

The “bottomless pit” effect – An analysis of tourism development funding in the Ormánság

A „feneketlen kút” hatás – Az Ormánság turisztikai fejlesztési támogatásainak komplex elemzése

JÁNOS CSAPÓ – GERGELY MARTON – ÁKOS PINTÉR – KATINKA SZABÓ

Abstract

The paper intends to analyse tourism development supports and their regional impacts in the Ormánság since Hungary's accession to the European Union. According to the authors, in the Ormánság, a strongly disadvantaged region it is very important to receive grants and funding from the EU and from other sources; but not any less significant to measure how these sources were utilised and determine whether any changes have been detected from 2004 on. Our hypothesis is that hardly any positive processes can be experienced in the researched area, neither from social nor from economic aspects. Our paper explores whether claiming that the Ormánság is a “bottomless pit” is true or not.

Keywords: Ormánság – backward region – tourism development funds – “bottomless pit” effect

Összegzés

A tanulmány legfontosabb célja az európai uniós csatlakozásunk óta az Ormánságba érkezett turisztikai célzatú fejlesztési források felmérése, regionális hatásvizsgálata. A szerzők szerint az Ormánságban – mint hazánk egyik leghátrányosabb térségében – természetesen nagyon fontosak a pályázati támogatási források, azonban azt is meg kell vizsgálnunk, hogy a területre érkező támogatások milyen mértékben kerültek-kerülnek hasznosításra, milyen mértékű társadalmi-gazdasági változásokat tudtak generálni 2004 óta. Tanulmányunk és a konferencián elhangzott előadásunk arra az alapkérdésre próbál választ találni, hogy az Ormánság valóban egy „feneketlen kút”-e a támogatások tekintetében, vagy ez a tétel megcáfolható.

Kulcsszavak: Ormánság – halmozottan hátrányos helyzetű térség – turisztikai fejlesztési források – “feneketlen kút” hatás

Introduction

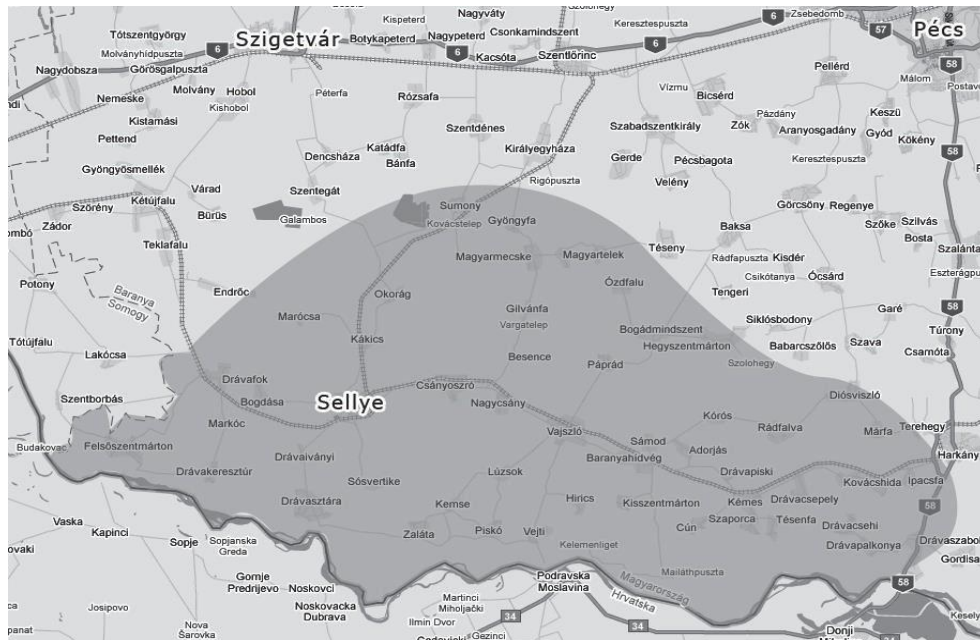
The Ormánság, as primarily an ethnographic unit located in the southwest part of Baranya County, is situated between River Drava and the Zselic. The area comprises 52 small settlements (hamlets), each with only a few hundreds of inhabitants, mainly in the Sellye District. (Gyenizse, 2009)

The disadvantaged region is a cross-border, peripheral area, which was totally excluded from state socialist industrialisation processes and from the modernisation after the system change as well. (Bank, Rudl & Tésits, 2003) As a consequence, demographic problems of the economically disadvantaged areas are characteristic of this region as well: such as ageing population, exodus of young and qualified persons, unemployment, low entrepreneurial activity, low level public services and general underdevelopment in the services sector. (Aubert, 2011; Tésits, 2004)

As one beneficial consequence, natural resources of the area are practically untouched and are under environmental protection (NATURA 2000, Ramsari, Danube-Drava National Park). After the system change tourism focused on these natural resources in the region, so their development into tourism products has begun; but relevant investments could only be launched after the EU-accession.

The current study investigates important tourism resources and tourism products in the Ormánság as well as the related development processes and future development plans. Is it possible to carry out sustainable, long-term tourism development, established by explicitly determined measures; so that tourism in the region could quantitatively and qualitatively develop?

Figure 1. The area of the Ormánság



Source: Losonci and Marton, 2008

Analysis of tourism potentials in Ormánság

The Ormánság possesses unutilised tourism endowments which are primarily connected to the attractions of the untouched natural environment. (Gyuricza, 2009; Gyenizse, 2000) As a result of the social-economic-infrastructure retardation of the region, local tourism could not develop either. This is why, according to the official statistics, the Ormánság is far behind from the potentials which could have been expected from the endowments. It is at the embryo phase in the process of development into a tourism destination. (Szabó, 2006)

The basis for tourism potentials in the Ormánság is provided primarily by natural resources such as forests and waters (River Drava, oxbows) and the flora and fauna (Danube-Drava National Park). The majority of these natural attractions are under environmental protection which, on the one hand, is an advantage as it brings reputation;

on the other hand it is manifested in certain restrictions in touristic developments. (Csapó & Marton, 2011)

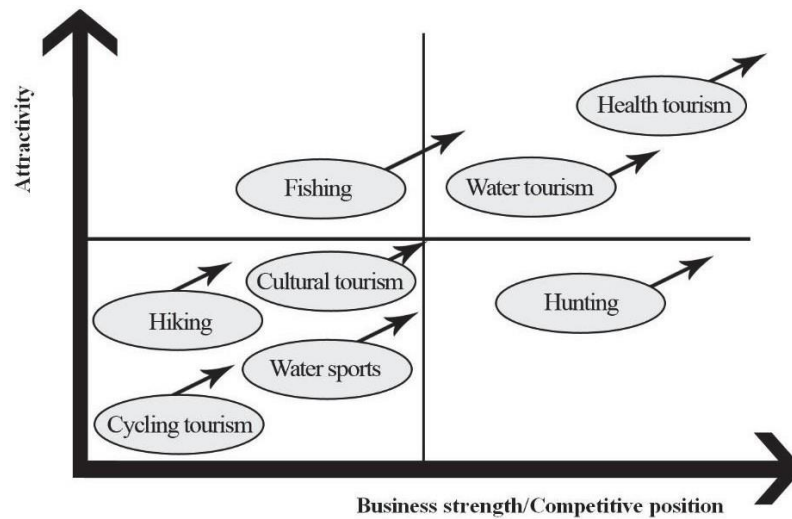
Outstanding resources could be utilised successfully by active- and ecotourism, with complementary local attractions, as traditions, cultural heritage, historical and religious monuments and gastronomy. (Bazsika & Gyuricza, 2011)

Tourism supply

Tourism products

The following tourism products are characteristic of the Ormánság area – based on the above mentioned attractions (*Figure 2.*).

- The Thermal Spa Sellye as a local centre of health tourism, renewed at the beginning of the 21st century within the frameworks of Széchenyi Plan.
- Fishing and angling is related to River Drava, its oxbows and to the artificially created lakes and channels. The majority of anglers come from the local population. Some of the visitors, though, are also attracted by such opportunities.
- Untouched forests in Ormánság rich in game animals are an ideal spot for hunting. The majority of the hunters in the region are foreigners who expect high quality services provided by the hunting associations and their accommodations (such as Hubertus or Lázár Hunting Houses).
- Water tourism is related to River Drava with services of river trips, mainly in Drávaszabolcs and Barcs.
- Cultural tourism is mainly facilitated by religious monuments, such as painted wooden coffer ceilings in Calvinist churches, and other collections of local cultural heritage. In this case the most important problem is their sporadic allocation in a relatively great area. A thematic route allowing these attractions to be connected with each other would solve the problem.
- Hiking is organised mainly in the protected areas and study trails in the Danube-Drava National Park: organised trips and excursions to exhibition or visitor centres.
- Concerning water sports, canoe trips on the River Drava are organised, supervised and regulated by the Danube-Drava National Park. According to the present regulations a maximum of 1,500 persons can take part in the river trips. The organisers (the national park, private entrepreneurs and associations) usually connect water trips with other services and sights to make the tourists acquainted with nearby attractions and local products.
- Infrastructural conditions for cycling tourism are improving year by year in the area, what, as a tendency, will probably continue in the future. Within the frameworks of Old-Drava Programme new cycling routes and bicycle lenders are planned. New hiking routes will also be designated with the support of an awarded IPA programme. (Bognár & Marton, 2010)

Figure 2. The GE Matrix of the tourism products of the Ormánság

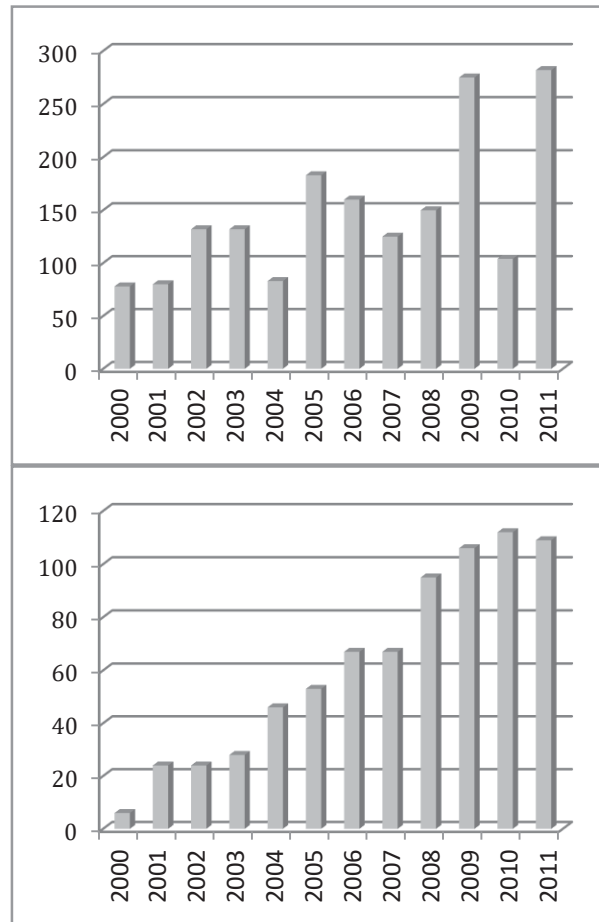
Source: Marton, 2008

Accommodations

As for accommodations, supply in the Ormánság is poor; considering the number of bed places: only 14 of 52 settlements have some kind of accommodations. According to 2011 statistical data, only two units were classified as commercial accommodations, one pension and one camping site. Both are functioning in Sellye. We cannot find any hotels in the Ormánság, what definitely indicates the lack of tourism products in the region, which would induce higher tourism spendings (such as business tourism). (KSH/CSO, 2013)

As for private accommodations, 16 guest houses and hunting houses are available to accommodate a total of 600 persons. The majority of rural accommodations in the Ormánság are relatively comfortable (in Hungarian terms, between 2-4 “sunflowers” category). Four of them possess the qualification of a specialised “Eco Farm House of South Transdanubia”.

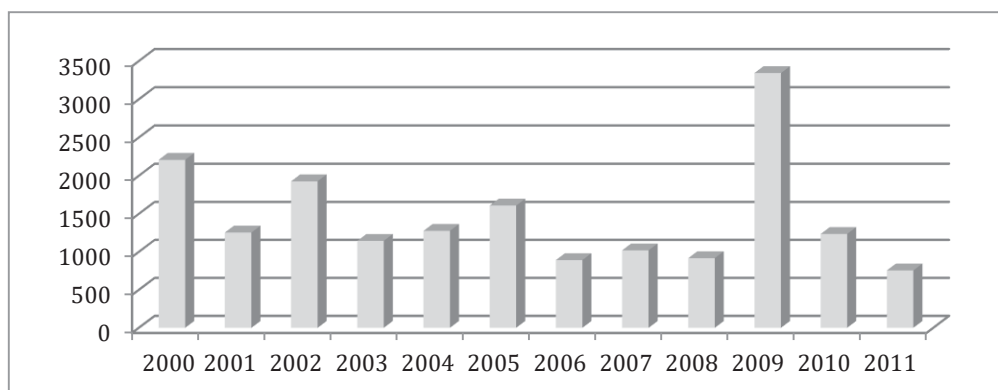
Figure 3-4. Total capacity of commercial and private accommodations in the Ormánság



Source: KSH/CSO, 2013

Tourism demand

As regards the demand for tourism products and accommodations services, according to the official statistics, an annual average of only 1,465 tourists are registered in the area, altogether reflecting a most unfavourable situation (Figure 5.). Nevertheless authors highlight that the official statistics are unable to demonstrate the real turnover and demand. According to our own empirical research, these numbers are ambiguous and do not represent the real volume of tourism of the Ormánság. (Bognár & Marton, 2010)

Figure 5. Total number of guests at the accommodations of the Ormánság

Source: KSH/CSO, 2013

Many visitors come to the area only for a day, and these excursionists are another significant factor in the demand side of Ormánság tourism. Considering their number, and some other characteristics that we cannot find in any of the official statistics, local entrepreneurs and municipality professionals estimate the number of the visitors in the Ormánság around 35,000-37,000 persons per year (Table 1.). These persons mostly visit the thermal spa in Sellye, and they are often involved in hiking, cycling, river trips, hunting and angling. (Bognár & Marton, 2010)

Table 1. Number and interests of the visitors and tourists in the Ormánság

	Guests (person)
Hunters	500-600
Anglers	6600-7200
Cruisers	8700
Water sports	1600
Hikers	1400-2500
Cyclists	500
Waterside holidays	16200
Total number of visitors	35500-37300
Number of tourists	2500-3000
Total number of guests	38000-40300

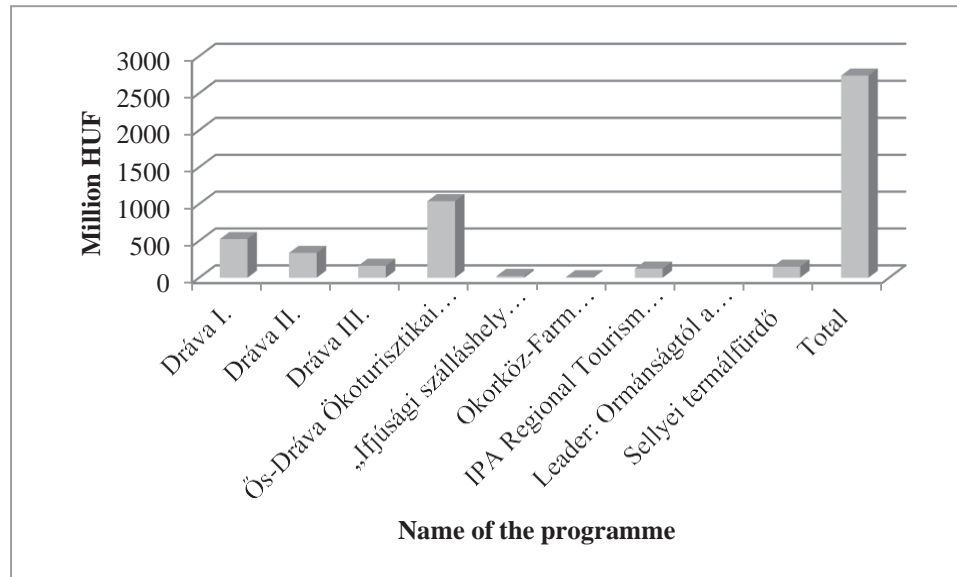
Source: primary research, Marton, 2010

Investments in tourism

We have analysed the efficiency of tourism related investments in the Ormánság Region in 4 different planning periods: Széchenyi Plan (2000-2002), National Development Plan (NDP 1) (2004-2006), New Hungary Development Plan (NDP 2) (2007-2010) and the recent New Széchenyi Plan (2011-2013).

In these planning periods we could differentiate five types of support sources which could be connected to tourism, often directly but sometimes indirectly: Széchenyi Plan, Regional Operative Programs (ROP), Agricultural and Rural Development Fund (AVOP), IPA (Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance) and the Leader programmes.

Figure 6. Support sources for tourism purpose in the Ormánság region (2000-2013)



Source: KSH/CSO data; with authors' edits

Since 2004 a total of 2.8 billion HUF have been invested directly into tourism developments in the Ormánság area, with investments in accommodation building, ecotourism, rural tourism and health tourism as priorities.

Results

After discussing the exact volume of funds and financial supports in the Ormánság area, authors examine how these supports have been utilised. Is there a specific trend demonstrating any positive changes in the tourism sector? This can be done by relying on basic statistics on tourism demand.

The total number of guests at the accommodations of the Ormánság from 2000 on reflects a very hectic performance. Steady trends, either increasing or decreasing, cannot be identified in this respect (Figure 5.). Some increase can only be detected in the number of guests at private accommodations (Figure 3-4.), but the numbers are very low with a maximum of 630-640 persons per year. Unfortunately, there is no correlation between the impacts of tourism supports and the results of commercial accommodations.

Some of the reasons for this situation authors could identify:

- There is a very low tendering activity in the Ormánság Region. The number of people trained or educated enough, and the entrepreneurial activity to participate in projects or tenders are very low.
- The total number of the local population is also very low in the area.
- It seems that there is no breakthrough yet; due to the lack of an integrated development concept and insufficient product development. One of the most important problems in the realisation of tourism sources in the area is that product development is not demand based. Cultural attractions in themselves are not an independent tourism attraction (though several sources or scientific papers claim so). Tourism in the area is mainly based on natural attractions.
- Another important reason for the underdevelopment and underutilisation of financial supports are top-bottom development initiations; the bottom-up approach is almost entirely missing.
- There is a lack of social factors related to tourism catering and hospitality: the local population is not prepared for tourism developments. The area lacks general and tourism infrastructure and this is not taken into consideration during the developments.
- The name of the area, „Ormánság” still carries a negative image amongst the Hungarian population, due to social, economic and historical reasons.
- Total lack of marketing: Surprisingly, authors have found that none of the investments and supports targeted international or national tourism marketing strategies of the region to improve the above negative image.

Summary

Reviewing the characteristics and the development supports of tourism in the Ormánság, authors conclude that there was no marked “driving force” present, that could have developed the branch into a significant economic sector.

Major problem of the investments – except the thermal spa in Sellye – is that they do rely on natural attraction development but do not take the lack of the general and tourism specific infrastructure into consideration, which cannot be compensated by other factors. Developments of the supply side do not meet interests of the demand side; as a consequence, not as many tourists and visitors are attracted to the area as could be expected. Another problem of these investments is that the complementary services, such as guest caterers or leisure opportunities, are not present either in the region.

Tourism industry in the Ormánság reflects a two-faced situation. On the one hand it possesses a relatively great visitor turnover with mostly active tourism motivations. Unfortunately investments do not follow the demand though it is a real growth potential. On the other hand there is very low turnover related to ecotourism and health tourism; in addition, such visitors’ needs are only partially satisfied.

Based on the above conclusions, authors suggest to either develop popular tourism products or to provide high standard services in the present developments, with significant growth in innovative and complementary services. Our initial hypothesis that hardly any positive processes could be experienced in the researched area from the point of tourism supports and their impacts has been proved. Without significant improvements in the above factors the Ormánság area will be a “bottomless pit” in terms of tourism supports.

References

- Aubert, A. (2011). A területi egyenlőtlenségek és a turisztikai erőforrások értelmezése Magyarország leghátrányosabb helyzetű kistérségei példáján (pp. 25-36). In: Kókai, S. (szerk.). *Geográfiai folyamatok térben és időben: Tanulmánykötet Dr. Hanusz Árpád 65. születésnapja tiszteletére*. Nyíregyháza: Nyíregyházi Főiskola Turizmus és Földrajztudományi Intézet.
- Aubert, A., Gelányi, N. & Jónás-Berki, M. (2010). The Place and Role of Peripheries in Hungary's Changing Tourism. *Geographica Timisiensis* 19 (2): 257-267.
- Bognár, A. & Marton, G. (2010). A Dráva mente turizmusfejlesztési lehetőségei (pp. 277-287). In: Görcs, N. L. & Pirisi, G. (szerk.). *Tér – Tálerum – Tanítványok II*. Pécs: Publikon Kiadó.
- Bank, K., Rudl, J. & Tésits, R. (2003). Some Important Features of the Human Sphere in South Transdanubia. *Geografski Vestnik* 75 (1): 73-83.
- Bazsika, E. & Gyuricza, L. (2011). A néprajzi tájak lehetséges szerepe a turizmusban (pp. 40-57). In: Michalkó, G. & Rátz, T. (szerk.). *A turizmus dimenziói: humán, ökonómikum, politikum*. Székesfehérvár: Kodolányi János Főiskola.
- Csapó, J. & Marton, G. (2011). A turizmusfejlesztés aspektusai az Ormánságban, különös tekintettel a belső és külső integráció lehetőségeire (pp. 317-332). In: Michalkó, G. & Rátz, T. (szerk.). *A turizmus dimenziói: humán, ökonómikum, politikum*. (Turizmus Akadémia 5.) Székesfehérvár: Kodolányi János Főiskola.
- Gyenisze, P. (2000). A természeti adottságok szerepe néhány dél-baranyai település kialakulásában és fejlődésében (pp. 93-101). In: Lovász, Gy. & Szabó, G. (szerk.). *Területfejlesztés – regionális kutatások: Tiszteletkötet Tóth József professzor úr 60. születésnapjára*. Pécs: Pécsi Tudományegyetem.
- Gyenisze, P. (2009). Tájhasználat és településfejlődés az Ormánságban a XVIII-XX. században (pp. 171-181). In: Frisnyák, S. & Gál, A. (szerk.). *A Kárpát-medence környezetgazdálkodása*. Nyíregyháza – Szerencs: Nyíregyházi Főiskola – Bocskai István Gimnázium.
- Gyuricza, L. (2009). A természeti adottságok meghatározó szerepe a turizmusban (pp. 87-95). In: Aubert, A. & Berki, M. (szerk.). *Örökség és Turizmus*. Pécs: Idresearch Kft. – Publikon Kiadó.
- Marton, G. (2009). Az Ormánság kulturális örökségei (pp. 259-266). In: Aubert, A. & Berki, M. (szerk.). *Örökség és turizmus*. Pécs: Pécsi Tudományegyetem TTK Földrajzi Intézet.
- Szabó, G. (2006). Területi márkák Baranya és a Dél-Dunántúl turizmusában (pp. 60-91). In: Aubert, A. (szerk.). *Desztináció-építés és -menedzsment*. Pécs: Dél-dunántúli Regionális Idegenforgalmi Bizottság.
- Tésits, R. (2004). Characteristics of rural unemployment in South-Transdanubia. *Geografski Vestnik* 76 (2): 33-43.
<http://statinfo.ksh.hu/Stainfo/haDetails.jsp?query=kshquery&lang=hu>