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INVESTIGATION OF THE INTERNAL SYSTEM OF
SLOW TOURISM

Theses of the Doctoral Theses

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1 BACKGROUND, RELEVANCE, OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES OF THE WORK

1.1 Background and Relevance of the Work

My previous professional work led to my choice of topic. In the first 10 years of my professional career, I dealt with health tourism developments, and in addition and after that, I was an instructor for the first health tourism specialization in college education in the country, for 20 years. I am not only close to those areas of health tourism that represent infrastructure, but also the holistic approach. As a result, a straight path led to the slow trends and one of the domestic professional work in cooperation based on slow principles. Since 2018, I have been a founding and board member of the Alföld Slow Association in Békés County, where I do professional work. In the slow trends, the holistic approach is present in the same way as in health tourism, and these two areas are connected in me and in my work.

Tourism weaves through our lives. The unexpected events of the past two decades have presented to completely new challenges both international and domestic tourism. Although there were smaller or larger setbacks in connection with these critical events, the most decisive was the health pandemic that occurred in 2020, which reduced the number of international tourist arrivals by 72%. 2024 is the year by which, according to the forecast, tourism will regenerate. It is a well-known fact that tourism can recover relatively easily and quickly, because people basically have the desire to travel and

vacation. How they can do this and at what distances is another question. The economic crisis of 2008-10 brought the appearance of new tourism products such as proximity tourism with itself, which includes staycation (tourist staying in a place) or even workcation (working during vacation).

The critical situations of the last few years drew attention to the subject of the dissertation, slow tourism, apart from the fact that international organizations have been operating for several decades and, since 2011, domestic slow organizations as well. Thanks to this, slow tourism and slow movements themselves have become the focus of research, especially since the beginning of the 2000s, so many conceptual demarcations have been created on the subject, but there is still no uniform conceptual system.

1.2 Objectives and Hypotheses

The **main goal** of the dissertation was to develop **an unified conceptual system** in connection with slow tourism, and a figure of *The system of the slow tourism* was created, which provides practical help for the conscious development of slow destinations.

The first sub-goal was to prove with statistical methods that slow tourists and non-slow tourists can be separated from each other with the help of a questionnaire compiled on the basis of the literature.

In connection with this, the goal is to create a Slow Tourist Index and clarify the concept of the slow tourist.

The second sub-goal is to investigate whether slow destinations can be identified in our country and to determine what makes a slow destination slow. The aim is to clarify the concept of slow destination and formulate a Slow Destination Criteria List.

Hypotheses:

H1. Among the domestic tourist destinations, it is mainly the non-mainline destinations that see potential for the development of slow tourism.

H2. The awareness of international and domestic slow organizations and regions is low among the respondents.

H3. The questionnaire created for the questionnaire research is suitable for distinguishing slow and non-slow tourists among those who complete it.

H4. Among the identified slow tourists, several different buyer personas can be clearly distinguished based on their demographic and personality characteristics, thus enabling a slow tourism destination organisation to carry out more targeted marketing activities.

H5. The travel habits of slow tourists and their choice of destination can be used to identify the necessary services of a slow destination.

H6. Slow tourism can be defined by the concepts of slow tourist and slow destination. The slow tourism approach.

2 RESEARCH CONTENT, METHODOLOGY AND RATIONALE

The theoretical background of the thesis moves from the broader to the narrower topic, i.e. from the tourism system to the conceptual definition of slow tourism, and then through the slow destination to the slow tourist. The reason for this is twofold: on the one hand, it follows a kind of chronological order, since slow tourism was first identified in the international literature, followed in roughly parallel fashion by the identification of destination and tourist. On the other hand, it was in this way that the conceptual background to slow tourism was placed within the framework of tourism.

In contrast, the research part and the confirmation of hypotheses follow a reverse logical order. This is due to the sequentiality of the research, the diversity of the research methods used and the fact that the identification and definition of the two internal elements (tourist and destination) led to the concept of slow tourism and the creation of the slow tourism diagram.

The secondary research was conducted between 2020 and 2024 through an analytical review of the national and foreign literature available online and in print, most of which has been published and used in this thesis. The results listed here have formed the basis for the main objective of the thesis.

To achieve the two sub-objectives, a systematic literature review was carried out in late 2023 and a questionnaire survey in early 2024.

Research questions were formulated for both the secondary and primary research.

Research issues in secondary research:

1. What crises hit domestic tourism in the 2000s?
2. How has slow tourism been defined so far? Can the concept be standardised?
3. How can *The Tourism System Figure* be complemented in the context of today's challenges?
4. How has slow tourism been defined so far? Can the concept be standardised?
5. How have slow tourists been defined so far? Can the concept be standardised?

Further research was conducted in 2023-2024, after which the received data and results were evaluated and processed. Systematic literature analysis was used as a qualitative method in the research to analyze domestic scientific and professional sources in connection with the identification and planned development of slow destinations. The primary quantitative method was the questionnaire survey, which took place online, with the participation of 536 people, of which 534 evaluable data lines remained after data cleaning. The sample is not representative.

Qualitative and quantitative research questions by theme:

1. Regarding a slow destination:

1. What kind of research has been done in relation to the concept of the slow destination in Hungary? Including:

- a. What Hungarian-language publications and strategies have been prepared on the subject of slow tourism in our country, which also named settlements and regions?
 - b. In connection with which settlements and regions did slow tourism arise as a development direction?
2. How well known are international slow movements and domestic slow organizations? Do respondents know the municipalities with slow maps? Do the respondents recognise settlements or landscapes already involved in slow tourism today in relation to a specific facility?
2. *Regarding slow tourists:*
 1. Can a slow tourist be identified among the respondents based on a research conducted among domestic respondents?
 2. If so, can one or a few specific customer personality profiles be created from the identified slow tourists?
3. *Regarding slow tourism:*
 1. What do slow tourists want from a slow destination?
 2. What makes a slow destination slow?
 3. How can slow tourism be defined in relation to the criteria of slow destination and slow tourist?
 4. What can be included in *The slow tourism system* figure? What are the characteristics of the internal elements?

3 THE RESULT, THESESES

3.1 Innovative Scientific Results

Preparation of a national slow map of existing and planned slow destinations.

The production of these two maps was useful because it clearly shows - even for decision-makers - the importance of this tourism product now and in the coming years (Figures 16-17).

Proposed definition of Slow Destination

Slow Destination: can be an urban or rural destination where sustainable and conscious authentic tourism product development and management takes place, using slow tourism models.

The services are primarily based on authentic local values: restaurants using local ingredients, indoor and outdoor spaces showcasing local (including agro-) culture and customs, small-scale accommodation run by local residents and local labour.

Suggested name: slow destination or destination with a slow approach.

Proposed Definition of Slow Tourist

Based on primary and secondary research, a *slow tourist* is a responsible tourist,

- who is consciously interested in authentic experiences (local values: culture, handicrafts, food and nature),

- travel to and within destinations in an environmentally conscious way,
- tend to visit smaller, rural destinations and stay longer in smaller, rural accommodation.
- Whose motivation to travel is based on cognitive needs: immersion in authentic experiences, but also includes revitalisation, self-development and self-reflection in their daily life, and is open to education as a result of their personality.
- She is sensitive and emotionally engaged with the local population and the destination, and is familiar with the slow movement and related organisations.
- Dedicates time and money to travel every year.

Suggested name: slow tourist or slow tourist.

Purely slow tourists are minimal (14% of respondents) but exist according to the survey. Tourists' behaviour may be "slow" in some cases, in other cases they may even function as mass tourists. Slow is also a matter of attitude and lifestyle in this respect, but there may be external factors that prevent a tourist from behaving as slow (e.g. parents going on holiday with their children).

Proposed definition of slow tourism

Slow tourism is based on the principles and philosophy of the slow movement, a conscious approach that permeates the entire tourism system. Human-scale, ethical tourism.

It harmonises well with health tourism, cultural tourism, green tourism, rural tourism, gastronomy and some elements of active tourism (Figure 39).

Suggested name: slow tourism or slow tourism.

The New System of Tourism Figure

In the context of the challenges and opportunities of the new millennium, Márton Lengyel's figure *The system of tourism* was rethought and supplemented, and the diagram *The new system of tourism* (Figure 40) was created, which eventually helped to develop *The system of the slow tourism* figure.

3.2 New Results

Development of a criteria system for slow destinations

A detailed description of the Criteria System is given in chapter 4.3.4 and the full table in Annex 9.2.6. 7 main criteria have been developed, with a further 46 sub-criteria. The main criteria are:

1. social, economic and environmental sustainability (with 11 sub-criteria),
2. strengthening the local economy (with 7 sub-criteria),
3. authentic experiences (9 sub-criteria),

4. new approaches to destination development (4 sub-criteria),
5. new approach to marketing (8 sub-criteria),
6. education (2 sub-criteria),
7. stronger local community involvement (5 sub-criteria).

Identifying Slow customer personality types

Based on the research, 4 male and 4 female and, after merging, 2 male and 2 female customer personality types were identified. Their detailed presentation is in 4.2.6. can be found in chapter 26-33, and 9.2.8. in the annex. Based on customer profiles, destinations aiming to develop slow tourism can conduct more targeted and conscious marketing communication in order to reach slow tourists.

Design of the Slow tourism system figure

Based on *The new tourism system* figure and the results of primary and secondary research, *The slow tourism system figure* (Fig. 41) was created, which helps the conscious planning, review, development and operation of slow destinations. It also provides an opportunity for the management organization to provide continuous feedback.

3.3 Theses

After confirming the hypotheses, the following theses were formulated:

T1. Most of the domestic (existing and planned) slow destinations are located outside the priority tourist destinations.

T2. The awareness of international and domestic slow movements is below 30% among respondents. Domestic slow regions, municipalities and their visibility cover a wide spectrum, depending on the current involvement of the municipality in the tourism circuit. On this basis, a proposed definition of a slow destination has been formulated (chapter 5.1.2).

T3. With minor clarifications, the questionnaire is suitable for identifying slow tourists and non-slow tourists in other destinations as well.

T4. A buyer persona can be formed from the slow tourists identified on the basis of the questionnaire based on their demographic and personal characteristics. The surveyed characteristics are partially sufficient for grouping, questions related to motivation are still necessary, but sufficient for targeted marketing.

Based on these, the proposed definition of the slow tourist was formulated (Chapter 5.1.3).

T5. The travel habits and destination choices of slow tourists provide a basis for the specification of services in slow destinations. The majority of slow tourists like to explore several smaller towns during their trip, but also like to explore the values of a larger city.

T6. Based on the research, more precise definitions have emerged, which have contributed to the development of the Slow tourism system diagram. Slow tourism is an approach that permeates all elements of the system, not just the supply and demand side.

4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The thesis focused on the research of 3 main areas: slow tourism, slow tourist and slow destination.

A **slow destination** is not always slow. It has slow elements, but it can also have mass tourism elements. Tourists who are interested in health tourism mostly participate in mass tourism, especially during hot summer days. But a larger spa may also offer services aimed at slowing down. A good example of this is the slow map, the marketing of which still needs to be improved based on the research. Previous tourism products can also be slowed down. This is a way of looking at the destination and its management.

A **slow tourist** is not always a slow tourist either. It has identifiable characteristics, and on certain trips the tourist can function as a slow tourist, but not always. Despite all this, the research confirms that those who approach life with a kind of slowness consciously look for tourist destinations with a similar service approach. On the other hand, those destinations that think in this direction must consciously prepare for this, with a strategic approach.

I do not consider slow tourism a niche product and I do not consider it an umbrella. I consider slow tourism to be a tourism trend, a way of thinking that permeates all elements of the tourism system, from

external elements to internal elements, so not only supply and demand. It is a different form of tourism than the ones we have had so far, and in my opinion it is not alternative tourism and not mass tourism. That is why the path of the research led to further thinking about the system figure.

The proposals were formulated in relation to several areas: to the strengthening of slow tourism cooperation and their marketing activities, to the criteria system that helps the management of the region, and to the questionnaire. In addition, the possibility of linking destinations with other tourism products (e.g. health tourism) to slow tourism was formulated.

As a result of the research, it is recommended to use **the word „lassú” (slow in Hungarian) instead of the word slow** in the future. In the case of the three examined areas, slow or slow approach indicators are also recommended: slow or slow approach tourism, slow or slow approach tourist, slow or slow approach destination.

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