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EXPERIENCE PROMISES, EXPECTATIONS  
AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION  
IN TISZA RIVERSIDE TOURISM  
BETWEEN 2010 AND 2016

The comprehensive study is based on the database of questionnaire research in the settlements of Tisza riverside, in the summertime from 2010 to 2016. Inquiry form apart from standard questions, focused on the different elements of the experience on demand or supply side, deepening the query toward the motivation or satisfaction. Issues of research focus on factors influencing travel decisions usually or during actual travel, the intended and actual intensity of the individual experience factors, the satisfaction with tourism product items, the attitude of local products consuming, the accommodations, the spending and spending structure and other travel habits. In addition to the experience-centred approach, product orientation can be traced, and it is also possible to define the characteristics, consumption habits and subtypes of the riverside tourists of Tisza, their preferred experience elements, which as part of the experience basis or the generated experience supply may contribute to the further development of this area. The result of the research is the determination of “the Tisza riverside tourist profiles” according to age groups.

### **Introduction**

Development of riverside tourism (water sport-, eco-, leisure-, fishing-, angling-, or other active-tourism) of the concerning settlements is the breakout possibility of destinations. The empirical facts show that in these rural areas the average spending of tourists does not reach the level of exclusive tourist spending because of the limited availability of extension of the waterside services or the experience elements related to water as the main motivation of the travel. The answer is based on the proportions appearing in the model of the experience components (Gentile et al., 2007, Kóródi, 2012), in the case of the waterside tourism the distribution of experience basis and experience generating is different among the various motivations. In the first pole the experience basis, namely the service supply related to the water experiences is

more significant, in second extreme case the proportion of the services generating experiences in excess apart from the ordinary riverside surrounding. The study, which summarizes the annual research reports aims to provide a comprehensive view of the certain demand characteristics of tourists in the Tisza riverside while the central category is the experience. Based on tourists' travel habits, motivations, used facilities and satisfaction, the typical tourist profiles were outlined primarily determined on the basis of age groups.

### **Theoretical background**

The Tisza River with the length of 962 km (597 km in Hungary) is the determinant part of everyday life in coastal settlements and it is considered as a resource reflected in their symbols and assets. The tourism utilization of the main and side river bed, backwaters, reservoirs, floodplains, structures, ramparts and dams is multifaceted, they can satisfy a number of travel needs based on different motivations. Despite the heterogeneous nature of the Tisza, as a tourist destination, it has everywhere identical supply elements (water-, water sports-, eco-tourism attraction factors) and distinctive elements (events, visitor centers, and the mouths of the tributaries have a lot of attraction as Bodrog, Zagyva, Körös). This heterogeneity is characteristic of all three regions, the Upper Tisza area from state border to Tokaj, than the central part of Tisza to Tiszazug, and the Lower Tisza well. The Tisza Lake as the fourth part of Tisza region has the autonomous destination characteristics with its 127 square kilometers area and approx. 67 km coastline with cycling tour possibility. The settlements taken part in this research include all four territorial parts such as Vásárosnamény and Tokaj (Upper Tisza), in addition Tiszafüred and Abádszalók (Lake Tisza), furthermore Szolnok and Tizsakécske (Central Tisza), and Csongrád and Szeged (Lower Tisza) as well (Well-Press, 2002).

Tourism development projects realized during the considered period (2010–2016) were part of the integrated development measures for the Tisza Region of the National Spatial Development Concept on the one hand, and were implemented in the operational programs of the 2007–13 planning period, on the other hand. Such significant developments with impact on the attitudes of demand and experience idea were e.g. the reconstruction of the castles, mansions, pilgrimages and monuments in the Upper Tisza region, while the completion of fish ladder in Kisköre in the Central Tisza region, the development of public and other transport conditions in Szeged and the reconstruction of the Cathedral, in the Lower Tisza, and the development of Ecocenter in Poroszló in the area of Lake Tisza.

For successful product development in case of standard tourist product as well the experiences should be created (Robert – Hall, 2004) not only in rural tourism but also in several fields of tourism. For this purpose it is required the multiplicity of reserve elements of tourist products. The adventure, excitement, fantasy mobilization such an activity fill an experience creating function, but tourist experiences are as many various as tourist avails services (Michalkó – Rátz, 2005).

The change of management techniques conduced to the modification of development procedures and adaptation new tools and methods. Beside the currently preferred spatial-based and multi-products destination management, in certain regions henceforward it takes part in practice the spontaneous visitor management, or tourism product management based on local endowments, which can be got ahead of attraction management in absence of endowments (Fehér – Kóródi, 2008). One can attain the level of experience management through the product management completed with methods of visitor management development. The concept and content of experience management became more and more familiar for destination (Stamboulis – Skayannis, 2003) with its four stages –performance quality of tourism, tourist’s experience quality, overall satisfaction, revisit intension (Cole – Scott, 2004) – which are analysed in context in researches. The contemplation of model of Aho (2001) is more dynamic with seven stages of experience processes (orientation, attachment, visiting, evaluation, storing, reflection, enrichment), which takes into consideration previous experiences of tourists as well. The same components were defined with constant character by Gentile et al. (2007). Both complexity and multidimensionality are features of tourism experience (Walls et al., 2011), further development depends on the proportion of experience basis and experience generators (Kóródi, 2014). The experiences play an important role in the upgrade of waterfront journeys (Sulyok, 2012), however, it cannot be realized without the tourists’ active participation, it is necessary them to seek the possibility of experiencing, they must be willing and able to immerse themselves in the experience (Zátori, 2014).

### **Material and Methods**

The experience promises, expectations and impact assessment was investigated from 2010 to 2016 in July and August of each year with the students’ participating in the Tourist Police (TP) service. The returning query was took place in the riverside settlements from Tokaj to Szeged settled by the TP service based on a standardized questionnaire with written and oral data collection allowing for wider sampling.

This study was made on the basis of annual research reports, databases and previous papers, comparability was ensured by the same period of time and the same locations of the survey, and only derivative data were compared.

The issues in the survey were as follows:

- three questions referred to the tourists' visit habits (frequency, duration, ranking of travel);
- there was one complex question about motivations, with evaluation of general travel attitudes and attitudes which influenced current travel decision; the enlisted tourist service appeared in two questions;
- the satisfaction per factors and altogether in three questions but in one group by a five-stage scale question;
- the experience expectations and their implementation can be shown in a two-dimensional scale question;
- one question was in accordance with getting into the foreground of experience management, becoming experience promises and their redeeming more stressed for destinations.

The questionnaires were checked in form and content, the database was not cleaned because of the relatively small sample size.

Demographic composition of yearly samples is shown in *Table 1*. The younger age-group is overrepresented, but despite this distorting effect the results can be taken into account because these are the desired segments in riverside tourism.

| Criterion                 |                         | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Number of items (persons) |                         | 237  | 507  | 345  | 403  | 440  | 500  | 312  |
| Gender (%)                | male                    | 46.0 | 42.0 | 56.4 | 54.7 | 51.3 | 40.6 | 50.5 |
|                           | female                  | 54.0 | 58.0 | 43.6 | 45.3 | 48.7 | 59.4 | 49.5 |
| Age-group (%)             | younger than 18 years   | 5.1  | 5.8  | 1.7  | 5.5  | 6.9  | 3.9  | 5.8  |
|                           | from 18 to 24 years old | 18.6 | 26.4 | 26.2 | 25.4 | 16.9 | 13.6 | 29.1 |
|                           | from 25 to 30 years old | 24.4 | 24.9 | 22.4 | 23.4 | 20.0 | 13.8 | 17.5 |
|                           | from 31 to 40 years old | 29.1 | 19.0 | 19.2 | 20.4 | 29.2 | 37.2 | 23.3 |
|                           | from 41 to 50 years old | 13.5 | 13.8 | 19.8 | 15.7 | 11.6 | 19.1 | 16.5 |
|                           | from 51 to 60 years old | 7.2  | 5.1  | 7.6  | 6.0  | 7.1  | 7.8  | 2.9  |
|                           | older than 60 years     | 2.1  | 4.9  | 3.2  | 3.2  | 8.2  | 3.5  | 2.9  |

Table 1 Demographic composition of samples  
Source: field research, authors' compilation

In the analysis, the previous visit or the length of stay on the riverside of Tisza were taken into account as the background variables. Annually by turn 76.8–83.3% of the respondents belong to those guests, who already have experiences in the region, so the opinion of this group was taken into consideration separately.

## Results

### Tourists' features regarding visiting and staying habits

The visiting and staying habits have been appraised by two aspects, by the length of stay of this journey on the one hand and by the number of arrivals to the riverside of Tisza to spend holiday, on the other hand. The average length of stay of the respondents was higher (from 4.4 to 7.6 guest nights) than the national average (from 4.0 to 4.23 guest nights) in the period under survey, the proportion of transit tourist was minimal (2.1–3.2%). Most of the respondents spent 1–4 days and the assumption, that the tourists arriving for the severalth time are staying longer in a larger proportion, was only valid for two years. The regularity of the return characterized the respondents, they arrived in the same proportion for the first, second and third time, together 53.2–72.6% of the surveyed. The changes of aspects' proportions are shown in *Figures 1 and 2*.

The cross table analyses show that the length of the second or third visits was the longest but the lengths of the following recurrences did not grow. The return in several but shorter periods of time gives in to conclude the nostalgic nature, proven services facilities and guaranteed experience content of travel. This phenomenon can be tracked for all categories.

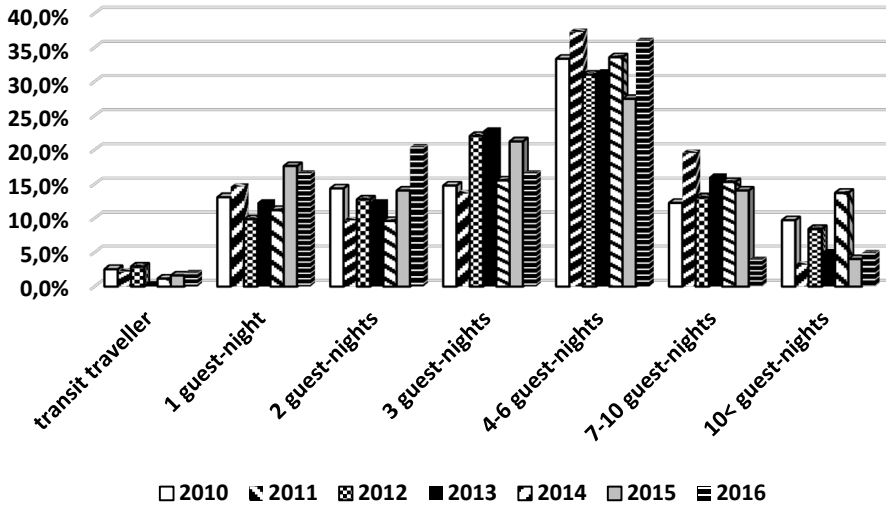


Figure 1 Respondent's proportion based on their staying time (%)  
 Source: field research, authors' compilation

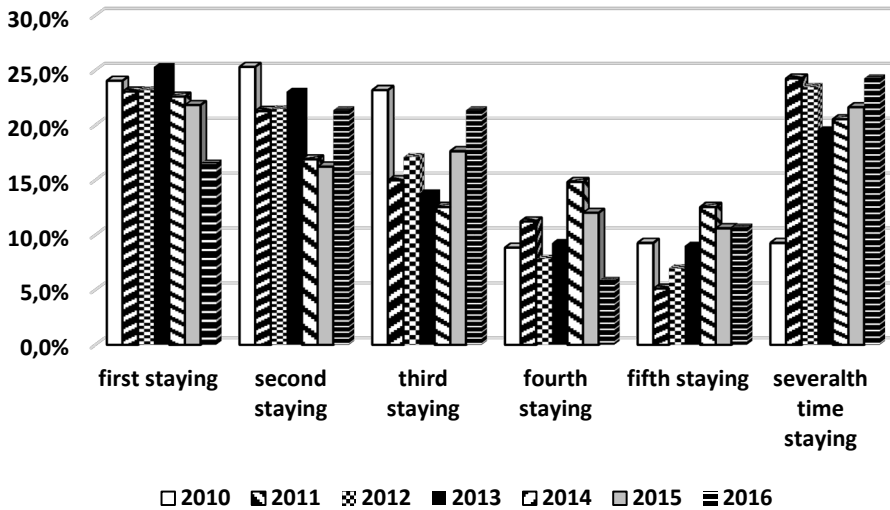


Figure 2 Respondent's proportion based on their frequency recurrence (%)  
 Source: field research, authors' compilation

However a kind of polarization can be observed. Tourists, who have short-term staying habits are risk-averse, their one or two days' staying is influenced by the weather, they set out on a journey supposing favourable forecast. The other pole is the tourists, who are staying above average. They are real loyal guests of the area, they arrive several times and they choose the Tisza riverside for longer period. *Figure 3* and *Figure 4* demonstrate the changes of aggregated proportions in two enhanced years (2011 and 2015, these were the most prominent years of period under survey represented the phenomenon).

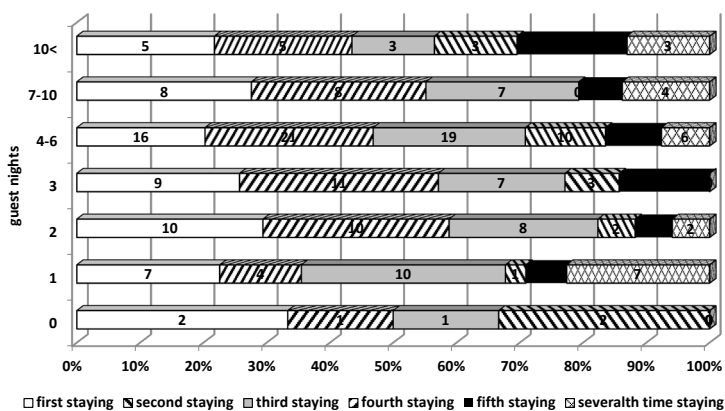


Figure 3 Respondent's proportion based on their features of the visit (%) (2011)  
 Source: field research, author's compilation

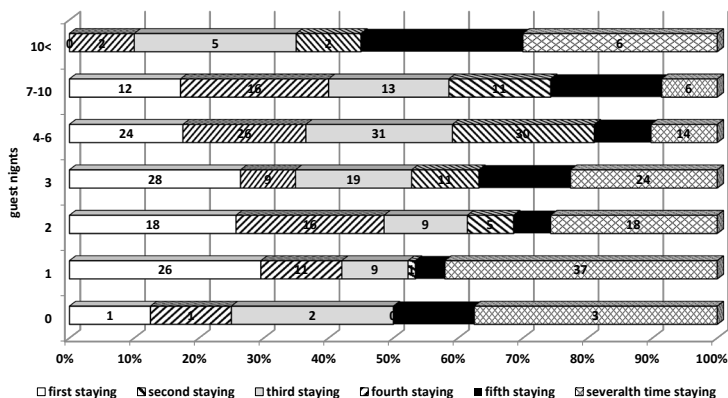


Figure 4 Respondent's proportion based on their features of the visit (%) (2015)  
 Source: field research, author's compilation

The social character of travel was the third viewpoint of analysis, principally with whom arrived the respondent in the area. The *Figure 5* shows the possible answers and the results.

At the beginning of the period under review Tisza riverside was definitely the favourite summer holiday site for friends and colleagues. Then one kind of restructuring is perceptible, while the proportion of other guest groups was growing, one can meet a sharp decline in this group. Currently, the holiday in Tisza riverside is rather organized along relatives and family relationships. The results can be taken into consideration in the compilation of segment-specific products with keeping to the fore the needs of age groups and society.

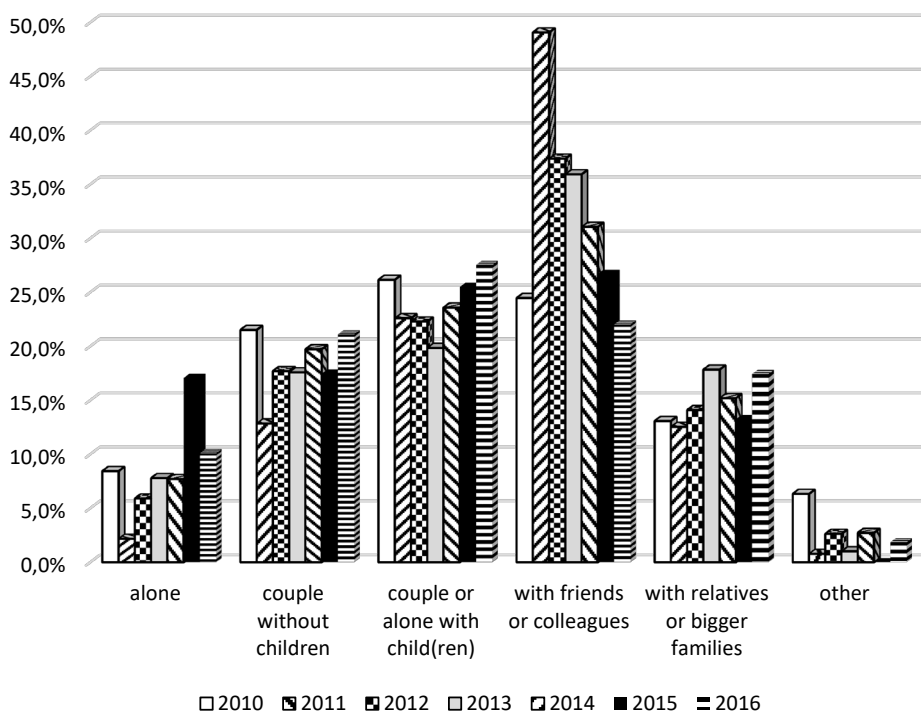


Figure 5 Respondent’s proportion based on their characteristic of visit (%)  
 Source: field research, author’s compilation



### Tourists' motivations visiting Tisza Riverside area

The motivations were expanded annually into eight, then divided into ten groups in a simple choice question as the primary goal of travel and stay. As shown in *Figure 6*, the main motivation is relaxation, all in all the water (water tour, beach, fishing) has no such big role. The attractiveness and motivational effect of programs, events, and festivals is fluctuating.

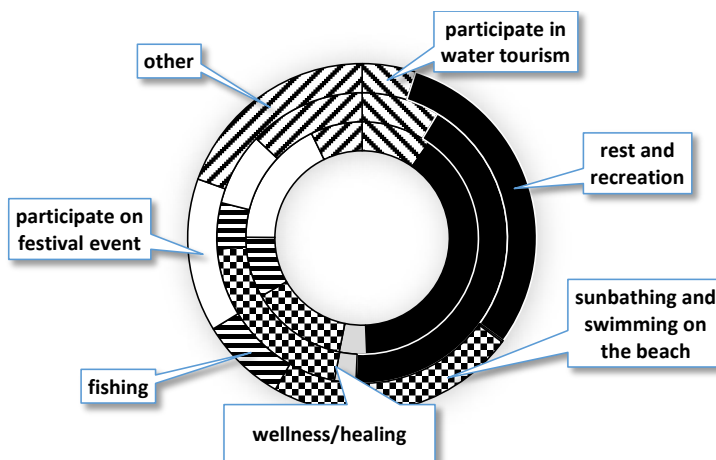


Figure 6 Travel motivations (%) (2010-2012)  
 Source: field research, author's compilation

Based on the *Figure 6* one can separate the primary, secondary, and tertiary motivations for travel. Respondents did not inquire about the spa and wellness facilities during the summer period, nor was this period for birdwatching. Cycling tourism as a newly appeared motivation (because of newly built cycling infrastructure) required a similar part of fishing tourism, river tours and festivals can be referred as the secondary purpose of visitors. Cross-analysis highlight the leading guest segments of the region, the younger couples and group of young friends. They need experiences planning, leisure time management.

From 2013 the motivations affecting the travel decision were searched with a new, by twos scaled question type. It was about that among the 12 chosen determining factors which ones and what measure are taken into account in travel decision generally and currently.

As shown in *Figure 7*, the main factors influencing travel decisions are generally income, motivation, cost, and experience. Proportion of responses in the current trip is similar but less significant, and even the time factor has been pushed back and has not significant impact. The experiences have come to the fore both the anticipated and the real experience. The habituation and the repeated return are reflected in the convergence of the general and the current expectations. Accessibility and mode of transport have no such role as many years ago. The demand and wishes of the co-travelers have been of high value. This result corresponds to the composition of the respondents, the large proportion of friendly, collaborative groups and families in a wider sense.

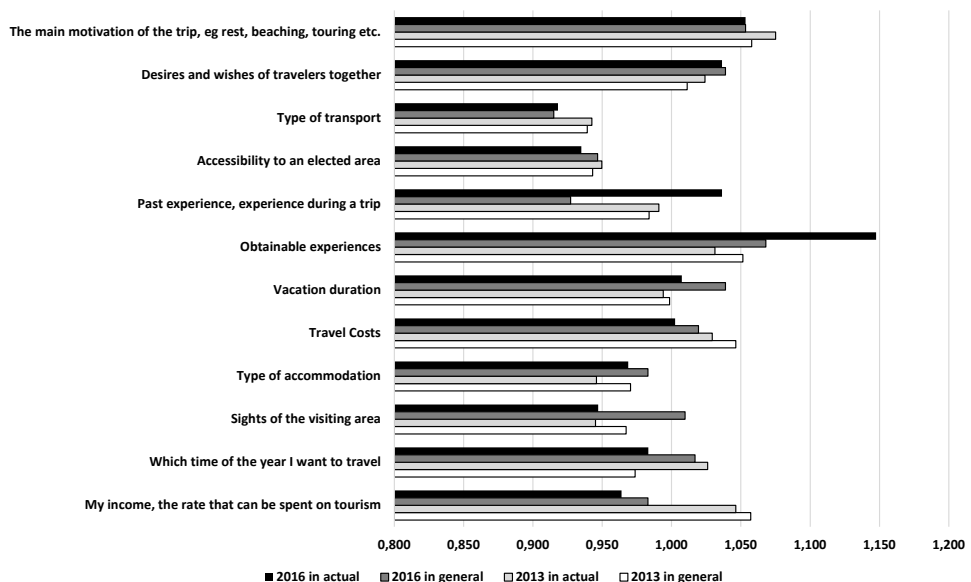


Figure 7 Factors determining the travel decision in general and in actual (%)  
(2013 and 2016 years)

Source: field research, author's compilation

### Visitor satisfaction

The most complex question in the questionnaire concerned the degree of satisfaction. The respondents had to answer by five-stage scale evaluation.

The average of the scores for the services is shown in *Table 2* in 2015, and the tendency of the previous five years by arrows. In 2016 this question was removed from the questionnaire because satisfaction was directly reflected in the next experience feedback question.

Guests are particularly pleased with quality of accommodation, natural sights, tourist information services, fishing and cycling facilities. Satisfaction with the program range has increased. As a positive sign one can evaluate the increasing average score from 2012. Almost all aspects of satisfaction improved compared to the previous year. Guest estimates that the programs are average level, but their expectations for local hospitality and the presentation of natural attractions are getting higher and higher. They are less and less satisfied with the waterfront, accessibility and value for money.

| Factor   | Average satisfaction in 2015 on five-stage scale | Difference from total average satisfaction | Tendency of satisfaction change from 2010 |
|--|--|--|---|
| cycling facilities                               | 4.89   | above average                              | ↑↑  |
| festivals, cultural events                       | 4.49   |  | ↑   |
| the diversity of organized programs              | 4.48   |  | ↑   |
| fishing possibilities                            | 4.48   |  | ↑↑  |
| quality of accommodation                         | 4.44   |  | ↑↑↑                                       |
| accessibility and quality of tourist information | 4.40   |  | ↑   |
| quality of catering facilities                   | 4.31   | average                                    | —   |
| cultural programs, attractions                   | 4.25   |  | —   |
| natural environment, sights                      | 4.20   |  | ↓↓↓                                       |
| shopping opportunities                           | 4.18   |  | —   |
| entertainment, disco, dancing, nightlife         | 4.18   |  | —   |
| the hospitality of locals / service providers    | 4.18   |  | ↓↓↓                                       |

| Factor                              | Average satisfaction in 2015 on five-stage scale | Difference from total average satisfaction | Tendency of satisfaction change from 2010 |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| public safety                       | 4.13   | below average                              | ↓↓↓                                       |
| cleanliness and services of beaches | 4.10   |  | —   |
| accessibility, transport            | 4.01   |  | ↓   |
| value for money                     | 4.01   |  | ↓   |
| water quality                       | 4.00   |  | ↓   |
| water sports facilities             | 4.00   |  | ↓↓  |

Table 2 Average satisfaction per service factor  
Source: field research, authors' compilation

The aggregate rating resulted a more favorable rating. Every year 65.4–81.9% of respondents felt at least good. The average was 3.78–4.28, much higher than the average by factor. The high score predestines the tourist's return, however, a steady decline in average satisfaction was a warning signal until 2014, and then a slow growth began again.

The recommendation attitude shows the satisfaction in the most complex relation. Yearly about less than ten percent of respondents refused to answer. Authentic and accurate communication can reduce this ratio, the promised experience, the feelings of the guest's imagination should be provided to the guest so that they do not disappoint, do not feel deceived. Tourism providers can prepare for fulfil their promises. This is the smallest uncertainty factor, even ten percent dissatisfaction is significant and can be made reduced.

*Table 3* summarizes the age groups' visit habits. The young tourists stay longer than others, they arrive with friends, the elderly ones rather return, they are more satisfied and they arrive with their family. In the case of young tourists, there is a higher proportion of river tour and entertainment motivation than average, while middle-aged tourists prefer to relax and do beach activities, while in the elderly, fishing is the more frequent than the average goal of vacation on the Tisza riverside.

| Factors defining tourist profile                    | tourists younger than 30 years | tourists from 30 to 50 years old | tourists older than 50 years | The multitude's average values |
|---|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| staying time  | 1.24                           | 0.89                             | 0.89                         | 5.12 nights                    |
| return inclination                                  | 1.00                           | 0.96                             | 1.21                         | 3.21 times                     |
| traveller alone                                     | 1.13                           | 0.96                             | 0.87                         | 18.84%                         |
| traveller with friend(s)                            | 1.87                           | 0.68                             | 0.30                         | 27.66%                         |
| traveller with family                               | 0.80                           | 1.04                             | 1.32                         | 61.92%                         |
| satisfaction level                                  | 1.00                           | 0.99                             | 1.07                         | 4.26 points                    |
| motivation for river tour                           | 1.26                           | 0.99                             | 0.40                         | 16.43%                         |
| motivation for relaxation                           | 1.00                           | 1.08                             | 0.64                         | 15.43%                         |
| motivation for fishing                              | 0.81                           | 0.96                             | 1.65                         | 31.86%                         |
| motivation for sunbathing and swimming on the beach | 0.99                           | 1.04                             | 0.86                         | 22.85%                         |
| motivation for entertainment, festivals and parties | 1.15                           | 0.95                             | 0.85                         | 13.43%                         |

Table 3 Factors of the tourist profiles compared to the multitude's average in 2015 (average=1.00)

Source: field research, authors' compilation

### Experience expectations

The extent of the realization has also been evaluated on a five-grade scale from 2012, in which case a major distorting factor to be considered was the circumstance that most of the respondents did not reach the end of their stay, so any change could have occurred. *Figures 8-9-10* show the expectation and the realization together, or the frustration in comparison with previous expectations and the experiences' notions in 2012, 2013, 2014 years. (These were the most prominent years of period under survey represented the phenomenon.)

It can be proved that there are some positive differences – the experiences were more intensive than the previously promised ones – as regards the items with accented marketing communication, however, some segments disappointed especially in view of the lack of programs and entertainment possibilities. In 2013, the guests were more disappointed compared to the previous year, this result indicates a kind of deficiency in marketing communication, as the communicated experience and the experience promise are different from the real fulfillment. One of the reasons for this dissent can be taken into account this contradiction.

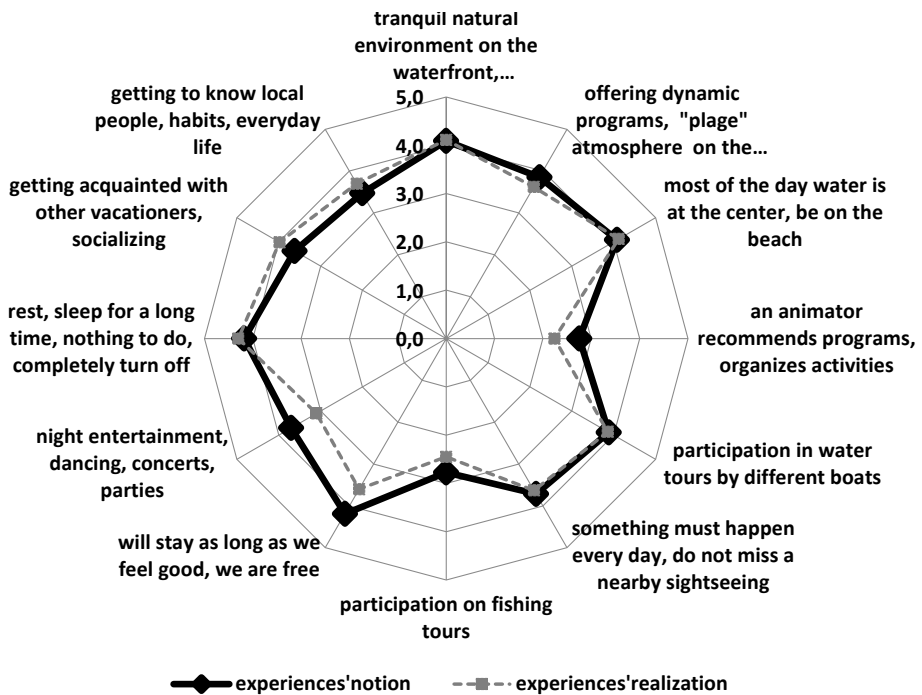


Figure 8 Comparison of the average intensity and fulfillment of the experience desire (2012)

Source: field research, author's compilation

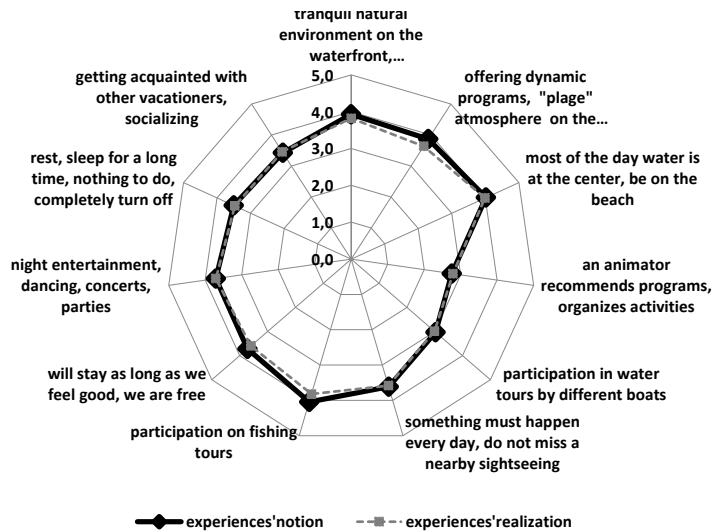


Figure 9 Comparison of the average intensity and fulfillment of the experience desire (2013)

Source: field research, author's compilation

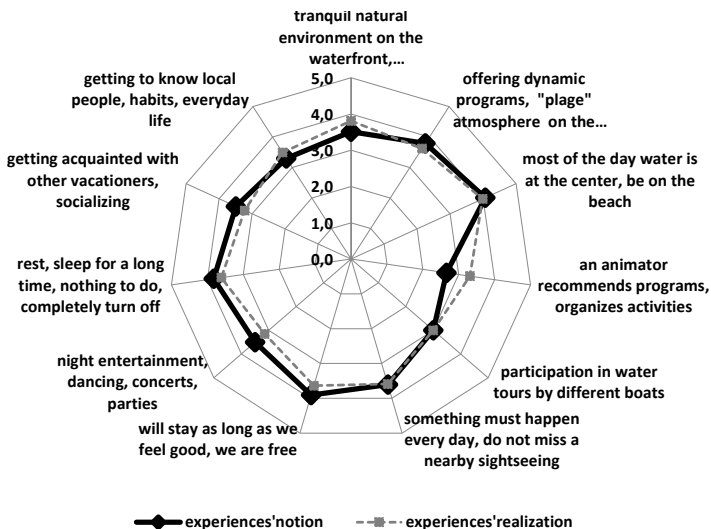


Figure 10 Comparison the average intensity and fulfillment of the experience desire (2014)

Source: field research, author's compilation

## Conclusions

Successful tourism planning requires not only the “hardware”, it is not only the services that need to be created, but also in the course of communication it needs to develop the unity of anticipated and real experiences, in which the tourist empathizes and intends to feel a desire to visit, and his travel decision based on this feeling. The research also indirectly sought answers to the question what factors might make Tisza as an attractive destination and what factors hinder tourism in the region. In campaigns promoting the Tisza, it is an important and useful information.

There is no doubt that Tisza riverside has tourist attractions, it should be necessary to develop the existing ones for becoming marketable and to expand the supply of product items, so they can be full-time products covering the entire period of the stay based on the guest's choice. Since the main objective is to provide recreation, a corresponding service offering should develop and it need replace unnecessary, unused and expensive services. Because of high propensity of return it is advisable to consider this consumer habit creating a regional tourist card.

Visitors in friends' groups are typical tourist in the area, so it have to target different types of friends' groups and compose products for them. Services of the settlements in Tisza riverside would be successful when in addition to the general family-preferred communication, the segment designated by the research would be preferred.

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