THE BARANYA GREENWAY AS THEMATIC TOURISM PRODUCT AND REGIONAL BRAND IN CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

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Abstract. In the present study, the authors reveal and present an innovative (eco) rural tourism product brand of the South Transdanubian Region, Hungary from the point of view of product development and branding. Since tourism seeks for newer and newer alternatives for mass tourism, we believe that one of the tools for local development and local involvement can be the application of the innovative forms of ecotourism as mostly bottom-up initiatives. The study, based on our earlier research and publication results, provides an insight to the general tourism characteristics of the region and then, introduces the greenway movement together with a practice, the Baranya Greenway with a special attention to its branding procedure.

Keywords: branding, ecotourism, South Transdanubia, greenway, rural tourism, innovation
1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most recent products of thematic route development are the so called “greenways” which were launched in Hungary only in from 2011-2012. In our article we lay the emphasis on introducing this alternative form of tourism development, especially advantageous at the rural areas, by demonstrating a cross-border cooperation program on the Hungarian-Croatian border at the Baranya/Baranja area.

Since, parallel with the development and stages of our research and application of the greenway, we already published or will be publishing (accepted for publication) our former results in this topic, the present article focuses mainly on the importance of regional branding and reports our preliminary results in achieving and applying the methodology in connection with the so called Baranya Greenway.

Besides tourism development, the presented initiatives rely on forming a sustainable society and a healthy lifestyle as well where the major focus is on strengthening the co-operations between the different actors, the community development of the local population, strengthening of the non-motorised transport forms and heritage tourism of course at both sides of the border.

2. METHODOLOGY

The relevant data and sources of information were gathered by our research team from the first half of 2013 and finished in the second half of 2014. During this period of time first we carried out numerous field trips on the one hand to collect and create a thorough attraction survey (indicating all the relevant attractions of the region) and on the other hand to appoint the exact route of the greenway. This latter activity was greatly supported by GIS methods as well since the route consist mainly byways and dirt roads also strengthening the concept of sustainability. During the field trips we carried out interviews and deep interviews with the local population, the possible stakeholders and NGOs in order to receive exact and relevant information on the needs and demands of these actors. As for desk research we focused on the scientific elaboration of the collected data which will be discussed later in this paper.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Tourism in South Transdanubia

3.1.1. General introduction to the tourism of the South Transdanubian Region, Hungary

The South Transdanubian (planning statistical) Region is situated in the southwest part of Hungary constituting three counties, namely Somogy, Baranya and Tolna. The region possesses two tourism regions, namely the southern parts of Lake Balaton and the South Transdanubian Tourism Region.

The analysed region of South Transdanubia is a lagging or backward region since the change of the regime, especially from 2000, concerning both economy and demographic
aspects. It means that all the three counties of the NUTS II region are so-called internal peripheries, where the transport corridors are decisive in economic and social aspects alike.

If we consider the tourism demand we have to highlight that while the South Transdanubian (planning-statistical) Region together with the southern shores of Lake Balaton is one of the most favourable regions of Hungary, without the northern parts of Somogy county (Lake Balaton) the area shows rather decreasing statistics of little account. (Aubert et al., 2011, Szabó, G. and Csapó, J., 2012).

The tourism of the region is highly concentrated in space since the south shores of Lake Balaton account for some 57% of the total number of tourist arrivals, while the Pécs-Villány-Siklós region attracts another 28%. The second major destination of South Transdanubia is the Pécs-Mecsek and the Siklós-Villány micro-regions.

Based on 2012 data (Fig. 1.), the commercial accommodations of the South Transdanubian Tourism Region generate only 4.3% of Hungary’s guestflow and 3.9% of the country’s guest nights. Nearly 80% of the visitors are domestic tourists, while compared to Hungary’s domestic tourism it counts only 6.4% and from the international visitor flow only 2.9%. The most important sending destinations are Germany and Austria. The accentuated destination of the region such as Pécs or Harkány are unable to get into the first ten most visited cities of the country, Pécs was the 16th, Harkány was the 19th in 2012 (Magyar Turizmus Zrt 2013, CSO/KSH 2013).

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![Fig. 1. Tourist arrivals (A) and guest nights (N) in the tourism regions of Hungary (first data=absolute numbers in %; second data change in % compared to previous year)](Source: Tourism in Hungary, 2013)
The volume of the guest flow shows a decrease which can be detected in the number of guest nights and the mean length of stay. The reasons for these unfavourable processes can be detected as follows:

- Small commercial accommodations supply from which mainly the high quality category hotels are missing,
- A great volume and significant losing of supply which were also negatively affected by the unfavourable international and national economic environment,
- The lack of health tourism destination with international or national importance and the cancelled modernisation of the existing spas (Csapó, J. and Jónás-Berki, M. 2011).

In the latter years the region built its tourism marketing strategy and supply on anthropocentricity, the landscape values, the quiet and peaceful countryside and health preservation so the highlighted tourism products are health tourism, cultural tourism, ecotourism, wine tourism, rural tourism and the different forms of active tourism.

### 3.2. Conceptual Paradigm and Methodology

#### 3.2.1. The Greenway Movement - Conceptual background

According to the Sopron Declaration, Environmental Partnership for Sustainable Development (2006) „Greenways are multifunctional trails, developed in both urban and rural areas, for non-motorized users typically leading along linear green corridors, historic trade routes, rivers and railways. They are managed by local people in order to encourage sustainable development and healthy lifestyle. Greenways provide a framework for community-based initiatives and projects related to nature conservation, cultural heritage preservation, sustainable tourism and mobility. Greenways seek to address needs of locals and visitors and to provide a positive contribution to the local economy.” (Sopron Declaration, Environmental Partnership for Sustainable Development, 1st July 2006).

We also agree with the concept of Lille Declaration, European Greenways Association (2000) according to which „Greenways are communication routes reserved exclusively for non-motorised journeys, developed in an integrated manner which enhances both the environment and quality of life of the surrounding area. These routes should meet satisfactory standards of width, gradient and surface condition to ensure that they are both user-friendly and low-risk for users of all abilities.” (Lille Declaration, European Greenways Association, 12th September 2000).

We would like to accentuate that the greenways are the most recent products of alternative tourism (quality, empathy, environment consciousness). This ecotourism product concept is an initiation for creating sustainable society and healthy lifestyle, for strengthening of international cooperation, for local community development, for strengthening sustainable transport forms and also strengthening heritage tourism.

Very important that this is a bottom-up initiative, a thematic route created by the local community for tourists who are interested in nature and culture (they also consider their protection as priority), and who prefer alternative forms of transport, such as hiking, cycling, equestrian very importantly on the bypasses and accommodation roads.
As for the settlements of the greenway it introduces the local attractions, monuments, customs and heritage, organises the events and festivals of their cultural heritage and offer local products for the tourist.

We determined three pillars for the greenways as it is shown in Fig 2.

![Fig 2. The three pillars of the greenways](Ed. Szabó, G. and Csapó, J. 2014)

The three pillars of course rely on each other and so their complexity provides the basis for the holistic tourism development approach of the greenways.

### 3.2.2. Shortly on the brands in tourism

Before we try to determine the concept of tourism brands, first we have to take into consideration the definition of the brands in general.

Hoffmann, D. (2010) presents Armstrong, G. and Kotler, P. (2003) in connection with describing the market relevance of brands: “... branding has become so strong that today hardly nothing goes unbranded. ... Brand names help consumers identify products, ... tell ... something about product quality ..., ... brandname and trademark provide legal protection ...”
The Baranya Greenway as thematic tourism product and regional brand

Also according to Armstrong, G. and Kotler, P. (2003) “A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of these, that identifies the maker or seller of a product. ... Brands have higher brand equity to the extent that they have higher brand loyalty, name awareness, perceived quality, strong brand associations, and other assets such as patents, trademarks and channel relationships.” Kotler (1994) states the brands are “created to mark the material product or service and to make it differ from competitive offers”.

Competition is becoming more and more strong among the destinations both concerning the supplied tourism products and the applied marketing techniques as well. That is the main reason why in the – very much “oversupplied” – world market one would need a well recognisable, authentic, ethic and sustainable destination brand (Nemzetgazdasági Minisztérium, 2011).

Panasiuk, A. (2006) states that, the tourism brand can be understood either in a narrow and a broader sense as well:

- "narrow, where the brand is treated analogically to the brand used in other economic sectors (industry and service),
- broad, referring to the areas and tourism attractions, as a complex of actions pointed in a local (regional) tourism product.” (Panasiuk, A. 2006)

3.3. The introduction to the IPA Cross-Border Greenway Development program (Croatia-Hungary

3.3.1. The Baranya Greenway

The successful tender of the Baranya Greenway was achieved in March, 2012 as part of the Croatia-Hungary IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2007-2013, tendered by the Gyeregyalog.hu Association.

The project partners of the greenway are: Baranya Megyei Falusi Turizmus Közhasznú Szövetség (Village Tourism Public Utility Association of Baranya County), Bakonya Község Önkormányzata (Local Government of Bakonya), Horvátországi Magyar Vállalkozók Szövetsége (Association of Hungarian Entrepreneurs in Croatia), Hercegszőlős (Knezevi Vinogradi) Járás Önkormányzata (Local Government of Knezevi Vinogradi).

The territory of this initiative covered regions from Osijek to Western Mecsek (Bakonya) (Fig. 3.) in the two countries of Hungary and Croatia. The major geographical areas of the greenway are the Western-Mecsek, the South-Baranya-hills, the Villány-Siklós Wine Route, the Bóly-Mohács Wine Route, the Danube-Drava National Park, the Baranya-Triangle – Kopácsi-meadow and the areas along the Drava.
All the 18 settlements on the Hungarian side (Bakonya, Kővágótöttős, Kővágószőlős, Cserkút, Pécs, Pogány, Egerág, Újpetre, Palkonya, Villánykövesd, Villány, Márok, Töttős, Nagynyárád, Majs, Sátorhely, Kőlked, Udvar) belong to Baranya county. The route itself has a northwest-southeast direction in Hungary and mainly a north-south direction in the Croatian side covering the settlements of Dvor, Batina, Zmajevac, Kneževi Vinogradi, Karanac, Kő, Lug, Vardarac, Kopačevo, Bilje and Osijek.

If we consider the attraction structure of the route, and the geographically related settlements, first we have to accentuate that we can distinguish between 3 types of settlements: regional centres (Pécs, Osijek), micro regional centres (Villány, Mohács, Beli Manastir) and small sized rural settlements. Of course they provide a different kind of attraction structure which serves as a basis for the differentiated tourism supply. (*Table 1*)
Table 1. The tourism product supply of the settlements along the Baranya Greenway

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<tr>
<th>Types of settlements along the route</th>
<th>Types of attractions (both Hungary and Croatia)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Regional centres (most versatile)</strong></td>
<td>• cultural tourism&lt;br&gt;  o heritage tourism&lt;br&gt;  o architecture&lt;br&gt;  o city tourism&lt;br&gt;  o events and festivals&lt;br&gt;  o gastronomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Micro regional centres (differentiated but on a smaller scale)</strong></td>
<td>• cultural tourism&lt;br&gt;  o heritage tourism&lt;br&gt;  o architecture&lt;br&gt;  o city tourism&lt;br&gt;  o events and festivals&lt;br&gt;  o gastronomy&lt;br&gt;  o wine regions&lt;br&gt;  o local food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Villages (usually concentrates on one or two tourism products)</strong></td>
<td>• rural tourism&lt;br&gt;  o ecotourism&lt;br&gt;  o village tourism&lt;br&gt;  o agro tourism&lt;br&gt;  • active tourism&lt;br&gt;  o cycling&lt;br&gt;  o equestrian&lt;br&gt;  o fishing&lt;br&gt;  o water tourism&lt;br&gt;  o rowing, boating&lt;br&gt;  o gastronomy&lt;br&gt;  o wine regions&lt;br&gt;  o local food</td>
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(Source: ed. by Csapó, J. and Szabó, G. 2015)

After finishing several important steps in the creation process (scientific position analysis, the track of the greenway has been appointed, a webpage, introductory trips has been organised) we focused on the branding opportunities.

### 3.4. The branding process of the Baranya Greenway

We believe that the introduction of the branding process in this paper of the Baranya Greenway is useful both for the academic sphere and for the practice as well since this is first of all a new initiation and also because it strongly correlates with numerous regional development principles of the EU, in connection with regional brand creation and cross-border cooperation as well.

According to our ideas the branding process involved destination image, brand identity development, destination positioning and of course destination branding, a process used to develop a unique identity and personality that is different from all the competitive destinations and at last place branding development (Fig. 4.). Due to these processes the
given place can and should become a marketable product and the settlement or the settlements will also appear as a brand.

Fig. 4. The major elements of the branding process at the Baranya Greenway
(Ed. Csapó, J. 2014)

For this we have to add associated and integrated products in the development agenda, and also have to analyse the „added values” and its elements such as the experiences of the potential consumer, the physical reality of the settlement, the culture and past of the settlement, the notions and image about the population of the settlement and the image of the settlement about itself (settlement identity).

Of course by achieving all this, the major aim is to demonstrate competence and uniqueness of the given region.

From the brand creation process we would like to demonstrate the creation of the logo variations of the Baranya Greenway since this is a very remarkable step in bringing into notoriety a region. Fig. 5. demonstrates the steps of the logo creation process (since figures can be published black and white, please concern that the colour of the figure is green).

Here one can see step by step the process of the logo creation (carried out by the authors) – one of the most important tools in order to market a region (the final version is on the right bottom). The logo itself represents with its colour (green) the closeness to nature, the hilly and also plain areas of the Baranya/Baranja region, and also emphasizes the alternative forms of transport with which one can travel around this thematic route.
Fig. 5. The logo variations (development) of the Baranya Greenway. Top left and top right: initial ideas, bottom: final logo

Source: ed. by the authors

As preliminary results we collected the already available major achievements of the project and the ones that are priorities but should be achieved in the near future in Fig 6.
4. CONCLUSIONS, FURTHER CHALLENGES

According to Fig. 4, in the branding/marketing process we already achieved such results concerning brand identity development and destination positioning as the creation of the common sign system (logo) or a joint webpage and organisation of trips and joint programmes.

A further, very important question is how could we activate the settlements along the greenway? In order to involve the local population/community we already started a bicycle lending program where the local service providers are tendering the altogether 70 bicycles of the host of the greenway and provide them to their visitors.

A further important step in the organisation to attract visitors is the stronger appearance in social marketing, social media and other type of communication with non-regular methods or for instance organising gastro-festivals with Facebook campaigns.

As a summary of our results we can state that all the mentioned factors organised to a network (with the more and more popular gastronomy festivals and cross border co-operations) provides a new trend of (rural tourism) development in the region which is very much needing it a being a complex periphery of both related countries.

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**Fig. 6. Major achievements of the Baranya Greenway project**

*(Ed. Csápany, J. 2015)*

**Achieved**
- Survey of cultural and heritage attractions and services along the Baranya Greenway
- Creation of an attraction survey
- Service providers’ database on the complete route
- The track of the greenway has been appointed
- Creation of a webpage, [http://www.baranyazoldut.eu/](http://www.baranyazoldut.eu/)
- Database and descriptions
- Popularising the project and the greenway
- The creation of the graphic visualisation (e.g. logo)
- Organisation of art camps and nature based camps (for Croatian and Hungarian children)
- Purchasing bicycles and „júrta” buildings (ancient Hungarian round shaped buildings)

**Not yet achieved**
- Information signs and boards will be placed
- Creation of promotional material
- Organisation of eco events/festivals
- Eco tourism Visitor Centre in Vörösmarty
- Eco tourism Exhibition Centre in Bakonya
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