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TOURISM DESTINATION MANAGEMENT FOR COMPETITIVE HUNGARIAN TOURISM DESTINATIONS

Tourism is a dominant branch of the service sector in Hungary and has also become a strategic sector (Nemes 2008). The planning of potential development based on the country's endowments has become more target-oriented, which if successfully managed will be manifested in continuously improving performance. The importance of tourism is also shown by the fact that the employment rate in tourism has continued to increase (ksh.hu 2014).
The Hungarian development programme (called the New Széchenyi Plan) has a strategic development programme (furthermore it is the first in its kind in this country) designed for tourism, focusing on health tourism. Therefore this sector has a special and emphasised role, but it is also a key element in other plans, too (e. g. the national employment policy). In the drafting of the second Tourism Development Strategy (2011) sector-specific tasks and five main goals have been identified. The first goal is to improve the competitiveness of the destinations. There is no consensus however, on which destinations can be regarded as competitive and which need to be improved or developed to be competitive. To answer these questions it is important to compare the competitiveness of the various tourism destinations.
This paper deals with this current and important practical topic. After defining the 'destination' the paper will show the importance of its management, the organisational background and the Hungarian situation. Focusing on the goal to produce results that can be utilised in practice the research questions are the following:
1. Which spatial unit can be regarded as tourism destination?
2. How can the competitiveness of a destination be defined?
3. How can the competitiveness of a destination be measured?
4.What are the characteristics of competitiveness of Hungarian tourism destinations?

After a critical overview of the wide-ranging relevant literature it became obvious that several definitions and research had been published in the wider topic of the research. Analyzing and systematizing the relevant literature the conceptual framework was specified to use as a basis throughout the research. Having established the framework the research focused on measurement and an appropriate index was formulated and tested on Hungarian tourism destinations.

Destination definition

Tourists' demands have changed lately. The most sought-after product is now the *experience*, which can be available in a destination. That also means that the analysis of competition concentrates on destinations (Ritchie – Crouch 2000). However it often remains an unclarified question what a tourism destination is. There are countries where a group of minimum criteria determine a destination – such criteria can be the number of guest nights, local or community tourism bureaus or the size of the budget (Aubert et al. 2010). But the main characteristic is that the whole territory means one unit for the tourist, and during and at the end of the travel all the things build up into one complex experience. Therefore it is important to look at destinations as the scenes of available experiences – where the product (that is the destination) is lived through instead of being consumed by tourists (Stamboulis 2008).

Tourists' experiences can be of all kinds however – and also the scope of the destination is observed differently. This exposes the main difficulty of destination research: the 'district' cannot be easily defined. After Nemes Nagy (2009:101) who says: "as many people-so many scopes" it can also be said: as many people-so many destinations.

Among terms used in the field of economics, a tourism destination can be seen as the equivalent of a traditional nodal region. This type of region is usually regarded as related areas of several neighbouring settlements – with one or some bigger cities in the middle, as a node (Lengyel, I. 2009). Nodal regions generally mean the spatial concentrations of an economic activity, mainly within the processing industry (Lengyel, I. 2010). Nevertheless a destination is usually organized around an *attraction* not a town or village – it is similar to a nodal region. In addition, a destination is also open and cannot easily be defined by administrative boundaries.

Yet, in the scientific literature many of the authors examine existing regions (Cracolici – Nijkamp 2008) or mostly countries (Gomezelj – Mihalic 2008; Dwyer – Kim 2003; Blanke – Chiesa 2009; Croes 2011) as destinations because it is easy to handle and research – merely because of the existing boundaries. They usually also emphasise that considering geographical and/or administrative boundaries as definers of a destination is not always eligible, because tourists' choices do not rely on administrative boundaries. Klepers and Rozite (2010) say the same drawing on their research, where they found that travellers do not notice administrative borders in general (Klepers – Rozite 2010).

Leiper (1995) says that a destination is the place towards which people travel and where they choose to stay for a while in order to gather experiences (Leiper 1995). This definition makes research difficult, because the territory and the boundaries of the place regarded as their 'destination' can vary according to the tourists' expectations and motivations.

Taking the supply-side approach, Buhalis (2000) defined a destination as a region where all the supply elements (attractions, services, etc.), which a tourist would need are available (Buhalis 2000). It seems straightforward to delimit the destination like this, but considering the various services that different tourists need. It also fails to give a good basis.

In this paper the issue is considered from a management perspective. The destinations may be performed as collaborating networks of complementary organizations (Gunn 1997) and it is also evident that a destination with a management organisation is more effective and competitive and able to react more rapidly on market changes than without it (Raffay et al. 2010).

This "management view" can be found in the definition phrased by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO 1989), which can be regarded as the most accurate. This assumes that the destination has an organisation which is responsible for its management, usually called the Destination Management Organisation (DMO). In Hungary these DMOs are still being established and founded with the definitive goal to help in any way to improve the competitiveness of the destination they are responsible for. Therefore it seems to be logical to consider those spatial units which belong to a DMO as Hungarian tourism destinations.

Although there are places[1] without DMOs, and therefore the comparison of destinations will now be possible only in a limited way using this definition. However the delimitation of the destinations on the basis of the DMOs gives an ideal starting point for the research. These local DMOs are in an intermediate status: they are official, so they are also administratively more or less approved but at the same time they aggregate the tourism destinations based on experiences and partnerships. Since their tasks can be slightly different and as the local destinations' success are critically important in terms of bottom up building, the most appropriate spatial units to be researched are those belonging to local DMOs at the first stage.

The importance of destination management and the Hungarian DMO system

Nowadays destination management itself is of growing importance. Tourism destinations in Hungary have not been bottom-up units thinking together, but small regions formulated by the central government (Hanusz 2010). Any administrative region may not respond as quickly or quickly enough to market changes, compared to a destination based on close cooperation (Kovács 2008). Regional tourism supply and the formulation and strengthening

[1] Of course it cannot be a goal to cover the whole territory of Hungary – but now some „typical" destinations, (like Szeged) are still missing.

of tourism destinations are some of the most significant instruments to increase competitiveness (Hanusz 2010).

This is the main reason why destination management is so important (not only in Hungary). Destination competitiveness is a fashionable term, but also a key factor influencing the long-term survival of a destination. It follows that the Secretariat for Tourism within the Ministry of Local Authorities decided to foster the establishment of DMOs throughout the country (Raffay et al. 2010) and to maximize advantages including:

- Possibility of conscious development with the interest of all the stakeholders;
- Financial basis and competence for independent actions;
- Effective marketing;
- Effective image-formation for the area;
- Increasing tourism performance, more tourists and income;
- The local government can delegate tourism-like tasks to the DMO (yet have more tax-income);
- New work places, migration can stop. (Hanusz 2010)

In the Tourism Development Strategy (2011) it was also determined that competition among destinations is stronger and stronger (p. 16.) therefore it was seen as an important task is to establish and develop destination management organisations (DMOs), which are responsible for the destinations. These organisations are able to influence the competitiveness of the destinations, too.

The first organisations which worked like a DMO were established at the beginning of the previous decade. For instance, the success of the Gyenesdiás Tourism Association, founded in 2003, proved that the bottom-up approach is effective indeed, and only cooperation leads to successful development.

Accordingly the tourist administration of the national government tried to further these sorts of bottom-up initiatives and help the local and regional participants of tourism to organize DMOs for improving destination management performance. In 2005-2006, within the frame of Lake Balaton Partnership Programme, a training programme was organised and tourism professionals were teaching about the importance of cooperation in the tourism sector. They presented international best practices and sketched out the planned Hungarian system. As a result of this training the Balaton DMO Booklets came into existence (Clarke – Raffay 2011). In 2008 a handbook of organizational and professional DMO development was published. This offers easy-to-follow guidelines for the tourism sector to build up these organisations and in addition more and more invitations to tender became available to fund organisations that could achieve these aims (Jancsik et al. 2008).

Task	Local	Middle level	Regional
Planning	◐	●	●
Development	●	●	◐
Destination marketing	◐	●	●
Attraction and visitor management	●	●	◐
Quality management	◐	◐	●
Monitoring	◐	◐	●
Professional training	◐	◐	●
Advocacy	◐	◐	●

Legend: ● main task ◐ occasional task

Table 1. DMO tasks at different levels
Source: Lengyel, M. 2007. p. 19.

The handbook also stated the main characteristics of the Hungarian DMO-system, including its structure. The DMO-system in Hungary consists of three levels:

1. local level (settlement),
2. middle level (micro-region),
3. regional level (region).

Local level – as the basis of the whole DMO-network, these are usually formulated by a settlement, if the conditions for effective operation are ensured. If conditions are not given in one settlement then they have the possibility to cooperate with other settlements, formulating a local level DMO system or the local enterprises can join in the geographically nearest local (maybe micro-regional) organisation (Nyirádi – Semsei 2007).

DMOs can exist at all the levels – but with slightly different functions. Typical tasks are shown in Table 1.

Some expectations are common (present at all levels), like development cooperation, research activity or information management (Lengyel, M. 2007), which are stated in the handbook – and appear as basic requirements in the series of tenders.

Since 2010 the new DMOs have to be registered at the Secretariat for Tourism within the Ministry of National Economy (it is a prerequisite of the tendering activity). At the time

of the research, there were 75 registered DMOs working in Hungary (tdmszovetseg.eu) and their geographical distribution within the country is shown in Table 2.

Region of Hungary	Number of local DMOs
Balaton Region	**19**
Southern Great Plain Region	**4**
Southern Transdanubian Region	**7**
Northern Great Plain Region	**6**
Northern Hungary Region	**12**
Central Transdanubian Region	**7**
Central Hungary Region	**4**
Western Transdanubian Region	**6**
Altogether:	**65**

Table 2. Number of local DMOs by Hungarian regions (2012)
Source: tdmszovetseg.eu

In 2011 a new tendering period began and with the help of this invitation to tender the government wanted to support the formation of not only the local but the regional DMOs as well. This initiative saw at the end of 2011 the commissioning of the first regional DMO in Hungary, when the Balaton Regional DMO was established.

This research focuses on local DMOs, because this part of the DMO-system is the best evolved.

Theories and models of destination competitiveness

In the last two decades destination competitiveness has emerged as a major focus of tourism research. It started with the adoption of Porter's seminal work (1990) *The Competitive Advantage of Nations* and now there are several theories about the competitiveness of various territories. Several reports and articles have been published on the competitiveness of whole countries (Gomezelj – Mihalic 2008; Armenski et al. 2011) and it is important to mention the most popular competitiveness index from the World Economic Forum (WEF[2]) (Blanke – Chiesa 2009). In the field of regional economics the focus has been on smaller entities such as

[2] WEF: World Economic Forum

regions and cities (Go – Govers 2000; Heath 2002; Cracolici – Nijkamp 2008). In the tourism field the most appropriate kind of territory for deeper investigation is the destination, as the competition in tourism has intensified between destinations (Jancsik – Mayer 2010).

The importance of being competitive is not the subject matter anymore. This has been recognised as it must be the main goal for both the successful and the less visited countries. The exact meaning of this phrase has been to some extent clarified due to Ritchie and Crouch's valuable contribution (2003) to the topic. The most accepted definition from the authors suggests that a destination is truly competitive if it has the "*ability to increase tourism expenditure, to increasingly attract visitors while providing them with satisfying, memorable experiences, and to do so in a profitable way, while enhancing the well-being of destination residents and preserving the natural capital of the destinations for future generations*" (Ritchie – Crouch 2003:2). This definition shows well that competitiveness is a complex term, which becomes abundantly clear when we try to quantify it, that is to measure the competitiveness of a destination.

But for effective tourism management it is essential for the destination to be able to measure its success at any time and to be able to determine the points (factors) where certain management interventions (marketing, development, etc.) can help to achieve or maintain this success.

For this reason several models can be found in the relevant literature which tries to find a system of competitiveness factors for various types of destinations. There are several researchers however, who focus on the overall examination of destinations (Enright – Newton 2005; Vanhove 2002). The research fields and the depth of the examination are however very different.

With theoretical models researchers try to map the competitiveness of tourism destinations and to determine those factors which influence it. Most of the tourism destination competitiveness models are comprehensive – therefore useable to compare competitive destinations. But exact measurement is usually not part of the model building procedure. The most cited theoretical models are shown in Table 3.

Within these contributions the most spectacular is the one of Heath (2003) who used the analogy of the house to build his destination competitiveness model. He used it to analyse the competitive position of South-Africa for the first time. The most cited theoretical model was established by Ritchie – Crouch (2003). This model is the most comprehensive with 36 elements altogether. Although the model is complete regarding the factors influencing destination competitiveness, it has to be noted that this is all that the model can provide. Therefore, although it is cited and often used by researchers as a starting point, there are just as

many critiques published as well, mostly highlighting the lack of the logic and the connections among the factors.

This is why the *integrated* model of Dwyer – Kim (2003) is so famous and popular. They have built their model much more carefully showing the connections by arrows. They also tried to elaborate a measurement system, but it was too difficult and only applicable for whole countries as destinations.

Researcher	Starting point/model	Is there a methodology for measurement?
Ritchie – Crouch 2003	Porter	no
Dwyer – Kim 2003	Ritchie-Crouch, Porter, Dwyer et al.	yes
Hassan 2000	Porter	no
Heath 2003	Ritchie-Crouch és Dwyer-Kim	no
Paskaleva-Shapira 2007	Dwyer-Kim	no
Rodríguez-Díaz – Espino-Rodríguez 2007	Porter	yes
Tőzsér 2010	mostly Porter, Dwyer-Kim és Ritchie-Crouch	no
Vengesayi 2003	Ritchie-Crouch	no

Table 3. Theoretical models examining tourism destination competitiveness
Source: Papp 2013. p. 49.

As a common criticism of the models it can be generally stated that the tourism destination competitiveness models mostly concentrate on the research of whole countries or larger territories and these are not, or only in a limited way, available for the examination of "small" destinations. Special indices and measurement methodologies are also published by various researchers (Croes 2011; Garau – Taberner 2007), but most of them are applicable only in the exact case and/or destination and they cannot be easily adopted.

The largest incompleteness of the examined models and methods is that the used factors are not separated by the cause-result logic. It is however important to separate the indicators as "ex ante" and "ex post" factors (Török 2003). Then it could be evident what factors are able to produce the results (and therefore are usually able to be measured, too), and which can be developed in order to modify (of course, to improve) the results.

As tourism destinations can be regarded as a region, it was obvious to review the literature background of regional science. In that field there is a comprehensive contribution, known as the general regional competitiveness model. This Hungarian contribution to the field, the

so called pyramid-model (Lengyel, I. 2003), is translated and used in many countries. Comparing the incompleteness of tourism destination models with Lengyel's pyramid-model, the experiences show that the pyramid-model is much more logical, consistent and easy to use. Furthermore it is more suitable to examine small territories, even small destinations, just like Hungarian tourism destinations. The concept of the pyramid-model is seen in Figure 1. The main advantages of the model can be seen to be the following:

- the model was elaborated specifically for the smaller spatial units within countries;
- it was designed specifically with in the Hungarian circumstances in mind;
- it also fits together with the accepted definition of competitiveness of the tourism destinations (Ritchie – Crouch, 2003);
- in the model the cause-result factors can easily be separated.

General regional economic competitiveness is however slightly different from the competitiveness of tourism destinations. Therefore the pyramid-model needed some modification (Papp – Raffay 2011).

The logic and the setup of the basic model (Lengyel, I. 2003) were fully kept during the application of the model for tourism destinations: the top of the pyramid-model shows the final goal of competitiveness and success: to reach the welfare of local residents. From the bottom up there are first the success factors, the base factors and the base categories which are built on each other.

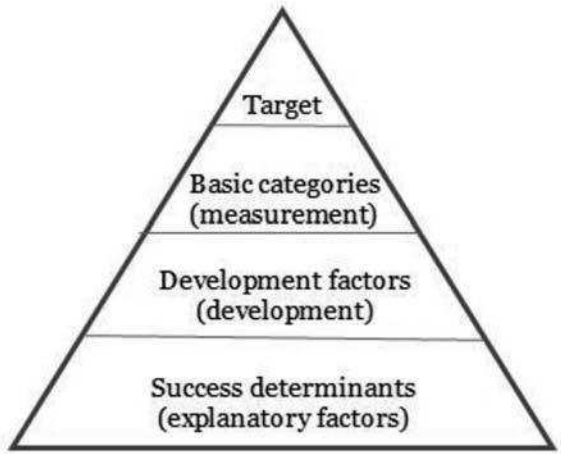

Figure 1. The logic of the pyramid-model
Source: Lengyel I. 2003. p. 291.

During the application for tourism destinations the base factors and the success factors have been changed a great deal in terms of specific content, as the general economic characteristics needed to be replaced by tourism-specific characteristics: new factors were selected on the basis of the destination characteristics, drawing heavily from the relevant literature (Figure 2).

The part of the model called 'base categories' shows the measureable elements. This section was modified both in content and in shape while applying the model to tourism destinations. The base categories in the original pyramid-model (regional income/GDP, employment and productivity) were not useable or only in a limited way in the modified model – therefore this part was replaced by the phrase "measurement of the competitiveness".

It was necessary to modify the pyramid-model because of the special characteristics of the tourism destinations. This alteration happened mostly on the basis of the relevant literature. But it was also necessary to validate the modified model so that it would be suitable for the examination of the defined Hungarian destinations. It was needed to prove that the modified model is convenient (Creswell 2009), to avoid what Mazanec et al. (2007) emphasize in their criticism: a significant proportion of the researches is "detached from reality", because little attention is paid to what practitioners think.

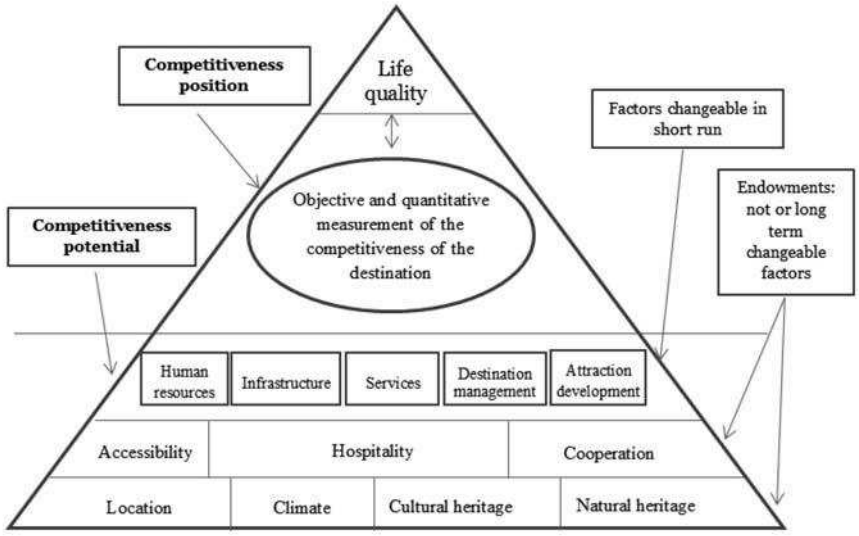

Figure 2. Applying the pyramid-model to tourism destinations
Source: Papp 2013. p. 62.

The validation process was implemented in terms of the content and the shape (Churchill 1995), using one of the validation strategies Creswell suggests (Creswell 2009) and calls "*member checking*". This is a qualitative method based on interviews. The method made it possible to gain in-depth opinions about the elaborated model, and the interviewees needed to be selected carefully. The managers of the DMOs were considered the most appropriate interviewees to validate the applied model as they know the destination well as a spatial unit, its characteristics and are responsible for its management and development but are also able to improve its competitiveness.

To summarize the validation process, the following findings may be stated:

- In terms of the success factors and base factors of the modified pyramid-model there is no element which is missing from the theoretical model.
- There are however some elements which were declared as not important by the interviewees. As these elements can well shade the picture of the destinations competitiveness potential, it is still reasonable to keep them in the model.
- Many of the interviewees argued about the objective measurability of the competitiveness position. They had some suggestions but these notions were not applicable to assess the competitiveness of the researched territory. It can be stated that the content (like applicable indices) of the competitiveness position could not be formed by the validation procedure because of the differences in the opinions. Therefore further action is needed in terms of the measurement of the competitiveness position.
- The shape, form and logic of the modified pyramid-model is clear, the collected elements of destination competitiveness are methodically linked in a system, which is clear and understandable for practical experts, too.

It is important to note that the further development of DMOs is still possible, as this is an ongoing process. Therefore it is still worthwhile to implement a new validation later on, when the number of destinations with DMOs has increased or other circumstances have changed significantly (but no later than in 5 years' time).

Compared to the original form of the model an additional modification was applied: the pyramid-model was divided by a horizontal line. The line represents the separation of the cause and result (so called "ex ante" and "ex post") parts. The part above the line shows the measurable part of competitiveness (this is the "ex post" or result side), which was named the *competitiveness position* – the position or competitive situation of the examined destination determined by measurement. Under the line there is the part of competitiveness, which cannot be objectively measured (this is the cause-side or "ex ante" part). This part was called

the *competitiveness potential*. The name was chosen because of the fact that this part shows the endowments and possibilities that the destination has.

Research hypotheses

With the application and validation of the pyramid-model the objective was to determine a starting point and a theoretical-logical framework to research the competitiveness of Hungarian tourism destinations. Therefore the research focuses on the mapping of the possibilities given by the model and the examination of Hungarian tourism destinations.

The aim of the research at the first stage was the "reconstitution" of the base categories in the pyramid-model; that is to sort and categorize all those indices which are applicable and appropriate to measure the competitive position of a destination, and which make the destinations and their competitiveness comparable.

After solving the problem of the measurement of the competitiveness position it became possible to analyse the Hungarian tourism destinations' positions in a complex way.

Hypothesis 1

The measurement-problem of the competitiveness position, determined by the pyramid-model can be solved easily, also in an in practice applicable way with the help of the available indices.

This hypothesis assumes that one unique index can be formulated with the help of the indicator kit determined in the first step of the research, which is both easy to calculate and to interpret by the managers of the DMOs. Thus the measurement of the competitiveness position becomes simple in practice to ease the evaluation of the destination's situation.

Hypothesis 2

In case of the competitiveness position the success factors of the applied pyramid-model appear as comparative advantages, but in the case of the same destination types the existence of the competitive advantages are determinative.

In view of the competitiveness position of the destinations the research has focused on the competitiveness potential in this step. The hypothesis refers to the endowment elements (that is the success factors of the pyramid-model) that are necessary, but not sufficient conditions, for the attainment of good competitiveness positions by a tourism destination.

Data sources

The destinations determined in the research do not serve as administrative units, but all of them contain one or more settlements. Therefore data were needed and gathered at the settlement level. The necessary data were collected from various sources (KSH[3], MÁK[4], KÖH[5]) with the help of the TeIR[6] system. After the collection data were aggregated to the destination level (in the case of the destinations containing more settlements). The latest available data at the settlement level referred to the year 2010. Since the data were collected from an official source, the checking of the reliability was neither possible nor considered necessary. Data gathered from secondary sources were used mostly to measure the competitiveness position of the destinations.

There are no available and appropriate data to analyse DMOs or DMO-destinations. Although the Hungarian DMO Association gathers some data regarding its member DMOs, these data are not beyond question regarding to reliability and actuality. Since data collection is not in an exact time or period, the coherence of the gathered data is a matter of question. In addition, not all the local DMOs are members of the Association, so the database is also incomplete. (To prove that the system is immature it can also be mentioned, that in some cases it was not even clear if one exact DMO is a local or a regional one, and which settlements are parts of it. These cases were cleared up by phone interviews with the particular DMOs.)

To complement the missing information primary data collection was needed. At the time of the research officially 65 local DMO-destinations operated in Hungary. Although the aim was to collect the data of all the organisations, finally the coverage was 92% (60 DMO managers answered).

A questionnaire was used to ask the DMO managers, which was delivered online[7] to be as efficient as possible. The design of the questionnaire made questions compulsory to answer and thus the number of missing answers was reduced to zero in the case of the important questions.

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[3] Hungarian Statistical Office
[4] Hungarian State Coffers
[5] Cultural Heritage Office
[6] National Spatial Development and Planning Information System – www.teir.vati.hu
[7] The online questionnaire was constructed by the software of the faculty of Business and Economics of University of Pannonia.

According to its topics the questionnaire can be divided into three main parts:

- questions about the DMO (e.g. size, main characteristics, etc.) are in the first part;
- in the second part DMO managers had to evaluate their own destination (reporting on specified aspects, in a given scale);
- finally there were some questions about the competitors of the destination.

The data collected by using primary sources are important for analysing Hypothesis 2.

Both secondary and primary data were systematized with Microsoft Excel, while SPSS software was used for the analysis.

The first step of the analysis was the production of *descriptive statistics*. This is applicable to evaluate the inner structure of the examined indicators (Héra – Ligeti 2005). In the paper descriptive statistics were used to explain the sample and also to examine the hypotheses. *Principal component analysis* was used for the next step of the research: to filter the indicators suitable to measure the competitiveness position. For the detailed analysis of the competitiveness position of the Hungarian destinations a *cluster analysis* was applied, which is a valid method when the aim is to find the typical characteristics during the analysis.

Characteristics of the local DMOs in Hungary

There is relatively little data available about the DMOs and the destinations they represent. Therefore the basic characteristics were also asked within the questionnaire prepared for them. 60 of 65 DMO managers completed the questionnaire, resulting in an acceptable response rate of 92 per cent. All the further analysis draws on these 60 DMOs (for locations see Figure 3).

Only roughly a quarter of the organisations were founded before 2009 – and then (probably due to the availability of funding sources) another 22 DMOs were formalized. 2011 was the other year, which resulted in the third most births of DMOs: 30 per cent of the organisations in the sample were formed in this year. 65 per cent of the organisations are newly created ones (in 2009 18 were new out of the 22 registered organisations) – but after 2009 there were more among the DMOs, which transformed from existing associations.

The organisations can choose from two forms of operations: a destination can be managed either by a tourism association or a not-for-profit Ltd. The vast majority (73 per cent) of the DMOs chose the association form, while two destinations decided to have the association and the non-profit Ltd. in parallel. It is also noticeable that the form of non-profit Ltd. is mainly selected by larger towns' DMOs (for example in Veszprém, Hajdúszoboszló or Keszthely).

The size of the DMOs can be examined in various ways. One possibility is to compare the number of members. A DMO has on average 86 members, but the standard deviation is relatively high: the DMO with the most of the members has 600 members – while the smallest operates with only 12. Typically the number of the members is constantly changing, often increasing. In the period since the evolution, the organisations have grown by an average of 51 members – with only 3 destinations recording that no change had happened. (But these 3 DMOs are among the earliest; two founded in 2011 and one in 2009.)

It is worth examining the number of settlements included in the DMO. At the local level of the DMO system it is also possible to create joint organisations and more than half (52 per cent) of the destinations have made use of this institutional form. In this sense the largest destination (and the largest DMO) is in Szombathely (named "Savaria DMO") which embraces 40 settlements. It can be concluded that only 8 organizations were founded with more than 10 collaborative settlements, and as an average a DMO consists of 5 settlements.

No correlation was found between the number of the members and the number of the settlements: it is not common that the more settlements a destination has, the more members

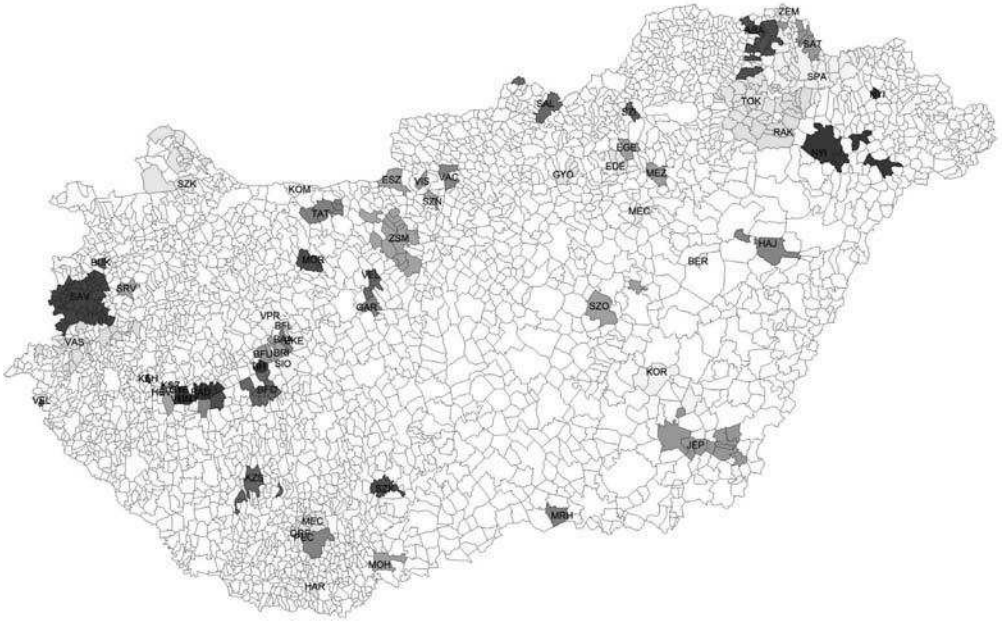

Figure 3. Locations of the 60 examined local DMOs
Source: Papp 2013. p. 84.

of the DMO can count on. Many examples can confirm this; a prominent example is Balatonfüred with 170 members (from one middle-sized town) – or on the other hand Sárospatak, where only 52 members were gathered from 33 settlements.

The number of people employed can also refer to the size of the DMO and its destination. Regarding the regular staff the majority of the organisations (nearly 30 per cent) can maintain only one job (which is the DMO manager's), while 4 organisations do not have any permanent employees. These DMOs all operate as associations and the members do social work to carry out the necessary tasks. The most of the regular employees work in the Tokaj DMO (9 employees) and an average of 2.5 permanent workers are found in the DMOs.

In respect of temporary workers, the proportion of the organisations with no temporary employment is much higher (30 per cent). Hajdúszoboszló represents the other extreme: in 2011 8 seasonal staff had been recruited. The overall average is 2 employees.

All the questionnaires were filled in by the DMO managers (or association chairs, if there was no manager) and some of their personal characteristics were collected in terms of education and business experience (number of years spent working in tourism). As expected, a large proportion (exactly 40 per cent) of the managers held a bachelor degree in tourism. Although there is one manager who does not have any diplomas, there are three others, who also have a doctoral degree.

The managers have on average 13 years of work experience. The proportion of those who had 10 years of experience or less is significant (42 per cent), but equally significant (20 per cent) is the proportion of those who had experienced more than 20 years working in tourism.

It can be clearly seen that the Hungarian local DMOs and the destinations they are responsible for, are diversified – looking at any of the organisational factors: their size, operational form, or at the characteristics of their employees.

Research results

In implementing the research steps, the first task was the "reconstitution" of the competitiveness position in the pyramid-model applied to the tourism destinations. After that a complex analysis of the Hungarian destinations took place and also the hypotheses were examined.

Competitiveness position measurement

From the several sources used all the potential indicators were gathered, which could be appropriate to measure the competitiveness position. The principal component analysis of

the selected indicators resulted in the definition of two principal components on one hand (Table 4) and in the reduction of the indicator kit to the minimum on the other hand.

Rotated Component Matrix [a]		
	Component	
	1	2
Average number of employees in tourism per year	.942	
Number of guests	.926	
Income from accommodation	.925	
Number of inbound guests	.915	
Income from catering	.913	
Occupancy rate (beds)		.943
Occupancy rate (rooms)		.926

a Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Table 4. Rotated Component Matrix
Source: Papp 2013 p. 91.

The first evolved principal component was labelled the *Key performance indicator* of the destination, while the second (containing occupancy rates) was named as *Capacity utilisation index*.

The two principal components have 93% explanatory power.

In the pyramid-model applied to tourism destinations the competitiveness position can be defined by two principal components: the capacity utilisation index and the key performance indicator. The final shape of the pyramid model with these findings is shown in Figure 4.

The results harmonise with the original pyramid-model: the income and the employment (that is its part according to the tourism superstructure) appear in the key performance indicator. The expectation to have a manageable number of the indicators is also fulfilled as enough to measure the competitiveness position of tourism destinations relatively simply and quickly. The two principal components contain seven indicators altogether.

The result of ensuring that the principal components analysis is useful for practical experts is that the indicators suitable for the measurement of competitiveness have been restricted. One stressed goal of the research was to implement a complex evaluation about the competitiveness position of the Hungarian tourism destinations. To reach this goal a cluster analysis was implemented with the help of the seven indicators, which resulted in the principal components analysis. The first attempt was made to group and standardise the Hungarian destinations.

Figure 4. Final shape of the pyramid-model applied to tourism destinations
Source: Papp 2013. p. 93.

After excluding the overhanging elements (Hévíz and Hajdúszoboszló) the proposed solution of five clusters was found to be stable and professionally reasonable, therefore this was elaborated. The clusters resulting from the cluster analysis were named as follows:

- Destinations with relatively strong competitiveness position: the **number ones**: cluster K5 (5,17% of the destinations).
- Destinations **strong in utilisation**: cluster K4 (6,9%).
- **Significant towns**: cluster K3 (5,17%).
- **Mass base:** destinations with competitiveness positions under the average, but not the weakest: cluster K2 (56,9%).
- Destinations with relatively weak competitiveness position, the **laggards**: cluster K1 (25,86%).

Summarizing the cluster analysis, it can be stated that the destinations can be standardized by their competitiveness position, which helps the complex analysis of the destinations and also helps to explore the power relations.

At the same time the methodology of cluster analysis is not common enough to be used safely and routinely by a DMO manager. Since the aim is that the results of the research would be useful also in practice, I think it is much more useful to give an instrument to the DMO managers, which is easy and simple to use and with which they can determine their own competitiveness position themselves. In harmonisation with this aim the first hypothesis was articulated.

Testing the hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

The measurement-problem of the competitiveness position, determined by the pyramid-model can be solved easily, also in a practically applicable way with the help of the available indices.

It is expedient to create a complex index to measure the competitiveness position really simply. According to the way that the indicators have various units of measurement, the first step must be to make them comparable. Therefore a scale coordination transformation was applied (Barna 2007), to have all the indicators at the same level scale. Thus the indicators became easy to summarize. It is reasonable, however to weight the indicators – practically with the rotated factor weight. The created index was named as destination competitiveness index (DVP – based on its Hungarian name), with the formula as follows:

$$DVP = 0{,}942 \cdot \acute{A}L + 0{,}926 \cdot \ddot{O}V + 0{,}915 \cdot KV + 0{,}925 \cdot SZB + 0{,}913 \cdot VB + 0{,}943 \cdot FK + 0{,}926 \cdot SZK$$

Where
ÁL: average number of employees in tourism (accommodation, catering) per year;
ÖV: number of guests (all);
KV: number of inbound guests;
SZB: income from accommodation;
VB: income from catering;
FK: occupancy rate (beds);
SZK: occupancy rate (rooms).

After substitution of the formula and calculating the indices the competitiveness position of the examined tourism destinations can be explained and featured by one single number (Table 5). The DVP index is mostly appropriate to compare the competitiveness position of several destinations at the same time.

With the examination of the destinations ranking by DVP index, the experiences show that the ranking is in harmony with the results of the cluster analysis. It can be stated therefore that the DVP index can provide results fitting to those results reached by more difficult methodologies. Therefore the competitiveness position of the Hungarian destinations can be explained easily by reference to the DVP index, without an exact knowledge of serious research methods and this index can paint a real picture of the destination's position.

	Desztináció	**DVP**		**Desztináció**	**DVP**
1.	Hévíz	5,86	31.	Szolnok	0,92
2.	Hajdúszoboszló	4,73	32.	Veszprém	0,91
3.	Sárvár	4,14	33.	Orosháza-környék	0,80
4.	Bük	4,05	34.	Kehidakustány	0,78
5.	Siófok	3,90	35.	Gyenesdiás	0,77
6.	Balatonfüred	2,87	36.	Szilvásvárad	0,72
7.	Pécs	2,36	37.	Orfű	0,72
8.	Eger	2,24	38.	Vác	0,71
9.	Visegrád	2,20	39.	Vas-vidék	0,69
10.	Mórahalom	1,93	40.	Balatonalmádi	0,66
11.	Balatonkenese	1,74	41.	Komárom	0,66
12.	Szigetköz	1,68	42.	Mecsek	0,63
13.	Harkány	1,58	43.	Salgótarján	0,61
14.	Nyíregyháza	1,51	44.	Gárdony	0,61
15.	Balatonmáriafürdő és -keresztúr	1,51	45.	Vonyarcvashegy	0,60
16.	Balatonföldvár	1,41	46.	Tokaj	0,59
17.	Velence	1,38	47.	Badacsony	0,58
18.	Egerszalók	1,33	48.	Balatongyörök	0,57
19.	Tihany	1,33	49.	Gyöngyös	0,55
20.	Keszthely	1,19	50.	Esztergom	0,55
21.	Mór	1,12	51.	Kapos-Zselic	0,52
22.	Zsámbék	1,09	52.	Aba-vidék	0,47
23.	Tata	1,08	53.	Mohács	0,46
24.	Berekfürdő	1,01	54.	Sárospatak	0,45
25.	Balaton Riviéra	1,00	55.	Zemplén	0,35
26.	Matyóföld	0,99	56.	Szekszárd	0,27
27.	Fonyód	0,98	57.	Balatonfűzfő–Litér	0,24
28.	Balatonfenyves	0,97	58.	Sátoraljaújhely	0,24
29.	Szombathely	0,96	59.	Rakamaz térsége	0,12
30.	Körös-vidék	0,92	60.	Szentendre	0,07

Table 5 Ranking the examined Hungarian local DMO destinations
Source: Papp 2013. p. 100.

Hypothesis 2

In case of the competitiveness position the success factors of the applied pyramid-model appear as comparative advantage, but in the case of the same destination types the existence of the competitive advantages are determinative.

To prove the hypothesis a much more shaded analysis of the destinations was carried out: the competitiveness was examined within the categories formulated according to the competitors of one another. Altogether four categories were isolated on this basis in harmonisation with the typology of Aubert (2011):

- Beach destinations: the category contains the DMOs around the Lake Balaton, plus Gárdony and Velence (at the Velencei-lake).
- Health tourism destinations: those DMO destinations are in this group which are mainly famous of medical or wellness supply (like Hévíz, Bük or Kehidakustány).
- City destinations: the criterion was here that the DMO should contain only one or two settlements.
- Rural destinations: those which have no clear-cut attractions cannot be ranked in another type and the DMO is also "rural-like": contains more than two but usually more connecting settlements.

Within the groups the competitiveness position was analysed by the DVP index as the first step, and new rankings were created. Since the success factors (situated in the lower part of the pyramid-model) that is the endowments are almost the same among competitors (that is why they can be regarded as competitors) the little differences can be evaluated as exhibiting special unique characteristics. It was reasonable therefore to involve the success factors of the competitiveness potential (next to the competitiveness position). During the questionnaire research DMO managers evaluated their own destinations' success factors – it was necessary to have these evaluations as a base. With the help of the analysis, the situation among the competitors could be mapped and it was also possible to have a much more complex analysis, and to paint a much more detailed picture about the destinations than ever before.

The analyses showed that the competitiveness position is not determined by the success factors of the competitiveness potential, but the position and its improvement depends on competitive advantages. Competitive advantage can appear as the efficiency of the management, the success of the marketing activity, the grounded and expedient attraction development or other development activities – thus mostly these elements which appear in the pyra-

mid-model as *base factors*. The closer examination of the base factors is therefore a further interesting research field.

Conclusions: responses to the research questions

Having the results of the research and the review of the relevant literature, the research questions raised at the beginning of the paper can be answered properly as a conclusion. These answers together can also highlight the logic along which the whole research was built up.

1. Which spatial unit can be regarded as tourism destination?

Destination competitiveness depends on its management, which can influence the competitive position – and also take action to improve it if needed. Therefore it is obvious that a territory can be regarded as tourism destination if it has a management organisation. Recently a new approach was started in Hungary to develop local destination management organisations. Within the Hungarian circumstances therefore those spatial units can be considered as tourism destinations, which have a local DMO (independently from the fact that the DMO might contain one or more settlements).

2. How can the competitiveness of a destination be defined?

Destination competitiveness is not the notion which can be determined by one exact factor or number. As it is a quite complex conception, a theoretical model is useful to describe it.

After analysing several models it can be stated, that the pyramid-model elaborated by Lengyel (2003) for researching the regional economic competitiveness is the most suitable for the examination and research of Hungarian tourism destinations. In this research the applied model was also validated and tested.

3. How can the competitiveness of a destination be measured?

The applied pyramid-model was a useful tool to separate the "ex ante" and "ex post" parts of competitiveness. The "ex ante" part contains the factors which can influence the competitiveness of a destination – that is the competitiveness position (the "ex post" part).

The measurement of the competitiveness position given by the pyramid-model can be easily resolved (also in practice) by the disposable indicators. One of the main results is the identification of an assortment of useable and appropriate indicators – and the other is the DVP index which made the measurement even much easier.

4. What are the characteristics of the competitiveness of Hungarian tourism destinations?

Using the DVP index and other methodologies a very comprehensive picture can be painted about the destinations. According to these analyses there are two outstanding tourism destinations in Hungary: Hévíz and Hajdszoboszló. Unsurprisingly both are famous for health tourism based around water, which is an important and prioitised tourism product in Hungary.

However the analyses also showed that comparative advantages like mineral water or spas are not enough to have good competitive position. Among competitors the competitive advantages are more decisive.

Managerial implications

There is increasing competition in the tourism and hospitality industries: between destinations worldwide, between destinations domestically, and between firms within a destination. As tourism companies need a good management team to become (or stay) competitive, the same is also true for tourism destinations as they too need managerial solutions. Tourism destination management is a new field of management, which has a special task: partly because the manager is not only responsible for a spatial unit (which is the same as what regional managers have to do), but also because the territory is usually a special one (not necessarily defined or connected to administrative borders).

Effective destination management must facilitate visitor experiences and can improve the profitability of the business sector. An appropriate management can contribute to the longer-term prosperity and development of the local community (new jobs, more incomes, etc.). Destination management can also optimise the economic, social and environmental impacts by ensuring a responsible and sustainable balance between economic, socio-cultural, and environmental interests, especially if the destination has a DMO to coordinate and motivate cooperation among these interests.

In Hungary destination management is a more and more important field. As DMOs have been formulated and DMO managers realized the strength they have, they have started to

put actions in place in order to manage a successful destination. It has soon been realized that the way to long term successfulness is to be competitive.

With the help of this research, DMO managers can have ideas and also tools to better destination management:

1) Applying the pyramid-model to tourism destinations it became obvious, how the factors can be separated and which ones can be (or should be) managed and which are to be measured.
2) The principal component analysis also helped to find the best factors to count with in any measurement of the destination. Now managers have an idea how to find out their destionation's position, even with or without DVP.
3) DVP itself can prove to be a useful management tool to compare the competitiveness of destinations. If the analyses show different results than expected, then the managers can take very targeted actions.
4) Finally the DVP-hierarchy presented in this paper can show which destinations can be regarded as "best practice".

Among the aims of this research it was important to have results which could be used by practitioners, by real-life DMO managers to nourish destination competitiveness. Accorrding to the aims, the main result of the research, the DVP index is a useful managerial application, which can also ease the work of DMO managers as it can be easily constructed and interpreted.

Further research directions

The results of the research are helpful for the Hungarian destinations (and DMO managers) to identify where they are along the route compared to the other destinations, or specifically to those destinations which are travelling the same route.

In the research on destination competitiveness there are possibilities to move forward: new analyses can be found in the further application of the created DVP index and the applied pyramid-model has also many unexplored reserves.

The created DVP index can be used for dynamic analysis: with its help the competitiveness position of a destination can be evaluated in time. At the same time the index can be a method to assess the impact of a special activity to improve competitiveness. But it can be easily used to feature the "walk of life" of a destination as well.

Since the destination definition used in this paper can be verified in other countries as well (where DMOs exist), the elements of the pyramid-model can be the base of international

comparisons. If the selected indicators are available in other countries the international comparison becomes possible with the help of the DVP index.

Within the limits of this paper the analysis of the "middle" factor group of the pyramid-model, which includes the base factors, could not take place. The connections among these factors and the competitiveness position can be another interesting research topic, mostly to be examined by qualitative methods.

In the research the most neglected element is the final goal (in the top of the pyramid-model), the welfare (life quality) of the local residents. With the DVP index it is another exciting research area to find connections between destination competitiveness and welfare. It would also be interesting to find out if the success of the destination can really contribute to the quality of the local residents' life. An attempt has already been made to find these connections in the case of Hungarian counties (Papp – Molnárné Barna 2013).

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