

In the case of the foreign sample, the quotas are based on the number of nights spent by tourists from Hungary's 10 largest tourism sending countries in five years preceding the survey.

3.3 Test methods

The bulk of my primary research was focused on quantitative (quantifiable) data, but the open-ended questions provided both quantitative and qualitative information to support my research objective.

The questionnaire assessed tourists' perception of safety and risk perception on a five-point Likert scale, based on nearly 60 risk factors. For ease of use, illustration and interpretation, I introduced new variables, so-called "tourism safety indicators", along the eight safety domains mentioned earlier.

I started my quantitative analysis with descriptive statistical analyses, which serve to present the individual variables and describe the association relations between the variables. I supplemented the presentation of basic statistical indicators (frequency, means, standard deviation, correlation) with cross-tabulation analyses.

One of the main objectives of the research is to explore and characterise tourists' consumer perceptions of tourism safety in Hungary. For this analysis, I found the "multidimensional scaling method" (MDS) to be the most appropriate. The method displays respondents' perceptions and preferences in space. In essence, the method assigns a spatial map to multidimensional points on which distance relationships are plotted. The axes in the spatial map often correspond to a psychological basis along which consumers formulate their opinions and perceptions (MALHOTRA, 2002:725; VERES ET AL., 2017:57). To check the error rate of the point configurations generated on the MDS maps, I use the "stress" fit index, which refers to the difference between the theoretical and the real configuration. For the price mapping, the lowest possible values of the stress index are desirable (LŐRINCZ, 2011:12):

During my research I also sought to find out what factors and how they influence the development of risks and indicators, using an explanatory model, ANalysis Of Variance (ANOVA), which is suitable for comparing differences between the means of the populations included in the study. I will use the Levene test to verify the homogeneity of variance as a basic condition. Using an F-test, I examined whether there is a significant correlation between the variables at the 5% significance level. Where the analysis of variance yielded significant results, I conducted post-hoc tests using LSD method for equal variances and Tamhane's T2 method for different variances.

The analyses were carried out using the IBM SPSS Statistics 22 mathematical-statistical software package.

In addition to quantitative information, the open-ended questions in the questionnaire also provide an opportunity for qualitative analysis. In the survey, tourists responding to the questionnaire express in no more than three words what is the first thing that comes to their mind about Hungary. In addition, they are asked to indicate any destinations they do not feel safe in and to provide a short (one or two sentence) justification. To process and interpret this data, I chose the methods of content analysis and word cloud mapping. I created the word cloud mapping using WordCloud web-based software and plotted the image associations. For both analysis methods, I also relied on quantifiable data for the analysis.

4. Results of the research

The main objective of my research was to assess the tourism security risks in Hungary based on the consumer perceptions of domestic and foreign tourists. The results of the questionnaire survey of 1,525 tourists were analysed along eight safety areas, which I believe, based on the literature, cover the range of risks involved, thus providing a complete picture of tourism safety in Hungary and tourists' perception of safety. Thanks to the research methods used, my hypotheses have been evaluated and confirmed. The overall result is that the tourists surveyed consider Hungary to be a safe destination, with a low level of emerging risks.

H1: Safety is the number one determining factor in tourists' overall travel decisions.

In the literature review, I have detailed the factors involved in and influencing the travel decision process. In the last decades, the issue of safety has become more important in tourism, which has an impact on travel decisions and aspects. The UNWTO also pointed out in its 2015 survey that security is an increasingly important factor. The hypothesis assumes that it is not only a determining factor but also takes first place over other factors influencing travel decisions.

To prove the hypothesis, I used both the Hungarian and the foreign sample as a basis, and in the latter I also performed a variance analysis in addition to the ordinal analysis. The domestic sample clearly shows that safety is the most important factor in the choice of destination, as nine safety-related factors rank in the top ten in the order of the criteria.

The picture is not so clear for the foreign sample, but for citizens of eight countries surveyed, at least six of the top ten factors are related to security. Even when aggregated across nations, six out of the top ten and four out of the top five rankings are security-related factors, so I accept the hypothesis.

Since the data showed a higher variance for the foreign sample, I performed a variance analysis by introducing a new variable (Safety Factor - BF) using the method of arithmetic averaging of the associated variables. As a result, it was confirmed that significant differences may exist between nations, such as for the USA, which statistically proved to assign higher mean values to the new variable, i.e. its citizens surveyed consider security more important than respondents from other countries included in the research.

H2a: Socio-demographic characteristics have an impact on the assessment of Hungary's tourism safety, within which the age factor results in significant differences in assessment.

The assessment of a country's tourism security is a complex process, depending on subjective and objective factors. Risk perception as a theoretical concept of consumer behaviour, or even just the consumer (travel) decision process, is influenced by a number of factors ranging from motivation to information sources and personal experiences.

Hypothesis H2a assumes that the degree of consumer risk perception of tourism safety in Hungary is determined by certain socio-demographic characteristics (e.g. age, type of settlement, education).

To test the hypothesis, I used the analysis of variance method with an additional post hoc test to detect differences in the absence of coefficient of variance (Levene's test). Among the socio-demographic variables, there was a statistically proven difference between the category groups in age and education. The type of municipality (for domestic respondents) and the sex of the respondent had no statistically proven effect on risk perception. The hypothesis is proven as stated above.

H2b: The nature and circumstances of the trip have an impact on the assessment of Hungary's tourism safety.

Hypothesis H2b assumes that travel circumstances and the nature of the trip (motivation, means of transport, number of nights spent, frequency of travel, travelling companions, mode of organisation) play a role in the perception of tourism security risks in Hungary.

To test the hypothesis, I also used the analysis of variance method, with an additional post hoc test to detect differences in the absence of coefficient of variance (Levene's test). Statistically significant differences between category groups were found between travellers with and without children under 6 years of age, between tourists arriving alone and those travelling in couples or groups, and also for the means of transport crossing the border. Based on the above, I consider the hypothesis to be confirmed.

H3: Regarding the perceived risks, Hungary is a safe tourist destination, and destination-specific risk cannot be identified in an international comparison.

The assessment of the safety of a tourist destination is a complex task, which is supported by parts of the literature (types of risks, interpretation, case studies). A consumer's perception of the safety of a tourist destination and his perception of safety there, and the image elements he associates with a destination, depend on a number of factors. Past experiences, incidents or threats to the destination and other factors, political decisions (e.g. terrorist attacks, natural disasters, immigration, criminal organisations) all play a role in how risky a tourist perceives a destination to be.

I analysed the tourism security risks in Hungary based on the responses of both domestic and foreign tourists along nearly 60 statements (variables), which could be categorised into eight

security areas that I had pre-defined based on the literature. For these, I introduced new variables (indicators) for a more transparent and meaningful data analysis.

My third hypothesis assumes that Hungary is a safe tourist destination in terms of risks, i.e. respondents assign a low risk level to the variables measured on the five-point Likert scale, and that none of the areas stand out from the others in terms of averages (risk level).

To do this, I looked at averages of risk factors and newly introduced indicators. For both samples, the level of risk is below the medium level (domestic: 2.36; foreign: 2.52). I analysed the indicators from both a subjective (based on previous experience) and an objective perspective, a process facilitated by the two separate blocks of questions and the newly formed indicators. Although no significant difference was found between the averages of the security domains (indicators), the domains of consumer security (first for nationals and second for foreigners) and orientation security (first for foreigners) were ranked first based on past experience. The objective analysis shows that public safety is the greatest risk for a tourist visiting our country of all the areas surveyed, with a similar response from foreign and domestic respondents. It should be stressed that even these averages correspond to a low to medium level of risk on the Likert scale. It is interesting to note that subjective experience differs minimally from objective perception, although of course the effect of the former cannot be completely filtered out from the latter.

Based on the methods and results presented above, I consider my hypothesis to be confirmed.

H4: Since security as an association is not a dominant feature in the perceived image of Hungary, security as a tourism attraction is not present in the perceived image of Hungary.

Most countries build on tourism assets in their official country image communication along different dimensions, which I have presented in the literature review. However, some countries have incorporated safety as an image element in their official communication following a disaster. There is not yet sufficient experience to answer the question whether this "security-branding" is necessary or more effective in increasing the number of tourists. Hungary has not yet used security as a promotional factor in its branding and image-building.

The hypothesis assumes that, based on consumer perceptions, safety is not the first thing tourists think of when they think of Hungary, and thus it does not appear as an attraction among the image elements.

To reveal this, the questionnaire asked foreign tourists to share the phrases that first come to mind when they think of Hungary. After cleaning the data, I analysed the content of the expressions, illustrated them with WordClouds, categorised them and created image dimensions. As a result, the number of mentions of "security" was minimal (five) out of more than 1300 terms. On this basis, the hypothesis was confirmed.

5. Theses

Thesis 1.

Safety is the number one determinant of tourists' overall travel decision.

The thesis suggests that tourists consider a number of factors when making their travel decisions, and that when ranked in order of importance, safety-related factors rank seven out of the top ten.

Thesis 2.

The perception of tourism safety in Hungary is influenced by the socio-demographic characteristics of tourists and the nature and circumstances of the trip.

The thesis concludes that there are differences in the perception of tourism safety in Hungary across age groups, educational attainment, mode of transport and travelling companion:

- Younger age groups (18-24 and 24-44) are more sensitive and associate a higher risk value to psychological risks related to public safety or loss of social status.
- Respondents with a primary level of education were statistically proven to have higher risk perceptions than those with higher (secondary and tertiary) education,
- Tourists with a child under 6 years of age statistically proven to perceive a higher tourism safety risk than respondents without a child under 6 years of age.
- Tourists arriving in Hungary alone also associated a higher overall level of risk to tourism safety in Hungary than those arriving in a couple or group (family, friends).
- A much higher risk level was identified for those arriving by motorbike and bicycle (~3.50) than for other means of transport (2.40-2.80).

Thesis 3.

In terms of perceived risks, Hungary is a safe tourist destination, no destination-specific risks can be identified in an international comparison.

The perception of tourism safety in Hungary falls into the low-to-low risk category in each of the safety areas examined (health safety, public safety, orientation safety, consumer safety, technical safety, terrorism, natural disasters, psychological risks). There are no significant differences in the perception of each area, so no destination-specific risks can be identified for Hungary.

Thesis 4.

H4: As security as an association is not decisive in the perceived image of Hungary, security as a tourist attraction is not present in the perceived image of Hungary.

The thesis suggests that the issue of safety and security does not appear as the first thought in the image of tourists visiting Hungary. As a safe destination, it is not a particular attraction when choosing a destination, it does not appear as a well-defined image dimension or as a sub-element of other image dimensions.

In total, there were five mentions of security, all of which were about Hungary being safe, and that's the first thing that comes into mind about Hungary. There was no mention of Hungary being unsafe, nor were any other risks to tourism safety mentioned in the open question, which confirms the previous findings of an overall low risk to tourism safety.

Expressions related to the perceived image can be divided into eight categories:

- I. Capital, Budapest and its attractions;
- II. Lake Balaton;
- III. Wines and gastronomy;
- IV. Hungaricums, Hungarian specialities;
- V. Health tourism;
- VI. History, culture and traditions;
- VII. Natural environment;
- VIII. Hungarian national atmosphere.

6. Unique and novel results

Tourism safety is a relatively new field of research and that its theoretical background is still in its infancy. In the theoretical section, I have assessed the theoretical models of consumer behaviour and tourism system related to tourism security as a background through the security guideline.

So far, no survey has been carried out on tourism safety in Hungary as a tourist destination, due to the following methodological characteristics and complexity:

- The research is based on a sample of 1,525 (523 domestic, 1,002 foreign), which for foreign tourists focuses on the TOP10 sending countries using a quota sampling technique in terms of the proportion of nights spent in the last five years, while for domestic residents the sample is representative by gender, age and type of settlement. In both cases, the respondent had to be over 18 years of age and have spent at least one overnight stay in the country in the year preceding the survey.
- The content of the questionnaire was structured around the eight areas of security mentioned above and the approximately 60 risk factors that fall into each of these areas.
- Among the statistical methods used in the analysis, multidimensional scaling is a novel approach to interpreting risks and consumer perceptions, which has not been used in previous international research on tourism safety.

In the course of the analysis, I also illustrated the differences in the risk perception of the TOP10 sending countries through MDS maps, which revealed that the tourism security of Hungary is perceived differently by different nations. Some countries are more sensitive to certain areas of security, and it can be hypothesised that countries to the west and east of Hungary may also show differences, which may be based on stereotypes that have been developed in the past.

An one-way analysis of variance analysis of the effects of different socio-demographic and travel behaviour-related characteristics revealed that Hungarian residents associate a slightly lower risk value with tourism safety in Hungary compared to foreign tourists. Furthermore, those with primary education, travelling with children under six years of age, arriving by motorbike or bicycle, and travelling alone were statistically proven to have a lower perception of safety in Hungary.

The results of my analyses of the country image show that the issue of security is actually not present in Hungary's image (0.3% prevalence), and the image elements are consistent with the official country image communication. However, for other destinations, a strong opinion has emerged on the weakness and problems of certain security areas, which, according to the responses, show clear similarities (e.g. Egypt, Turkey, Tunisia, Russia, Italy), which are perceived as negative image elements by consumers.

7. Future research directions

Tourism safety has become a prerequisite for competitiveness in recent years, expected by consumers and not seen as an attraction. My empirical research has also shown that safety-related aspects are given greater importance (importance level) than general factors in travel decisions. sharp and less significant differences between nations have emerged, supported by statistical analyses, but to uncover the exact cause and effect of the results, it may be worth conducting more in-depth research (e.g. in-depth interviews, focus group interviews) to find the "why".

The empirical research presented in the thesis (online questionnaire survey) was conducted in November and December 2019, which can be considered a neutral period in terms of the media coverage of tourism security issues (terrorist attacks, disasters, epidemics) in the world. Although in December 2019, China had already been hit by the coronavirus, its impact on society, care systems and the tourism industry was not yet foreseeable. Tourism is a vulnerable sector in itself, and the negative impacts will be felt in the long term.

The pandemic that swept across the world, known as COVID-19, has transformed people's daily lives, not only changing their travel habits but also limiting their travel options. Consumers' sense of security has been shaken and their willingness to travel has declined despite the limited options, causing huge damage to the tourism industry and the service sector. While the wounds and damage will ease over time, recovery will not be easy for the industry. It is certain that the issue of health and safety has now become more important in the eyes of consumers, if only in terms of their hygiene habits. Travellers are taking many precautions as a precautionary measure without any external pressure. Travel habits and travel behaviour are clearly changing, and may or may not return to the way they were in the past, but there may be some lasting effects.

Analysis of social media content (e.g. using SentiOne software) from the period following the outbreak onwards, and comparison of the results with the findings of this research, can identify new approaches and priorities for tourism security. The study of the relationship between perceived risks and image during and after the epidemic is also an interesting area for research. In addition to the content analysis method, interviews with supply-side actors (decision-makers, professional organisations, service providers) would provide a different perspective on risk assessment, which, when compared with the present research results, would provide a more complete insight into the state of tourism security in Hungary.

A number of studies have been launched internationally on the impact of the epidemic on tourism, assessing the situation during the epidemic period. These may bring interesting results in terms of assessing the risks to tourism safety, but I believe that it is more useful to base such research not only on the emotions and impressions of the moment, but also during the period when tourists are no longer in such an extreme situation or period. Within this, it may also be worthwhile to examine the risks at a separate sectoral level (e.g. catering, accommodation, transport).

The database compiled through the questionnaire survey also offers a number of analytical possibilities, whether to measure the role of social media or traditional media, or to study a group of countries in more detail, to typify tourists (for example, through cluster analysis).

8. Application possibilities

The research results cover the period of 2019, free of extreme events (pandemic, war in a neighbouring country), thus presenting a clear picture of the baseline situation of tourism security in Hungary, with management and marketing implications.

One of the main results of the empirical survey, besides confirming that Hungary is a safe destination, is the identification of areas of tourism safety that can be improved to reduce risks and increase consumer satisfaction:

- consumption safety (scams by service providers, parking in illegal places);
- public safety (theft of property, public safety at night);
- orientation safety (language barriers);
- health safety (drinking water quality, bathing hazards).

During the development of the above areas, the cooperation of responsible organisations and bodies (e.g. law enforcement agencies, national professional tourism organisations, associations, consumer protection, local governments) should be given a special role, with emphasis on the creation of concrete actions and programmes (e.g. development of a risk assessment system, organisation of education and training, development of a tourism safety app). The development of a tourism safety (development) strategy would provide an excellent framework for this process, which could also include a tourism safety (action) plan.

In addition to its applications in management, consumer perceptions are also important in marketing. The areas mentioned above are those that can be improved (whether through warnings or calls for preventive action) to increase consumer satisfaction while reducing risks. From a marketing communication perspective, decision-makers should consider whether to include safety as an image element in official marketing communications. Based on the responses of the tourists interviewed, it can be said that safety is not present in the perceived image of Hungary, but it is possible to consciously incorporate it as an attraction, although there is a risk that external influences (e.g. epidemics) may cause a change in a moment. I do not therefore recommend its inclusion as a separate element, but can consider it as a solution that permeates the image elements.

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