TOURISM AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT – THE CASE OF MÓRAHALOM¹

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Abstract. Nowadays tourism is often a key element of urban and regional competitiveness. The aim of this study is to present how can become a less-known town also a tourist attraction with taking into consideration the local characteristics during the planning and development processes. The paper presents the case of Mórahalom, which is a small town in Southern Hungary. Few decades ago agriculture was the main economic sector in the settlement but since then massive investments have been put into the spa industry. These investments have accelerated the development of Mórahalom and quickly restructured its local economy and society, too. The paper is based on the content analysis of the local media and development documents, survey and local statistical data analysis. According to the results the cumulative inter-dependent developments in the spa industry of Mórahalom have produced a multiplier effect which has led to a strong increase in tourist arrivals or income tax. The visitors are satisfied with the spa and the services offered in Mórahalom. Therefore, the town has all the assets to be competitive in the tourism market which is a key factor of the local development.

Keywords: spa tourism, competitiveness, urban success, integrated development, tourist attractions

1. INTRODUCTION

The role of tourism is becoming more and more important in the lives of modern societies, as it is the primary form of spending leisure time. Therefore, it is vital in Hungary as well to build upon this continuously growing sector as the positive effect of tourism can prevail not only at national or regional level, but also at local level, too.

In the last decades more and more institutions are encouraged to take advantage of tourism also in Hungary. In Mórahalom, which was a traditional agricultural town, has been

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recognized that it is necessary to develop other sectors too, if the settlement would like to keep its success in the future. Exploiting the thermal conditions, spa developments began and a health centre was built in the last ten years. Thanks to these investments, the health tourism has started to boom in the settlement and it has become one of the most dynamically developing town in the region of Csongrád.

The aim of this study is to present that how can a less-known town become a tourist attraction with adequate planning and improvement strategies. The main question was that what kind of possibilities are available in a tourism-based local development? What are the results of the spa development in Mórahalom? What other developments connected to tourism or thanks to its incomes? Mórahalom is a good example of how tourism can thrive even in a small town with continuous and conscious development.

2. METHODOLOGY

Scientific literature has been overviewed in order to be able to answer particular questions related to the effects of tourism. The data collection had two main objectives: the analysis of the offer and of the demand. To analyse the offer development of Mórahalom I prepared a content analysis of the local media and processed the statistics gathered from the Hungarian Central Statistical Office and from the Local Government. There is only one guesthouse in the town, which has a database since 2007 and where – besides other things – the guests' addresses are registered. With using the database of the guesthouse, as one of the most important accommodation of the town, my aim was to define the main catchment areas. In order to analyse the demand for a more detailed assessment a questionnaire survey was made among the spa guests. This survey lasted 5 days in the summer 2010, and 255 people were asked about – among other questions – their satisfaction with the services and quality of the spa. The survey was filled out by interviewers and the response was voluntary and anonymous. The interviewers tried to choose the respondents nearly equal proportion in age and gender (finally the women were overrepresented). During the analysis the completed questionnaires were also used to compare with an earlier survey made in 2008.

3. THE ROLE OF TOURISM IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

3.1. The main processes of tourism

Tourism is one of the most dynamic sectors of the world economy (Ramukumba, T. et al. 2012). According to the data of the UNWTO (World Tourism Organization) in 1950 the international tourist arrivals were 25.3 million\(^2\), while in 2010 grew up to 939 million\(^3\) and the international tourism receipts reached the 710 billion euro\(^4\). The role of Europe in the world tourism is traditionally important, even today it gives more than the half of the global revenues.

An important element of the global demand trends that the participation of elder people in the tourism industry is growing rapidly. In this context, the demand for comfort

\(^4\) http://www.e-unwto.org/content/q868px1207550118/fulltext.pdf?page=1
and safety is increasing as well as the demand for convenient forms of transport (García-Altés, A. 2005). There is a stronger pretension for calmer relaxation and increasing the demand for the specific, individual products (Aubert, A. – Berki, M., 2007, Boros, L. – Pál, V. 2010). Since elder people prefer travelling in the off season, because they do not like crowds, and leisure is at their disposal any time, thus increasing the participation of elder people in the tourism industry has also the potential to reduce seasonality (Mester, T., 2003). The health awareness also appears in Hungary more and more widely. Although the free time of people has decreased, their purchasing power has increased in recent decades, so they are willing (and able) to spend large amounts to improve their state of health (Smith, M. – Puczkó, L., 2010, Cohen, M. – Bodeker, G. 2008).

About the supply trends it is said that embracing the traditions has a remarkable tourist attraction meaning for visitors, at the same time it is also increasing the welfare of local residents, and linking the community closer (Hanusz, Á. – Pristyák, E., 2007). The growth of consumer power forces enterprises to become consumer-orientated, as a result the quality and diversity of tourism supply is improving (Puczkó, L. – Rátz, T., 2000).

3.2. The economic effect of tourism

The economic impact of tourism can be examined by the tourists’ expenditure mainly. Based on the data of the Hungarian National Bank in 1998 the foreign exchange revenues from tourism in Hungary were 1.9 billion euro, while in 2008 they reached 4.1 billion euro. According to the statistics, the spending per capita is increasing in proportion with the length of stay, and with the quality and quantity of the available services. Therefore, tourism with conscious planning can have several positive effects in a particular locality (Wall, G. – Mathieson, A., 2006). One example is the multiplier effect, which shows the secondary effect of tourism, like increasing tourism revenues start a chain reaction that generates more activity (and revenues) than the original increase. Also a positive economic impact is the higher price level: in the tourist season the prices are growing to produce the annual income for the service providers. The wider tourist season is, the less need to increase prices, which is more favourable for the visitors. Hence, it is worth to establish deseasonalization services which can be used during the whole year. The other positive effect that has to be mentioned is that tourism can create new jobs. It is also important that tourism encourages enterprises and restructures the economy. Thanks to all of these mentioned above tourism helps to improve the quality of life of the local residents (Dávid, L. et al., 2003, Puczkó, L. – Rátz, T., 2005). Therefore, in the Hungarian economic development tourism is considered as a potentially successful sector, because it serves to achieve more targets at the same time: for example, creating new jobs, improving the balance of payments or regional development (Michalkó, G., 2001, Budai, Z., 2002).

The appropriate tourism development can cause a radical change in the life of a settlement. Mórahalom is a good example of this, because twenty years ago nobody considered it a tourist destination, but in 2009 more than 35 thousand guest nights were spent in the town, which was the second best result in ‘Csongrád’ County5 (only the county seat, Szeged, had better results) (Délmagyarország, 03.3.2010, 1). But naturally the development path of Mórahalom is not unique in the country. A similar example is Vásárosnamény (located in North-Eastern Hungary), which was an agricultural area for a

5 This is the name of the county (NUTS 3 level in Hungary) where Mórahalom is located.
long time, but nowadays succeed in tourism, while the traditional agriculture has been declining (Hanusz, Á. – Pristyák E., 2007). Another good example is Kehidakustány (located in Western Hungary, near Lake Balaton), which almost went bankrupt in the mid-1990s, but thanks to the spa development the negative trends were managed to be reversed (Dávid, L. et al., 2003).

3.3. The relationship between tourism and regional development
In the literature there are different views about the relationship between tourism and regional development (especially about the directions, nature and significance of the relationship). According to Aubert, A. (2001) in the services-focused economies the regional development and tourism development is strongly connected. The need for integrated development is confirmed by the earlier mentioned multiplier effect, as the tourism impacts on the whole socio-economic system. Péteri, L.’s (2003) opinion is that tourism is a “typical intersectoral, interdepartmental and international activity”, which is closely linked to regional development and to spatial planning. Michalkó, G. (2001) also points out to the intersectoral character, which means that tourism is not only the resource of regional development, but also benefits from it. In the research of Hanusz, Á. – Pristyák, E. (2007) it has also concluded that tourism has a significant impact on spatial development, which can be widely observed. Csordás, L. (2003) has also agreed – according to his researches in the Hungarian Great Plain - that tourism can be a key element of the regional and urban development and of the rural renewal. In my opinion, the regional development can be not only the result of tourism development, but also the reason of it, because the existence of the attraction alone is not sufficient to tourism. It means that there is a strong interaction between the two areas, and it is impossible to establish a priority ranking. Beside tourism development, regional development is also necessary, because the advanced infra- and superstructure, the appropriate public safety, hygiene conditions and institutions are the basic assumptions of the motivation for tourism. That is why in development programmes in Hungary tourism has priority from the regional development point of view.

4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MÓRAHALOM

Mórahalom is located in the South-East of Hungary, in the South-West of Csongrád County (Figure 1), and it is 20 kilometres far from Szeged (which is the county seat).
Figure 1: The location of Mórahalom

The town did not enjoy the positive effects of tourism for a long time, because the conformation of the sector is a result of a long and specific development path. This development path is remarkable, because 120 years ago Mórahalom did not exist as an independent settlement and now it is a sub-regional centre with an own catchment area. It has become one of the most attractive tourist destinations of Csongrád County (Csordás, L. 2009).

According to the census in 1960 the population of Mórahalom was 6142 people and from this the inner area population was 1799 people (Szécsy, Gy., 1967). Thereafter, the population did not change significantly, but the proportion was reversed. In 2008, from the 5948 residents 4417 live in the inner area and only 1531 live in the marge of the town. This is caused on one hand by the increasing of the inner area. On the other hand, the developing central area has attracted more and more people to settle down there. According to the latest data (01/01/2011), the current population is 6090 people.

In 1960s from the 6142 residents 4895 worked as a famer, which shows the strong agricultural character of the town in that time. Nowadays the employment structure is much more differentiated thanks to the important role of tourism in creating jobs and altering the economic structure. The vocational school used to trained agricultural unskilled labour, but now provides education for the tourism sector (training village hosts and masseurs) which shows clearly the settlement changing from agriculture-oriented to tourism-oriented. The development is also linked with administrative changes: Mórahalom in 1970 became a large village, in 1984 a large village with town rights, then in 1989, on the first day of March it was declared a town (Mészáros, R., 1997, Boros, L. et al., 2006, Boros, L. et al., 2007).

6 http://portal.ksh.hu/pls/portal/?C.P.hnt2.telep?nn=04349
5. TOURISM DEVELOPMENTS IN MÓRAHALOM

5.1. Institutional background
To begin a planned and organized tourism development in a settlement, it is necessary to establish proper institutional framework (Hanusz, Á. – Prístyák, E., 2007). The Tourism Association of Mórahalom was founded in 1996, whose aim was to activate Mórahalom as a tourist destination in the tourism market. In the following year – as a third in Csongrád County – a Tourist Information Office was established. Since 1999, the town is represented in the travel exhibition to inform the potential visitors about the available services. During a few years the institutions were established which have key role in the tourism organization and in the presentation of attractions.

5.2. Natural attractions of Mórahalom
Naturally, Mórahalom’s largest tourist attraction is the central located spa, but this is not the only worthwhile attraction. The area is also attractive for its natural values, which could play an important role to offer a complex tourism product for the visitors of Mórahalom. At the periphery of Mórahalom the flora is extremely rich; the meadows are filled with nationally rare plants, like orchids, or some species of the gladioluses, gentians. From the botanical point of view, the surrounding of Mórahalom is the most researched area in Csongrád County (Juhász, A., 1992). The most valuable areas from the ecotourism aspects are the protected ‘Csipaki’, ‘Csoda’ and ‘Tanaszi’ meadow, over and above the ‘Madarász’ and ‘Nagyszéksős’ Lake. In and around Mórahalom seven types tour routes were established and three educational paths were created. The so-called ‘Bölömbika’ educational path should be emphasized, because besides the observation of birds, the visit of the unique buffalo reservation is also included. The buffalo reservation was established in 2008 with the aim to meliorate naturally the dried up ‘Nagyszéksős’ lake, because these animals gnaw off the reed which contribute to recultivate the area.

5.3. The development path of the spa
The first thermal well in Mórahalom – which is also operating now – was drilled in 1960. Based on this, the bath (operating in the whole year) was opened in 1964. The expansion of the bath in 1986 was launched by a local resident with a donation of 2 million forint (about 6900 euro), thanks to this the 33.3x21 meters, 2 meters deep swimming pool was built. However, the planned and larger-scale developments only started in 1999. In that year next to the old building a new part was built with an indoor teaching pool and a spa pool. Thanks to the successful tenders further improvements were possible in 2001 (Table 1).

Table 1: Financial aids for spa development at Mórahalom in 2001
Source: www.morahalom.hu

\[http://www.erzsebetfurdo.morahalom.hu/partnerinfo/afurdorol/furdotortenet/\]
In 2002 the facility has received spa certification – as 41st nationally. A new three-storey building was completed in 2003, increasing again the number of pools, and the quantity and quality of the available services. The development has still not been stopped, or even on May in 2004, the largest pool expansion occurred: the family pool with slide, a baby and child pool, and the experience and teaching pool were inaugurated. Due to the image change on July in 2004 the facility got also a new name: Elizabeth Spa of Mórahalom. According to the decision of DARFT (Southern Great Plain Regional Development Council) Mórahalom won 37 million forint (about 128 000 euro) as a grant, which allowed to open a new pool again in 2005. Due to the mentioned developments the total water surface in the spa reached the 2200 square meters and the capacity increased to 4700 people. According to the Quality Control System of the Hungarian Baths Association, in spa category Mórahalom got the highest (four-star) qualification in 20067.

The smaller scale improvements continued in 2007. Next to the Finnish sauna on the ground floor a new splash pool and a rest room was built and then a new connecting building was constructed. On the outside of the connecting building a new pool was built, which is possible to be used by the guests in the whole year. In September 2007 the Health Center was completed, which is also largely supported by tenders. In the same year the water of the new thermal well (drilled in 2004) was classified as medicinal water, the 67.5 °C water is heating the entire complex, in addition also provide heating for the public buildings (Mórahalmi Körkép 2007).

In 2008, another large-scale, 880 million forint (~3.8 million euro) development of the spa began in the town, the half of the amount was supported by the New Hungary Development Plan, Southern Great Plain Operational Programme. The new regional unique indoor part of the spa was finished in 2010, which makes the spa water surface 400 m² and the total area 3000 m² bigger. Thanks to the several new pools and saunas not only the turnover increased but also reduced the seasonality in the settlement. In parallel with this development a three-level, sub-regional outpatient care centre have also been developed.

Due to the developments the number of the guests in the spa increased significantly. Among the spa visitors a sharp increase can be observed between 2004 and 2005. The reasons of this phenomenon are the opening of the new pools in 2004, the several available massage-services and the opening of the guesthouse which allowed for the guests to stay for a longer period in the town, close to the spa. While in 2004 only approx. 121 thousand visitors were in the spa, in 2009 it already has exceeded 312 thousand, i.e. during 5 years nearly tripled the number of the guests (Figure 2).
In accordance with the international processes in the revenues it caused bigger changes: during 5 years the revenues increased fivefold: from 64 million forint (~ 221 thousand euro) to 308 million forint (~ 1.1 million euro).

Despite the price increases over the years, the spa of Mórahalom has been still one of the cheaper spas, especially if we consider the available services compared with its competitors. It is difficult, of course, to compare the rivals, since each spa offer different services, but for example the Elisabeth Spa of Mórahalom offers more services than the Spa of Cserkeszőlő or Dávod but in spite of this its prices are cheaper than the others'. The Aquapolis Szeged represents a much higher level than Mórahalom, but even if there are fewer services, the Elisabeth Spa definitely more affordable, which could be a significant motivation for tourists nearby.

The presence of the primary superstructure, which includes the accommodation and catering facilities, is essential for the booming tourism. The supply of accommodation was very poor in Mórahalom but it also has changed significantly. In 2000 only three families offered private accommodation while in 2009 nearly eighty. The number of accommodations between 2001 and 2009 rose more than tenfold, and the capacity rose from 38 to 682. The significant expansion of capacity seems to be necessity because in 2008, 35 734 guest nights were spent in the town, which is the second best result in the county (after the biggest town: Szeged)\(^8\). Increasing the guest nights, the tourism tax revenues also increased significantly (Figure 3). It is remarkable that between 2001 and 2008 the tourism tax revenues increased more than 5000-fold. However, the year 2009 shows a slight decrease which is attributed to the negative effects of the global economic crisis. It can be observed that there is a significant increase in guest arrivals but in the same time the tax revenue has decreased. This shows that despite the crisis has not decreased the attendance of the spa, but fewer people could afford to spend a guest night in the town, so the tax

\(^8\) Fürdőre gyűlik a turistahad. Délmagyarország (2010). 100/52. szám. 1. old.
revenues decreased. From 2003 a sharp increase can be observed in the revenues, due to the Thermal Pension (opened in 2002).

![Graph](image)

Figure 3: Tourism tax revenues in Mórahalom (2001-2009)

Source: own construction based on the data from the Municipality of Mórahalom

5.4. The tourist catchment area of Mórahalom based on data from the Thermal Pension

Before the opening of the Colosseum Hotel in 2011, Mórahalom had only one commercial (but several private) accommodation: this is the 3-star Thermal Pension which was opened in October 2002. It shows the dynamic development of the local tourism that while in 2003 only 580 thousand forint tourism tax revenue thanks to this pension, in 2008 more than 4 million 700 thousand forint. Using the database of the pension my aim was to assess the main catchment areas of the town (or rather of the spa as the most important motivation to visit this town). The available data are from the end of 2008, but it is important to note that the pension has had this database only since May in 2007. Based on the data, during the mentioned period, 6744 new guests were registered (returning guests were only registered once in the database) from 603 different settlements. The most important tourist sending place is Budapest with 1263 new registered guests.

After Budapest, in the second place is Szeged with 220 registered new guests, but Csongrád County hierarchically is only the fifth. The reason of this on one hand, that there are few settlements in this county, so there are few sending places. On the other hand, the transport between Szeged and Mórahalom is well-developed, so the dense bus links allow to reach half an hour from one to another, however, from further settlements of Csongrád County it is not worth to travel to Mórahalom, as many settlements nearby (more accessible) have its own spa (for example Makó, Hódmezővásárhely, Szentes). The other two most new guests sending settlements are in Baranya County: Pécs (214) and Mohács (210), while Baranya County hierarchically is the third between the most tourists sending counties. Bács-
Kiskun County leading the list of counties, but its biggest sending settlement, Baja (196) is only in the fifth place between the tourist sending settlements (Table 2).

Table 2: The 20 most important tourist sending places according to the guesthouse’s database

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the settlement</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Number of the guests</th>
<th>Name of the settlement</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Number of the guests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Budapest</td>
<td>Pest</td>
<td>1263</td>
<td>11. Érd</td>
<td>Pest</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Szeged</td>
<td>Csongrád</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>12. Százhalmabatta</td>
<td>Pest</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Szekszárd</td>
<td>Tolna</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>15. Harta</td>
<td>Bács-Kiskun</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Székesfehérvár</td>
<td>Fejér</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>18. Dunakeszi</td>
<td>Pest</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysing the number of the new guests at county level, in the first three places are: Bács-Kiskun, Pest and Baranya counties (Figure 4). This is partly due to the fact that from these counties Mórahalom is easily accessible; however, all three counties have similar spas to Mórahalom so the good traffic conditions cannot be the only reason. Pest County included data except of Budapest, because the capital city would have greatly distorted the ranking. From Bács-Kiskun County, 1203 new tourists arrived at the guesthouse, significantly ahead of the second Pest County. Tolna County is also a major sending area with 520 new guests. It is remarkable that few people come from the adjacent eastern counties and from the above mentioned Csongrád County. This of course reflects the fact that who lives close, only visits the spa for one day, and do not spend nights in the pension. The economic situation in the eastern counties are less favourable, and its inhabitants can easily find an accessible and affordable spa in their own county. The least tourists come from Vas, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén and Zala County.
5.5 Other tourism-related developments

To make this town attractive not only the spa and the accommodations need constant development but almost all the facilities in the town. Nowadays the built environment contributes to the beauty of the landscape with more and more growing emphasis (Szalai, K. – Szilágyi, Zs., 2007), so it is important to develop these elements to provide a positive impression and comfortable feeling to the arriving tourists. As part of the integrated tourism development, Mórahalom takes into consideration this, which is well illustrated by the following examples.

The school development, expansion and image change finished in 2000. A high school section was also added in 2005, providing for students to stay in the town for longer period and the professions also serve the tourism of the town: the education of masseurs, physiotherapists, rural hosts.

The ‘Aranyszöm’ Cultural Centre was opened in September 2003, constructed a well-equipped, professional, 300 seats theatre and a conference hall in the town centre. In the courtyard of the Cultural Centre the ‘Homokháti Crowd’ event was organized eighth in 2011, offering different programs and concerts for almost two weeks. The event attracts an increasing number of tourists from the surrounding villages, many tourists have deliberately chosen this period for their vacation time.

In addition, the flower planting, and park maintaining are conducted continuously in the town. In 2004 and 2007 got a special award for the “For Floral Hungary” program (Mórahalmi Körképek 2004, 2007). In order to maintain the attractive environment, since

\[\text{http://www.rendezvenyhaz.morahalom.hu/?menuid=24}\]
2000, selective waste collection has been in the town and since 2009, it is forbidden in public places to smoke and drink alcohol.

In connection with health tourism, a Health Centre was developed with several specific surgeries, so the residents, as well as the arriving guests do not have to travel to Szeged or other cities for any of these services.

6. THE SPA OF MÓRAHALOM ACCORDING TO THE OPINIONS

In the questionnaire survey I was primarily interested in how the visitors think about the spa services, about the quality and price or how they were informed about the spa of Mórahalom.

According to the survey it seems that the visitors especially feel comfortable in the spa. Over 63% of the respondents completely enjoyed themselves, 35% felt rather well and only 4 people responded that rather did not feel well themselves. No one was among the respondents who totally did not feel well himself in the spa. Those who were not satisfied (2) have complained about the noise of the construction (because the construction of the hotel was during the survey), one guest was dissatisfied with the long queue at the entrance and one was dissatisfied with the doctors who did not give referral to the medicinal water for her. It was also analysed that which way the guests can be informed most about the spa, which forms of advertising convince people the best (Figure 5).

![Figure 5: How the visitors heard about the Spa](source: own construction based on the survey)

The result is not surprising - a number of studies found the same conclusion - that the most effective marketing tool, when you get recommendations from your own friends. This
influenced the visitors’ decision in 53%. All surveyed people but two would recommend the spa to their friends in the future. Many respondents got to mark the other category, where primarily they answered that they have known the spa since they were children, they are local or nearby residents. Or many people mentioned the advertisements placed on buses and the various flyers as well. 10% of the respondents were informed about the spa on the Internet, 6% from the newspapers and from the radio only 5% was informed. 34 respondents were informed from not only one source. The result is similar to the survey in 2008, when also the friends’ recommendation was the most important information source, and there was also a high number of respondents in the other category (some of the typical response in this category: known since childhood, medical referral received, came with Senior Club, etc.). The friend recommendation is not a conscious marketing trick but in the future according to the results should be emphasized.

For the question ‘Why did they choose the spa of Mórahalom’ (Figure 6) the most people (79) answered that the proximity had the major role in their decision. Accordingly, most of the respondents came from Szeged (82), Mórahalom, Szabadka, Domaszék, Baja, Röszke and Ásotthalom. Among the first 10 tourists sending settlements, only Budapest is not in the vicinity.

Many respondents chose Mórahalom because of the previous positive personal experience (20%) - this was a significant motivation in 2008, too (16%). Many of them came here because of the curiosity (had heard a lot about the new spa of this small town and wanted to try out), and because of the favourable price compared to the high quality. In 2008 most of the respondents came to the spa because of the new pools, this reason in summer 2010 cannot be possible because the new pools were opened only in October (while the earlier developments have become accustomed to the guests, so they did not expect...
new). The proportion of the respondents, who were convinced by their friends to come to Mórahalom, is not negligible either: 20% in 2008 and 5% in 2010. According to the answers the friendly, familiar milieu was very important for the visitors. Many of the visitors came to the spa because of their free tickets which they got during the voluntary blood donation, but of course there were some visitors who were attracted by the medical services.

It is not coincidence that the previous personal experience has attracted so many visitors to return again, as almost half of respondents (119 people) have already been more than 10 times in the spa. Only 46 people were in the spa for the first time and among them 43 people were planning to visit this place again. It seems that the spa makes a good impression to the visitors because almost all the respondents plan to visit it again. The most returning guests are living around, and for the others the distance is not a problem to return again. Those who do not plan to come here once more, they complained about the overcrowding, and the lack of shadow. According to the answers the major advantages of the spa is the wide variety of pools, the cleanliness, the curative thermal water and the flower-filled, friendly milieu. Among the pools the cocktail pool and the slide pool were the respondents’ favourites. The satisfaction shown by the fact that 82 respondents think, there is nothing bad or be needed to improve. However, many complaints were received that there are few green areas and the temperature of the waters are too hot. 49 respondents were not at any other spa in the last three years. Most of the others were in Szeged, Kiskunmajsza, Gyopárosfürdő and Gyula in recent years. Szeged outstanding popularity is not surprising, since the most respondents came from Szeged – as it has been previously mentioned –, and even Szeged is the most easily accessible, well-known tourist centre. Based on the results, the respondents considered the price realistic, the majority (84%) considered it entirely appropriate in relation to the provided services. 12% of the respondents said that it is cheaper than the provided services and only 4% said it is more expensive. One respondent said that it is expressly expensive.

Only 25 respondents took accommodation, 23 at Mórahalom and 2 at Szeged. Most of the spent nights were between 2 and 5 (13 people), 4 respondents spent more than 10 nights. In Mórahalom 14 guests rested in private accommodation and 9 at the guesthouse. 68% of them are doing other programs around, particularly visiting Szeged or Ópusztaszer.

It is noteworthy that 180 respondents could not know anything else besides bathing, what could be done at Mórahalom. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to emphasize also the other attractions of the town, for example nature trips and recreation (biking, horse riding, agro-tourism). Those who could mention other options, highlighted especially the riding, visiting the buffaloes, the ‘Homokháti’ Crowd event and fairs.

Overall, the tourists were satisfied with the quality of the offered services, considered the value for money appropriate and most of them are satisfied, returning guests, which all contribute to improve the standard of living of the local residents.

7. SUMMARY

After reviewing this development path, the conclusion is that Mórahalom a good example of tourism-based local development, during the development period the
improvements have been integrated, and reinforce each other's effects. The statistical data (for example tax revenues) confirm that tourism contributed to the economic prosperity of the town. The revenue was not only spent on the continuous development of the spa, but on the embellishment and modernization of the entire town, enhancing the attractiveness and expanding the services, increasing the quality – namely the tourism development was integrated into the whole local development. Mórahalom considered the existing conditions and the tourism trends and took advantage of its possibilities, laying the emphasis on health tourism. This can be an example for settlements with similar conditions because always will be people who want to relax and heal. For the settlements may be instructive to realize that even after reaching some goals, should not get stuck on a certain level. It is not enough to get involved tourism, after it has done, the settlement should improve, innovate, and expand its supply continuously to be strong permanently on the tourism market.

The developments described above provide a chance to (survive the economic crisis) Mórahalom be even more competitive, because its development is not a spontaneous process, but it is a result of a conscious planning.

According to the survey people like to visit this small town, they are satisfied with the quality of the services, the variety of the pools, the organized environment and with the value for money. It is not coincidence that most of the respondents already have been more than 10 times in the spa. However, besides health tourism, the better use of natural conditions would be worthwhile, because thanks to this a more complex tourism package could be offered to tourists; this would provide a wider possibility, especially for families and young people, in order to further increase the attractiveness and competitiveness of the town.

**REFERENCES**


Tourism and local development – the case of Mórahalom


Other sources:
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