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**THE ROLE OF VILLAGE TURISM IN THE RURAL DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES OF JÁSZ NAGYKUN
SZOLNOK COUNTY**

Doctoral thesis

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1. INTRODUCTION

For 150 years, the development of Hungarian village tourism has been in flux. However, in the mid-1980s, it underwent a kind of re-birth. This renewal is based on the traditions of successful village hospitality going back to the years before World War II, as well as Western European models. Today, there are more than 5,000 village hosts providing tourists with approximately 30,000 beds.

For most of the twentieth century, rural Europe as a whole underwent social and economic change typified by a gradual loss of its predominantly agricultural character. Rural areas in Europe are characteristically natural regions, each possessing its own uniqueness. The charm of a specific region might lie in the singularity of its landscape, human activities, architectural styles, buildings, customs, traditions and/or languages. Precisely these special regional characteristics require development, in order to improve the touristic potential of villages for tourism. Such improvement of rural regions focuses on the development of the local natural and cultural resources for touristic purposes, because it is these elements alone which make a village unique enough to attract the tourist. Consequently, active participation of the local population is needed to supply the tourists' needs. These manifest themselves in various touristic products and services.

The basis of village tourism is nature and the social/cultural environment, but these are fragile at best. Therefore, development should always keep in mind the principles of sustainable growth.

The main objective of village tourism is to provide supplementary income to the rural population and especially to agricultural producers. In this way, existential problems might be mitigated, standards of living increased and, last, but not least, make locals stay and prevent migration of generations that follow. Besides the economic and social functions of village tourism, the ecological role is also significant. Done properly, such development can do much to protect a healthy natural environment, maintain the uniqueness and versatility of the land, preserve natural habitats and protect ecological systems. Additionally, village tourism plays an important role in maintaining rural lifestyles, by preserving the communal and cultural values of the countryside and village communities.

Today, village tourism includes a wide range of activities, including equestrian, bio, and agro-tourism. The latter two can increase the touristic appeal of local agricultural products. Other activities which are a part of village holidays include cycling, boat tours, sporting activities and eco-tours. Wine tourism, cultural fairs and gatherings introducing local traditions or craftsmanship are also popular mainstays.

There are many reasons for the popularity of village tourism. The most prominent may be the longing of urbanites to escape the hustle and bustle of fast city living in the more relaxed, natural atmosphere of the countryside. The more easygoing population of the countryside, combined with a rural environment far away from the stresses of city life, provides the cityfolk with a relaxing retreat from everyday routine, leaving them with a memorable experience which lasts even long after their return to the city.

In a world shadowed by environmental pollution, increasingly more people appreciate a healthy lifestyle. A holiday spent in the countryside offers a perfect opportunity to live just that.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In my research, I investigated what results village tourism has achieved as one of many sectors of tourism, which is developing in a dynamic way. Due to its versatility, it may both directly and indirectly effect the local economy, community and environment.

In the literature, I examined sustainable growth, regional inequalities, the concept of regional and rural development and the present state of Hungarian villages. First, I gathered the interpretation and meaning of the concept of village tourism in all its complexity. I also analysed the set of conditions necessary for village tourism to operate, exploring how it is regulated, what institutional system exists, how it is supported, the elements of hosting, specialities of related marketing activities and the present situation of village tourism in general.

I then focused my research scope on the village tourism of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county, initially examining its assets, potential and readiness for tourism. Next, I reviewed regional, rural and tourism development strategies from the aspect of what role they assign rural tourism and how they develop the necessary infrastructure in the micro-regions of the county. I also investigated the county's micro-regions as to what extent they can apply for funding from the rural development program. Such funds effect the development of the countryside through the development of village tourism.

My interrogation of the literature spans several chapters. Using a complex approach, I have blended the national and international literature with my focus areas and the most up-to-date information on them. In this way, the literature interweaves through the entire structure of the paper.

Because documentation of the conditions related to my foci in the county has only been continuous since 1995, I begin my examination of village tourism only from this date onwards. My research will go to assist the Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County Village Tourism Association.

With the National Association of Village Tourism, we prepared a qualification system for the village boarding houses. On the basis of the prepared data sheets, we also qualified the village hosts. From the end of 1996 up until the beginning of 1997, a qualification committee has evaluated the qualifications of the county village boarding houses and their hosts. Unfortunately, because not all hosts requested qualification, the survey does not give a complete picture. My processing of the data sheets served as the basis for the first database on the capacity of guest houses in the village. In comparison, the Central Statistics Office only records data about the capacity of village boarding houses and the number of guests hosted since 1998.

In the summer of 2000, I prepared a survey about the village boarding houses of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county that have been registered. The objective of the survey was to learn what the county village hosts have experienced, as well as their opinions, suggestions and plans for development, in support of the improvement of county village tourism. The survey was supported by The Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County Village Tourism Association, the TISZAINFORM office, and the clerks of the settlements.

The questionnaire had to be filled in by the hosts themselves. The TISZAINFORM office forwarded them to the clerks of the county settlements and then they were sent to those hosts registered. The completed questionnaires have been sent back to the TISZAINFORM office by the clerks, by post.

The basis of the data collection are the village hosts registered by the county clerks. Unfortunately, the survey is not complete. Approximately only one-third of all village hosts are registered. 107 village boarding houses in 28 settlements have been surveyed. The sample shows a representation of 31,4% in the survey. (The number of village hosts was provided by the 1999 data base of the Central Statistical Office's Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county directorate. The questionnaire included mostly closed questions, however, to give a clear picture about the opinions and plans for development, at many points open-ended questions were asked. The questionnaires were processed using SPSS software. I have examined the success of county village hosting with tables prepared during the processing of the data.

Many institutions helped in collecting data using their own databases: the CSO, CSO's Jász-Kun-Szolnok county directorate, the Jász-Kun-Szolnok County Regional Development Agency Kht., TISZAINFORM, the local governments, village tourism associations. I have supplemented these data using information received from face-to-face conversations and interviews.

Data processing has been done by applying simple statistical methods. (ratios, mean, range). First, I analysed the data of the number of guests recorded by the CSO for the years 1998 and 1999. Analysing the data of these two years made it possible to observe changes. I further analysed the data of the registered village hosts and village accommodation capacities, and then compared them with the county tourism data, to establish the importance of village tourism within county tourism.

I also examined county village tourism on a regional level, comparing the number of guests received and the capacity of county village hosts, and then compared these figures with the data of two other counties (Hajdu-bihar and Szabolcs Szatmár-Bereg) of the Northeastern region. I also calculated the proportion of Jász-Nagykun-szolnok county within the region. Finally, I compared the data received from the county to the national figures, to be able to establish the position of county village tourism on a national level. Calculating intensity ratios, I examined the success and efficiency of village tourism.

I received detailed data from the Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County Statistics Office, which made it possible to examine the county village hosts on a regional level. The analysis has drawn attention to links which were hidden so far.

Recommendations were made possible by the survey, the data, and the information collected through data-processing. After synthesising the definitions of village tourism and analysing the statistics, I have drawn conclusions using the primary results of market research, and established the main characteristics of village tourism in Jász-Nagkun-Szolnok county.

My final summary serves to help local councils, tourism associations and managers of the region to prepare for village tourism.

3. THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

3.1 Research of the position and potential of village tourism

3.1.1 The significance of the tourism sector

Tourism has become one of the world's most important social-economical sectors, and also the most important factor of international trade.

According to one prognosis, touristic demands will increase, although at a slower pace than today.

The development of tourism in a particular region also serves the preservation of nature, historical places and cultural traditions. At many locations, eco-tourism and cultural tourism are developed with the objective of preserving values. This is important especially in those regions where resources are limited for such preservation programmes.

In most countries, the development of tourism has priority. This is mainly due to its favourable economic effects. In Hungary, both incoming tourism and domestic tourism are especially significant today, and will continue to be so in the near future. Apart from the economic possibilities, tourism also has potential social, cultural and physical effects. Its effect is, therefore, overall complex in nature, the effects appearing primarily in economic improvement. However, these are also connected to areas of regional and town development concepts, such as environment protection, cultural life, and the social environment.

In Hungary, it is necessary to use tourism to serve the development of the countryside. This could help rural regions line up to the European centre. Hungary's accession to the European Union includes preparatory tasks in the field of tourism. These can be linked to such preparation that gives rural tourism development priority.

3.1.2 Sustainable growth

Any number of overcrowded beach resorts may serve as prime examples of the environmental problems caused by tourism. As tourism is present in all sub-systems of the environmental system, it effects the physical, social-economic and mental environment as well. The capacity of resort areas can be measured nowadays. Measuring the capacity includes all elements of the environment and it must include all elements.

From the point of view of village tourism, I agree with Enyedi's view (1996), which emphasises a decentralised regional and local development:

“If development could be maintained, it would result in a decentralised regional development. This would moderate the interregional mobility of population and conserve village population. This would not mean the isolation of the region, as the development of communication would not be restricted by environmental issues. The role of local developments would strengthen, in contrast to national programmes. Development will adapt to the natural environment, the settlements, the local economies and the versatility of local communities.”

In Hungary, village tourism shows mixed results. The differences are most visible in the natural resources, geographical location and human resources. The regional inequalities are reflected in the hosting capacity of village tourism.

3.1.3 Regional inequalities

The position of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county worsened by the end of the 1990s to the point that the future has now become uncertain. Considering the regional differences, we can say that the difference between developed and underdeveloped regions has increased.

In Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county, by the end of the 1990s, the role of the local governments in representing their interests is becoming increasingly significant in the design of regional and rural development programs. The number of civil organisations compared to the national mean figures is slightly low, and that of businesses operating calculated per 1,000 people is also lower than the national mean. On the basis of these figures, we cannot expect the county to develop dynamically in the near future. We accept the primacy of regional development politics and its means to bring about positive changes, as it can reverse the above mentioned process. However, such means can potentially cause dramatic changes in the area.

The modification of the local council regulation of 1994 has restored the regional governing role of the counties. Additionally, this change eliminated the lack of middle level governance, so the county has become capable of preparing regional development programmes that build from lower levels to receive government subsidies. The modification of the law did not entrust the local county authorities with regional development tasks, but has ordered the establishment of county regional development councils. In these councils, both economic participants and regional organisations are represented. In this way, the mutual interests of both can come into play. (Enyedi, 1996)

Although Enyedi suggests there has been a positive change, the experience in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county shows that there are many conflicts, as the participating local council representatives favour county and regional objectives to the direct objectives of the settlement. The attempt to obtain dominance and acquire financial resources has arisen in the relationship of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county and the Northern Great Plain region. In my opinion, a longer learning process and common ground will bring about changes in attitudes sooner or later. The support provided by the European Union, especially from those sources supporting rural development, will probably speed up this process.

3.1.4 Rural development

In spite of the favourable geographical location of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county, only few villages have been able to link

up with the lifeblood of the town located nearby. Because of technological and infrastructural backwardness, there is hardly any foreign investment in the villages. At the same time, in Western-Europe, the small premises that are built for flexible production and demanding skilled labour are generally located in rural areas. Poor communication facilities are not only bad for business, but also for spreading information. Financial-business services are almost completely non-existent in the villages. The villages are not easily accessible, so this could mean that both tourists and investors will avoid them.

3.2 The position and operation of village tourism

3.2.1 The meaning of rural tourism

European attitudes and understanding are extremely variable. Along these lines, there is for example neither a common European definition for rural or practice of agrotourism. The Hungarian situation is quite the same, even within our own borders. A number of authors have defined village tourism examining it from a certain aspect, and their differing approaches also show the heterogeneity of village tourism.

Due to the complexity of village tourism, certain features need to be emphasised, in order to give predominance to the direct linkage of the natural environment (green tourism) to the agricultural environment, agricultural products or accommodations (agritourism), and farms (farm tourism).

Studying the village tourism in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county, my experience is that leisure time activities have become more important. The example of the county shows that village tourism is not present on its own but together with other touristic products.

In the following, I will present these features of village tourism from a different perspective. Village tourism also means the linkage of touristic products. It is connected to those touristic products which provide leisure time activities in the village. The leisure time activities of village tourism are determined by the natural, economic and social environments of the destination. Leisure-time activities could, for example, be activities connected to the uniqueness of the local natural environment, such as hiking, horse-riding, and other sports, or e.g., becoming acquainted with hobby-type activities, arts, and cultural heritage.

As motivation and environment are decisive factors, village tourism can be defined as holiday tourism, which can be perfectly combined with the elements of cultural and active tourism (horse-riding, hiking).

In my opinion, synthesising the above mentioned points, village tourism can be illustrated with the following diagrams.

The concepts of rural tourism



Village tourism is a kind of economic activity and utilisation of the environment which uses resources to create touristic products. The basis being the attractions of the countryside and through this does it offer typical leisure time activities, accommodation and boarding.

In this way, tourism helps maintain the given areas from a regional, economic, and social point of view, and allows them to renew themselves.

Village tourism contributes to the maintenance of the country:

- to strengthen rural environment and develop the village
- provides a supplementary income to rural families
- contributes to the preservation of rural culture and its revival.

Village tourism can be best assessed in its socio-economic and environmental roles. At the same time, village tourism includes all benefits of the hosts and local/rural community. On the basis of all that has been mentioned above, I have prepared a four-squared matrix from the points of view of its role and usefulness. In this matrix, I have included those

characteristics of village tourism which make it significant. Organising it into a matrix has separated usefulness, which will become important primarily for development purposes. But individual usefulness must also be important for the community, especially if there are plenty of hosts in the village.

3.2.2 The institutions of village tourism

To organise and administer tourism requires so many elements that only the settlements and local councils can undertake them. The local councils have to 'enter' tourism, i.e., to play the role of co-ordinator, especially in the areas of marketing and product development, while promoting investments between the touristic participants to establish co-operation especially on a regional level among potential partners.

The example of settlements which have been able to develop by finding their own ways show that the mayor plays a distinctively important role. He is able to 'shake' the village community, and show them that the situation is not hopeless, to generate the improvement of the economy.

Several mayors (the mayors of Nagykörű, Cserkeszőlő, Berekfürdő) have recognised village tourism as one of the possibilities to improve the local economy as an alternative for supplementing one's income. Village tourism also directly stimulates the income of the village hosts and service providers. It stimulates the local market indirectly and creates and increases sources for settlement development.

In Hungary, due to the present economic and social position of the countryside, the co-ordinators' roles have to be complemented by tasks which help the development of rural settlements in many fields, e.g. accessibility of information and community development. Besides co-ordination, development and management will still be decisive factors of the institution.

The co-ordinating tasks:

- to manage touristic attractions: to explore touristic attractions, searching for ways of utilisation, searching for business partners, inducing cooperations and organisations, helping enter the market
- initiating touristic developments: providing a strategic program and concept, searching for partners and resources, inducing program development, co-ordinating TO DO programmes
- consultations: to launch touristic programs, develop products, marketing activities
- organising events: cultural, sport, art, nature, Village Day, etc.
- information management: setting up a touristic data bank, tourist information, communication and PR activities, continuous communication with professional, civilian, organisations, local councils
- management of the community: initiations for a busy social life, representation of interests on a micro region, county, regional level. to expand and strengthen the system of relations the settlement, to introduce vocational training, organising programmes that develop the community.

In Hungary, some settlements could become successful by joining village tourism. Pusztamérgeş and Mesztegnyő are good examples, while in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county, Berekfürdő can be brought up as an example. At the same time, we have to keep in mind that several settlements which are backward from a social and economic point of view do not see any other means of development as a potential break away. Village tourism being the only solution, they attribute too much importance to it. Getting high expectations results in disappointment in several cases, as village tourism does not solve the problem of agricultural overproduction and the problems of the region.

In my opinion, to manage village tourism successfully, the declared role to develop the country, the intention to develop shown in the concepts are not enough. It is necessary to have a natural and man-made environment, appropriate economic potential and social activity to make the settlement an attractive touristic destination by making it offer a unique, peaceful, close to nature atmosphere. Settlements possessing these features are outstanding in our region and enjoy the benefits of village tourism.

As village tourism is connected to all sectors of the economy, all areas are concerned with its development and local councils play a key role. The ministry responsible for the management of tourism, stimulates the development of touristic products by offering bids/tenders. In this way, the development of village tourism was subsidised by resources from bids.

3.2.3. The elements of village hosting

In rural regions, the capacity of village accommodations are enlarged by other commercial accommodations, which can be typical of that particular region, having their unique atmosphere. For example: boarding houses, pensions, "keyhouses", farmhouses, and campsites. The versatility of accommodation implies a choice of certain programmes/services.

Experience indicates that the village houses joining village tourism need investments and reconstruction. The new houses are constructed in a practical way, provide a proper level of comfort and are capable of providing appropriate accommodation.

We have found several solutions for providing board:

- Self-supply: when the guests provide their own board, for e.g. in the case of "keyhouses", resort houses, or farmhouses.
- Bed and Breakfasts: where breakfast is provided and included in the price
- Full board: when breakfast, lunch and dinner is provided or
- Half board: where breakfast and lunch or meal is provided.

Half board or Full board depend on the request of the guests. The boarding house can provide occasional meals, such as barbecues, a grill party for all guests, or a dinner.

Providing services to the guests can improve the quality of hosting, the guest will be more satisfied, and this can in turn serve as an effective means for competition. It is advantageous to have a well-planned range of services in the competition among boarding houses involved in village tourism.

Village tourism leisure-time activities can be provided by:

- the village
- the boarding house

Both venues have their own attraction, but only their combination will give a remarkable holiday experience.

The boarding house can not influence or can hardly influence the programmes offered by the village. The programmes of the boarding house are designed by the boarding house itself and are improved on the basis of the guests' needs.

3.2.4 The marketing of rural tourism

The programs offered are based on the features of the village. These programs and the programs of the guest house complement each other, so it is useful to design the programs of the guest house based on the features and the program facilities of the village

It is a characteristic of rural tourism that it offers a complex product that the guest house and other touristic providers develop together. Therefore, co-operation and joint entry are advantageous in the market presence.

In rural tourism, the natural, cultural and community values are part of the attraction. Therefore, co-operation cannot be restricted to the co-operation of the hosts, the service providers in tourism and the entrepreneurs, but the municipality and civil organisations can also contribute a great deal towards "marketing" the village.

Successful examples show micro-regional organisation and communal marketing efforts at their early stages. Interests are reconciled and, eventually, communal marketing will become necessary.

The Jász-Nagykun -Szolnok county experience shows that at the successful guest receiving settlements, a communal marketing core has formed, interests have met and still meet, which soon leads to the necessity of communal marketing.

3.2.5 The current state of rural tourism

Presently, village boarding has become an increasingly visible and wide-spread form of spending a holiday. This is well documented in the national data of capacities and number of guests received.

The capacity and occupancy data of village hosting in Hungary

Name	1998	1999	Change (%) 1998=100
Hosts (unit)	4893	5533	113
Total capacity (u.)	26430	29768	113
Total guest (cap.)	81081	104015	128
foreigner	36977	42862	116
domestic	44104	61153	139
Total guest nights	431272	530485	123
foreigner	220669	255944	116
domestic	210603	274541	130

Survey in Jász Nagykun-Szolnok county

36 % of the settlements of the county joined village hosting. The micro-regions take part in village hosting at a different level of intensity, e.g., the ratios of the micro-regions Karcag and Tiszafüred are high.

The number of settlements with guest houses in the county

Micro-regions	Number of settlements		Ratio of settlements (%)	
	in general	in the sample	in general	in the sample
Jászberényi	18	4	23	14
Karcagi	7	7	9	25
Kunszentmártoni		4	18	14
Tiszafüredi	12	6	15	22
Szolnoki	17	4	22	14
Törökszentmiklósi	10	3	13	11
Total	78	28	100	100

Source: own calculation

Among the settlements in the survey, Berekfürdő, Cserkeszölő and Abádszalok play an outstanding role. 52% of the filled-in questionnaires arrive from these three settlements. At Berekfürdő and Cserkeszölőn, tourism based on health spas

is the most significant at Abádszalók, the holiday resort of Lake Tisza.

Guest houses surveyed in the county

Micro regions	Returned questionnaires (Number)	Returned questionnaires (%)
Jászberényi	13	12
Karcagi Berekfürdő 25 pcs=67%	37	35
Kunszentmártoni Cserkeszölő 12 pcs=70%	17	16
Tiszafüredi Abádszalók 19 pcs = 65%	29	27
Szolnoki	7	6
Törökszentmiklósi	4	4
Total	107	100

Source: own calculation

3.3 The rural tourism in Jász-Nagykun- Szolnok county

3.3.1 Its development and institutional system

Due to the multi-sectoral character of tourism, the major parts (infrastructure investments) of the financial resources allocated to micro regions and settlements promote the development of tourism indirectly, while the minors part (2%) directly promotes the development of tourism .

There is substantial difference in the financial support for tourism of the micro-regions, but this corresponds to conceptual tourism development. (The health tourism of the Karcag micro-region received a significant amount of the support.)

Primarily, the health and thermal spas were supported, along with their Touring Hotels, which belong to the local governments. But support was also given for individual products to enter the market for sale, and for a study establishing the future.

The preparation of the country development programs has begun. In 1999, there was the county Agricultural Structure and Rural Development Strategic Program. In the county, one of the areas of rural development is rural tourism. The prime beneficiary of the program may be the Kunszentmárton micro-region. Due to the complexity of rural tourism, the programs indicated in the strategy influence village tourism and support micro regional development directly and indirectly (human resources, environment protection, infrastructure development).

Direct tourism development funds, grouped by aim, 1998-2000

Aim	Amount ('000 HUF)	Vm (%)
Thermal, recreational bath reconstruction	150471	56,6
Museum reconstruction	47127	17,7

Touring-Hotel refurbishment	57623	21,7
Reconstruction of the Takács farm	6000	2,2
Touristic-centre establishment	2800	1,0
Study	2082	0,8
Total	266103	100

Data collected from the Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok Regional development agency

3.3.2. The current state of rural tourism in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county

Rural tourism is quite substantial in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county and the changes in trends also show favourable direction. The accommodation capacity has increased considerably and has, therefore, become substantial, when compared both to the Northern Great Plain region and the national level. The increase in accommodation capacity was not followed by the same increase in the number of guests, which shows the problem of effectiveness. The utilisation of rural lodging capacity is not satisfactory and the direction of change is not favourable. Among the rural lodgers, there is a considerable difference in capacity utilisation that further differentiates the already segmented accommodation providers.

When investigating the role of rural tourism, it can be observed that there is a substantial difference in the number of guests received, capacity figures, which are shown by the specific indicators. The two successful micro-regions are Karcag and Tiszafüred. The rural tourism of the prominent Berekfürdő in the Karcag micro-region is based on the thermal bath. In the Tiszafüred micro region, Abádszalók is prominent as a holiday resort, offering possibilities for waterside recreation and water sports.

In the county, domestic guests are interested in village tourism in a decisive ratio. The most substantial segment is the family. In the county, rural accommodations represent an above-average level and are well-equipped. They offer a pleasant stay with a green area for recreational purposes and they also offer outdoor cooking and sport facilities for people who want to spend their holiday actively. The services offered by hosts are incomplete, meals are only provided by few of them.

The environmental burden caused by rural tourism is not considerable.

The number of guests received in Jász Nagykun-Szolnok county

Name	1998	1999	1999/1998 (%)
Number of guests	5677	6690	118
foreigner	467	671	144
No of guest nights	24768	28735	116
foreign	3127	4852	155
Average length of stay(in nights)	4,4	4,3	98
foreign	6,7	7,2	107

Source CSO data

The capacity of village hosting in Jász Nagykun-Szolnok county

Name	1998	1999	1999/1998 (%)
Number of hosts	265	333	126
Number of rooms	593	771	130
Number of beds	1454	1888	130
Total capacity	1468	1922	131

Source : CSO data Jász Nagykun-Szolnok county Statistical Yearbook 1998

Village hosting in the tourism of Jász Nagykun-Szolnok county

Name	Commercial accommodation		Payment ahead service		Village hosting				Grand total	
					number		In total percentage %			
	1998	1999	1998	1999	1998	1999	1998	1999	1998	1999
Rooms	1194	1309	407	405	593	771	27,0	31,0	2194	2485
capacity	9429	10353	904	883	1468	1922	12,4	14,6	11801	13158
Guest	95445	87506	6271	5805	5677	6690	5,3	6,7	107393	100001
foreign	28372	24485	929	720	467	671	1,6	2,6	29768	25867
number of nights	391513	347567	47010	33951	24768	28735	5,3	7,0	463291	410253
foreign	172732	156957	318ö	4314	3127	4852	1,7	2,9	179039	166123

Source: CSO data (Jász Nagykun-Szolnok county Statistical Year book 1998 1999); own calculations

The rural guest houses, when determining the results of their activities, classified themselves into two groups: successful and not successful. The identification of the differences showed the factors of success.

Among the micro-regions, there is no difference in whether the ratio of the successful guest houses is dominant or not. One condition of successful hosting is that comfort be provided for the guests with separate entrances or a separate building, separate bathrooms and independent use of a kitchen or dining room, properly equipped guest house or room equipment. The successful hosts offer their guests many possibilities for recreation in order to complement their needs.

The other means to become a successful host is through strong marketing activity: focusing on information channels, membership in social and professional organisations, and cooperation in developing village tourism. Successful hosts have developmental objectives, which they want to themselves meet. They expect help with advertising activities, entering the market and also from the local government for the development of rural tourism.

Village hosting is operated on a family business basis and hosts are motivated by the opportunity to supplement income. The precondition of being a successful host is being professionally prepared for receiving guests, which can be provided by education and vocational training. The number of guests returning is also higher in the case of successful hosts, which justifies the fact that success can be measured in objective terms.

The portrait of an average successful guest house

According to the survey and successful scrutiny, I have selected those features that are characteristic of the majority of successful guest houses, but represent at least 50%.

- Provides a facility of full comfort with separate entrance or an independent building.
- Provides 2 doublebed rooms The rooms are 15 m² in size.
- There is no separate bathroom and toilet for every guest room but provides a separate bathroom and toilet for the guests and provides a kitchen and dining facility exclusively for the guests
- In the guest area there is a TV, radio, fridge and iron
- Full board or common meals are not provided for the guests
- A green area is provided for recreation within the premises and facilities for outdoor cooking There is no playroom
- It is a certified guest house certification 3 “sunflowers” .
- In 1999, the average price of a room was 900 HUF / person or 3700/ room. Holiday checks were not accepted
- At the settlement, you can go for a carriage ride, to watch folk craftsman work, go hiking horse-riding and there are other programs available.
- In 1999, most of the foreign guests were from Germany. On average, the Hungarian guests stayed 4.9 days, while the foreign guests stayed 4.6 days at the guest house. Most of the guest were families. 37% of the Hungarian guests and 24% of the foreign guest returned
- The hosts are familiar with organisations that help hosting, rural tourism , are a members of a national or local, professional or civil organisation that supports the development of rural tourism. The host has no business contact with a domestic or foreign travel agent
- The host receives information from the rural tourism association. He/she is satisfied with the information provided.
- The host motivation to board guests is to supplement the family income
- The host plans to upgrade the activities of the guest house in the next 3 years, mostly emphasising the advertising activity. He/she does not plan to install a new guest room, its refurbishment, to tidy up the premises, improving the level of comfort in the house, introduce new services or to take part in vocational training. training .
- The host does not expect help to host guests
- The hosts would participate in the development of the rural tourism but would not like to be a member of an association, would not pay a membership fee or undertake organisational tasks
- Family members help the host, on average 1.42 persons.
- The host does not run any other business that would be a source of income. Highest level of education is secondary school, he/she is 49 years old and speaks only Hungarian.

Rural tourism in Jász-Nagykun - Szolnok is like a mosaic. There are large differences between the micro-regions and settlements. Their involvement in rural tourism varies.

The features of the country, types of attraction, the general and touristic infrastructure basically determine the conditions and presence of tourism in the life of the settlement. The suitability for rural tourism along with the introduction of demand made village hosting successful in certain settlements. In the majority of the settlements, the weak attraction cannot be increased with substantial marketing effort. Rural tourism will not be substantial in the life of these settlements. The third group of settlements has the potential of successful rural tourism, but without substantial developments (investments). Only a few of the settlements guest houses may be successful.

Comparison of Jász Nagykun-Szolnok county village hosting and the characteristics of village tourism

Rural tourism in general	In the county
Complex terminology (complexity, incorporates lot of activities (catering, program organisation)	In most cases, providing accommodation, complementary service is not provided like meals, organising programs The guest houses offer the program of the settlement as free time activities.
In a state of spontaneous development	According to occupancy figures the micro-region Karcag (Berekfürdő) and the micro-region Tiszafüred (Abádszalók) have passed the stage of spontaneous development and is in a stage of planned growth
Has no mass tourism characteristics	In case of Abádszalók, it is based on mass tourism for 6weeks in summer. At Berekfürdő, the indoor health bath is popular from spring to autumn with a lower guest concentration
Based upon not only the local natural values, takes greatly into consideration the culture, folk and lifestyle of the local habitat	Natural values (the lake, heath spa) are dominant. According to the guest houses, this is the only attraction for guests.
The guest house sells its own agricultural products that provides further income	Agriculture and tourism has almost no connection , meals are provided by few guest houses.
The market entry, bookings are done by organised travel agents or marketing organisations.	The market entry, bookings are done by the guest houses themselves. They are supported by the rural tourism associations with their promotional activity .

4. RECENT OR NEW RESULTS OF THE STUDY

1. In the national and western European literature, the concept of village, country and rural tourism are approached differently due to their complex nature.

I have classified and illustrated the different rural tourism terms by taking the literature into account. The figures show the following relations:

The rural tourism is an economic activity and environment utilization that uses the local resources for the development of a touristic product: based on the attraction of the country it offers the option of active recreational activity that is typical for the village environment and an opportunity of accomodation and meals.

In this way, tourism helps to preserve and renew the particular environment from a regional, economic and social point of view.

2. When studying the tourism of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county, I discovered another typical factor. Based on the discovered relationships, I gave a new definition for rural tourism:

Rural tourism also means the combination of tourism related products. This is combined with those touristic products (types of tourism) that determine the recreational possibilities in the village environment.

The recreational program options of rural tourism are determined by the destination's natural, economic and social environments. The recreational program options may be a special activity related to nature, such as hiking, riding, sport, hobby activities, discovering arts or cultural heritage.

Therefore, rural tourism - by decisive motivational and environmental factors - is a kind of holiday tourism that can be

well combined with the elements of cultural and active tourism (horse-riding hiking).

3. I have introduced the tourism of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county and evaluated the potential of rural tourism as a micro-region. I have analysed the county's rural tourism occupancy and capacity figures and co-related them with the strategic development programs. Based on these results, I have identified the micro-regions to be considered for support in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county. I have determined that the micro-regions take part in rural tourism with different intensity. The role of Karcag and Törökszentmiklós micro-region is outstanding. Karcag micro-region's share is the largest from the regional development support, also the Kunszentmárton micro-region may be the beneficiary of the regional development program of the county .

I conducted a detailed survey among the county's village guest houses (supply elements, quality , competence). I have determined that the village accommodations represent a good and average level and the services of boarding are incomplete.

I have compared the county's rural tourism characteristics with the general characteristics of the rural tourism and highlighted the differences. It is typical of the county's rural tourism that it is based only on natural values, agriculture has no connection with tourism . The market entry, bookings are done by the guest houses themselves.

4. By cross analysis, I have investigated the main characteristics of successful and unsuccessful village guest houses. Based on these findings, I have uncovered the following co-relation: there is no difference between the micro-regions in the sense whether the ratio of the successful or unsuccessful guest-houses is dominant or not.

The pre-conditions of successful guest accommodation are the following: providing comfortable guest accommodation, targeted and market-specific service and the programs, competence in hosting and strong marketing activity.

The village hosting may become profitable by offering programs, if the ratio of accommodation service and program provision is more or less the same.

I have drawn up the portrait of a successful guest house.

5. THE PRACTICAL FEASIBILITY OF THE RESULTS

The results call for the need of the integrated development of rural tourism. In Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county, apart from a couple of settlements, one cannot speak of planned development of rural tourism on a settlement level. Although there are ideas, they have not manifested into a supply created on purpose, i.e. a supply that can have a brand attached to it. The preparation of the village communities, and the design and implementation of conditions of long term development are essential for the conscious effort that the result of the research also may help.

The results obtained when investigating "success" support the necessity that the training of the village hosts must be renewed. The vocational training listed in the National List (of Vocational Training, "OKJ") must be supplemented by special programs. In the special programs, instead of the classic transfer of knowledge, the personal development must play the leading role. This will help the identification of local opportunities and will be the initiator of local developments. The transfer of product development and marketing information is important where the problem of efficiency and quality of hosting appears. The direction of product development can be determined by the "success" research .

The analysis of the county's rural tourism can aid the professional activity of rural tourism associations. It can also help prepare development plans, programs that aim at funds from domestic or EU sources. The constant update of the database strengthens the competitive potential that may be utilised not only by the individual guest houses but by the professional associations and managers of the micro-regions as well.

The decision makers' choices can be founded upon the criterion that the micro-regions and settlements compete for resources for infrastructure developments that directly and indirectly develop rural tourism.

The result of the survey indicated a medium level of development in the capacity. For an improvement in quality and for the installation of a quality assurance system, expert support is necessary. The expert system can be modelled on Western European examples and on well-known domestic initiatives. I recommend the design of an expert system that is based on the county/micro-regional associations of the rural tourism.

In education, theoretical knowledge and the results of its practical application may be utilized. By synthesizing the knowledge and by describing the research results and the adaptable model of rural tourism, the training is extended by new elements. In the training of touristic professionals, professional knowledge must still remain to be emphasised. Besides obtaining the knowledge, solving complex tasks and cultivation of proper attitude must receive a larger role, such as e.g. the development of environment consciousness. This aspect becomes an increasingly important element in the

realisation of better micro-regional and settlement quality.

6. PUBLICATIONS IN THE FIELD OF STUDY

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