

UNIVERSITY OF MISKOLC
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS
Doctoral School of
“Enterprise Theory and Practice”

Anett Tózsér

**Competitive tourism destination:
developing a new model of tourism competitiveness**

PhD. thesis booklet

Miskolc, 2010.

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NAME OF DOCTORAL SCHOOL:

**DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF
ENTERPRISE
THEORY AND PRACTICE**

HEAD OF DOCTORAL SCHOOL:

PROF. DR. ISTVÁN SZINTAY
professor
candidate in economic science

LEAD RESEARCHER:

DR. ISTVÁN PISKÓTI
associate professor
director, Institute of Marketing

Miskolc,
2010.

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1. Rationale

The globalization processes currently taking place in tourism, the rapid and constant change of the tourism sector and the gradually intensifying competition between the different tourist regions all require quicker and more flexible changes and reactions from the macro- and microenvironments of tourism. Therefore, the managerial and operational processes in tourism urge alterations and reforms. *The managerial and operational structure of tourism is under reevaluation now, gradually being replaced by a modern management and operation system, the tourism destination management (hereafter TDM) regional and organizational framework.* The purpose of establishing this new destination management system is to increase the competitive value of any given destination by destination branding. Destination management is based on the traditional, complex and integrated system of tourism planning and operation, but with greater emphasis on the “*principle of regional concentration*” – being an important factor of regional competitiveness – and on more conscious and purposeful regional *co-operation*. The principle of *complexity* obtains a different role which means a more effective use of areas shared with other sectors. On the other hand, it assumes a more intense expansion of the supporting infrastructure of tourism besides developing the basic infrastructure of tourism as well. In addition, the underlying principle of competitive development is a *sustainable* and *innovative* approach.

Competition amongst tourist destinations has become more intense in recent years. The question is whether these resort areas are able to recognize, influence and manage the defining factors that ensure the competitive edge.

The topicality of the subject area is justified by a process currently taking place in Hungary which attempts to establish a more standardized and up-to-date operational framework of tourism than ever before. The elaboration of the tourism destination management framework would require the following steps of planning and operation:

- establishing the principles of destination delimitation
- defining the regional levels
- building up the network of destinations and regional levels
- ensuring the organizational and financial background of destination management
- setting the duties and responsibilities of the destination management organizations
- establishing an efficient operating mechanism
- developing an efficient monitoring system

In order to achieve the above mentioned steps invitations to tender were announced in the course of 2009 which first called for the establishment of local then micro-regional and finally, regional tourist destination management organizations and systems. Thus the topic I have chosen – which will be capable of measuring the competitiveness state of tourism destination management systems – is a current issue.

2. Purpose, structure and methodology of the research

2.1. Purpose of the research

The main aim of my research is to establish a new model of tourism competitiveness. Besides, it will attempt to reveal the factors of effectiveness of the model and explore the links. Unlike the existing national and international models, this new model is more complex and is based on a multi-level comparative study which enables us to explore deeper and more integrated correlations. The model examines the competitiveness of a destination from the viewpoints of the tourists, the local people and of the experts involved in tourism. The purpose of the model is to safeguard the interests of all three groups. Protecting the interests of the target groups contributes to the maintenance of long-term and sustainable competitiveness in the tourism sector. The model unfolds the factors and their points of connection as well that assist with promoting the interests of the target groups.

2.2. Structure of the research

In the first half of my dissertation I am going to present the tourism destination management framework in relation to competitiveness and its effects. In the second half of the dissertation I am going to demonstrate the results based on the examination of various national and international models of tourism competitiveness. The main aim of this is to present the views of some researchers of tourism concerning the most influential factors that affect tourism and competitiveness of any tourism destination. I am going to embed the phenomenon of competitiveness in tourism into the subject of sustainable tourism and competitiveness in economy, and then I will examine the links. After having identified and classified the most significant factors of tourism competitiveness, I will take a look at five different international models of tourism competitiveness. By getting to know the structure of these models of competitiveness, and by looking at the different elements and their correlations both refine the factors that define tourism competitiveness and their possible areas of use. After evaluating the models in question, I will demonstrate a new and unique model of tourism competitiveness not yet discussed in national or international tourism-related literature. In the future, this model could be used for measuring the competitiveness state of any given tourism destination in Hungary as well as for revealing the factors influencing regional competitive edge most. I have chosen the Mátra Region for testing my model.

2.3. Methodology of the research

I am going to examine the influential factors of tourism destinations from the points of view of the tourists, the local people and of the experts working in the tourism sector. I have chosen the Mátra Region for my research because this micro-region had submitted a registration tender for establishing a micro-regional office prior to the introduction of the national TDM framework. As a consequence, this micro-region is planning to set up a micro-regional TDM centre, after the establishment of the local TDM offices. Mátra Region happens to be the geographical area for the micro-regional TDM centre. Thus my research looks at the tourists, local people and experts involved in the tourism of this micro-region and its settlements. I strongly believe that the examination of the competitiveness state of this region is necessary. First of all, it is essential to measure

its current competitiveness state. Secondly, it is essential to identify the factors influencing its competitiveness most. Exploration of the competitiveness state of the Mátra Region as well as of the factors influencing its tourism competitiveness may affect later trends for development in this micro-region. Although this new model will be applicable to any other destination, in this dissertation I am going to analyze the correlations with regard to the Mátra Region only by examining its tourism competitiveness state.

2.3.1. Hypotheses

The formulation of the hypotheses was based on specialist literature studies, personal professional experience and consultations with recognized experts of tourism such as Piskóti, I. and Puczkó, L.. In my opinion, the long-term competitiveness of a destination should be examined from the points of view of the tourists, the local people and of the professionals involved in the tourism sector.

1. Tourists

1.1. The most important factors of travel/holiday for tourists are: accessibility (1), value for money (2) and choice & characteristics of attractions (3). Tourists in the Mátra Region are most satisfied with accessibility (1), value for money (2) and choice & characteristics of attractions (3).

1.2. Availability of supporting infrastructure of tourism such as health service, telecommunication, public toilets, and public safety is considered less important than infrastructure of tourism itself including the range, quality, catering services and recreational facilities of the visited holiday resort.

2. Local people

2.1. According to the local people the economic effects of tourism contribute in greater proportions to improving the quality of their life than the social, cultural and physical impacts of tourism. People living in the Mátra Region also think that the economic effects of tourism contribute in greater proportions to improving the quality of their life than the social, cultural and physical impacts of tourism.

2.2. The longer people live in the region in question (the stronger the bond is), the less satisfied they are with the effects of tourism on the quality of their life. And thus they see their living environment (less attractive) and less competitive.

3. Professionals involved in the region in question

3.1. Tourists consider the defining factors of travel/holiday more important than those working in the tourism sector. Tourists visiting the Mátra Region rank these defining factors lower than the tourism experts themselves.

3.2. Local people consider the positive effects of tourism on the quality of their life more significant than those working in the tourism industry. Locals in the Mátra Region feel the positive effects in greater proportions than those working in tourism.

During my research I first defined some field-related key terms, then revealed the links and last decided on the research methods.

2.3.2. Key terms

There are two major types of tourism competitiveness models according to specialist literature works (Jancsik, A. 2009): on the one hand, there are the explanatory models. On the other hand, there are models which are able to measure the competitiveness positions of specific destinations. Explanatory models explore the factors of tourism competitiveness, whereas measuring models reveal indicators that can show tourism competitiveness. The model I have developed is an explanatory one whose main purpose is to explore the factors affecting tourism competitiveness. Several tourism competitiveness related research do not make a distinction between factors and indicators as regards elements affecting tourism competitiveness. Therefore, they are not able to show correlations between the elements. Defining indicators that either construct the factors or measure/diagnose tourism competitiveness is not the purpose of this dissertation. Furthermore, exploring semi-indicators of tourism competitiveness is not the purpose of this dissertation either, but to explore factors of tourism competitiveness as a whole. I will carry out research in the field of tourism competitiveness measurement in later works. Based on the previously mentioned information in this paragraph, I would like to make a distinction between these two terms:

- *Factors of tourism competitiveness.* These factors influence competitiveness in tourism. They are also able to increase the competitive edge in tourism. I will attempt to reveal these factors in the process of developing the new model.
- *Indicators of tourism competitiveness.*
 - Firstly, these are elements constructing the factors (for example, the “attractions” factor could include the following indicators: the variety of attractions such as natural and cultural attractions, and programmes etc.)
 - Secondly, these elements do not necessarily influence tourism competitiveness, but are able to assess and diagnose competitiveness in tourism, for example, number of guests and nights etc. In other words, they are the consequences not the influential elements of tourism competitiveness (Jancsik, A., 2009).

Questions of the questionnaire used asked about some subjective factors of tourism competitiveness.

- *Subjective factors of tourism competitiveness.* These are the factors that may influence tourism competitiveness. Usually a certain percentage of these factors such as climate, security and choice of holiday resorts etc. cannot be expressed in numbers or can only be measured in terms of their constructing components. Their importance depends on subjective judgement. The other group includes the real (“purely”) subjective factors of tourism competitiveness. These factors such as image and motivation etc. cannot be assessed by statistical tools.
- *Objective factors of tourism competitiveness.* These factors such as number of guests and nights etc. can only be measured by statistical data. They can be called indicators because they are able to assess and explore competitiveness in tourism in

the first place. This dissertation does not aim at examining and revealing the objective factors of tourism competitiveness exclusively.

2.3.3. The examined correlations

I am going to take a look at the following links in this dissertation:

- links concerning the defining factors of competitiveness of any given destination and the destination in question (the Mátra Region) and thus the competitiveness index of the Mátra Region;
- links between the rankings of the three target groups.

1. Net of correlations

- Evaluating and ranking the importance of the defining factors during travel/holiday from the point of view of the tourist in the Mátra Region. Disclosure of the links between these factors.
- Evaluating and ranking the importance of the positive effects of tourism on the quality of their life from the point of view of the local people in the Mátra Region. Disclosure of the links between these factors.
- Evaluating and ranking the importance of the factors affecting tourism competitiveness during travel/holiday in the Mátra Region from the point of view of the tourism professionals. Disclosure of the links between these factors.

2. Net of correlations. Examining the links between the three target groups based on the above mentioned viewpoints. This net of correlations manifests itself in the various groups of questions of the questionnaire used regarding the locals as well as the tourists. This research method gives us the opportunity to compare the opinions of the tourists, the local people and the tourism professionals as well as to reveal the correlations.

2.3.4. Research method

The examination of the correlations of the new tourism competitiveness model was carried out by *quantitative research*. Quantitative research methods can be used in statistics, data analysis, comparative survey research and evaluation of results (Babbie, E., 2003).

Questionnaires were used for gathering data. With the help of the different groups of questions the structure of the new model makes it possible to reveal multi-level correlations. Questionnaires were designed for all three target groups.

There were 85 questions addressed to the tourists.

There were 57 questions addressed to the local people.

There were 144 questions addressed to the tourism professionals.

The questionnaires included both open-ended and closed questions. On top of all this, I also used a five-item Likert Scale to gain a better understanding of the respondents' opinions. The scale ensures opportunity for comparative study (Babbie, E., 2003).

Methodology of the mathematical-statistical analysis

I was looking at two sets of questions when evaluating the answers in the questionnaires coming from the tourists, local people and tourism professionals using mathematical-statistical analysis:

- what is the hierarchy of the expected factors of competitiveness intensified by contrasting opinions regarding travel/holiday in and outside the Mátra Region.
- what similarities we can find between the rankings of expected factors during travel/holiday in and outside the Mátra Region.

I used *discriminant function analysis* of the SPSS software to answer the first question and *concordance analysis* to answer the second question.

I was looking for those generally expected and awarded factors amongst the generally expected and awarded factors of the Mátra Region that explained the dependent grouping variable by a multiple discriminant function. The method is analogous to multiple regression, but in this case the dependent variable is a variable which indicates dichotomous groups.

There are two underlying differences between cluster analysis and discriminant analysis that justify the use of discriminant analysis over cluster analysis:

- discriminant analysis belongs to the “learning with teachers” way of classification. In other words, we want to find those variables which unambiguously prove that the classification of the pre-set groups is correct.
- reliability and statistical checking of the variables that are part of the classification can be traced easily.

Discriminant function analysis. One of the main goals of statistical data analysis is to examine the contrasting opinions of the respondents regarding the generally expected and the awarded factors during travel/holiday in the Mátra Region. That is which variables express the contrasting opinions markedly on the level of statistical reliability. The grouping variable marks the expected group of factors and the awarded group of factors in all cases. This method is analogous to multiple regression where the calculated dependent variable is the discriminant coefficient. With the help of this method I tried to identify those variables that provide the highest correlation, determination of the original grouping variable and the calculated grouping variable (Marija, J.N., 1993; Székelyi, M. – Barna, I., 2004). The described case was carried out by the “Stepwise” and “Enter” methods of the discriminant analysis of the SPSS software. I am going to present and define the above named parameters. The results of the application and classification of the method are justified by the canonical correlation, the eigenvalue and the values of Wilks’ lambda (Székelyi, M. – Barna, I., 2004).

Concordance analysis. The use of concordance analysis is justified by one of the significant purposes of questionnaire evaluation: this method can be used to prove the correspondence between the rankings of opinions. The correspondence ensures the verification and validation of opinions (Lukács, O. 1987). Concordance analysis made it possible to compare the different questions that appear in the questionnaires and check their significance.

Geographical area of sampling

The geographical area of sampling was the Mátra Region. The survey included nine settlements out of the forty-five of the region in question which are the following:

- Gyöngyös (Gyöngyös, Sástó, Mátrafüred, Mátraháza)
- Bátonyterenye (Nagybátony, Maconka, Kisterenye)
- Pásztó (Pásztó, Hasznos, Mátrakeresztes)
- Szuha, Mátraterenye
- Kisdána, Domoszló, Markaz and Nagyréde

The magnitude of the survey sample

The magnitude of the originally planned sample was *500 questionnaires*. The viewpoints of the tourists are the most significant in examining tourism competitiveness because tourism competitiveness is dependent on growth in tourist traffic. Therefore, the planned sample was the biggest in the case of the tourists, triple the number of the local people and tourism professionals. The proportions of the sample were the following:

- tourists: 300 people (10 % foreign, 90% domestic)
- locals living in the region in question: 100 people
- tourism professionals of the region in question: 100 people

Number of collected questionnaires was 356 which is 71% return ratio.

The proportions of the survey sample were the following:

- tourists: 215 people (71% return ratio)
- locals living in the region in question: 87 people (87% return ratio)
- tourism professionals of the region in question: 54 people (54% return ratio)

Intervals of completing the questionnaires:

- tourism professionals: 01. 06. 2008. - 30. 08. 2008.
- local people: 25. 05. 2008. - 30. 08. 2008.
- tourists: 01. 06. 2008. - 30. 08. 2008.

The survey can be considered *representative* because the results proved to be statistically significant of the region in question with the use of the different indicators.

The process of sampling

During the completion of the questionnaires I personally visited:

- *mayors and deputy mayors of five settlements* (these were Bátonyterenye, Pásztó, Domoszló, Kisdána and Markaz). With their help the survey of opinions of the locals, civic organizations, owners of major attractions, commercial and family-run accommodations became possible. Furthermore, it became possible to ask tourists visiting these tourism suppliers in the above mentioned towns.
- *the owners of the majors commercial accommodations in the named towns and cities* (Hotel Ózon – Mátraháza; Avar Hotel – Mátrafüred; Hungest Hotel Galya – Galyatető; Vincellér Panzió – Gyöngyös; Kemping – Sástó). With the help of the owners of these accommodations it became possible to ask the opinions of the tourists and tourism professionals.

- *the owners and operators of some of the major attractions in the region* (Kisnána Castle and Pásztó Museum). The owners of the named attractions helped in asking the opinions of the tourists and tourism professionals.
- *one of the offices of Tourinform, Hungary* (Tourinform Gyöngyös). Staff helped in asking the opinions of the tourists and tourism professionals.
- *a tourism committee* (Tourism Committee of Gyöngyös). The committee did not return any questionnaires.
- *Károly Róbert College*. One of the major employers of the region. Staff lives in and around Gyöngyös. Questionnaires completed by the staff of the college helped to evaluate the opinions of people living in Gyöngyös and its surrounding settlements.

Asking the opinions of the *tourists and tourism professionals* was realized at the commercial & family-run accommodations and attractions with the assistance of the owners of the attractions, commercial accommodations, the mayors and deputy mayors of the settlements and in person. The distribution of questionnaires was determined by the ratio of tourist traffic and tourism organizations. I collected the questionnaires personally from the tourism suppliers and organizations. Questionnaires completed by tourists and tourism professionals were returned from twelve organizations located in the region.

Specialties of *tourism professionals* involved in the survey are:

- tourism administration: mayors or deputy mayors, tourism committees of local governments and tourism spokespeople
- owners and operators of tourist attractions
- staff of Tourinform offices
- owners and employees of commercial accommodations
- owners of family run accommodations
- staff of tourism related civic organizations
- staff of educational institutions
- tourist guides

Asking the opinions of the *local people* was realized with the assistance of the mayors and deputy mayors of the settlements and in person. The distribution of questionnaires was determined by the population of the settlements involved in the survey. I collected the questionnaires personally from the settlements and the organization involved. Questionnaires completed by the local people were returned from six organizations located in the region in question.

3. The new and novel theses of the research

3.1. *New and novel conclusions drawn from specialist literature studies*

Based on specialist literature studies concerning the links between sustainable and competitive tourism I make the following statements.

To ensure the long-term success of the TDM framework on the international tourism market, it has to operate according to the principles of sustainability. The TDM framework can only be sustainable and competitive if it attempts to reach a compromise regarding the interests of all the people affected. The aim of the TDM framework is to provide experience for the tourists and economic, social, environmental benefits for the local people, hence improving the quality of their life. Sustainable and competitive activity assumes the existence of a co-operative partnership between the people of a specific region and the operation of a competitive tourism from a financial-economic aspect. The TDM system must guarantee the involvement of all people affected in the planning and development processes. Beside all this, it has to provide conscious planning and development activity which involves the principle of so-called “double integration”. In the first place, this means the integration of tourism into its wider economic, social and natural environment. Secondly, it means the harmonization of the planning of the different sub-sectors of tourism such as attractions, accommodations, catering units, transport etc. (Lengyel, M., 1997, 2004).

According to macro-, micro- and medium level theories, competitiveness in economy means the ability of increasing one's market share and resistance in the competition. The purpose of competitiveness is to increase business revenues and social welfare. Goals of tourism competitiveness can be adapted to the goals of all three levels of competitiveness. Therefore, *in the process of establishing the new model of tourism competitiveness we need to develop factors that ensure assistance in achieving the goals of all three levels of competitiveness.*

The number of tourism competitiveness related research is very high. Most of these mainly concentrate on the tourists and examines the defining factors of competitiveness from their point of view. In the interpretation of tourism competitiveness the most comprehensive approach can be connected to the *“holistic” approach*; a term constructed by me. Hence, *tourism competitiveness is closely linked to the principles of sustainable tourism.* In my opinion, these approaches only exist in theory at the moment because neither the models developed by researchers nor the theories have revealed the connections between the interests of the people involved in tourism (tourists, tourism professionals and locals) and the competitive edge in tourism.

Sustainable tourism encompasses tourism competitiveness. Environment, economy and society are the three basic pillars of sustainable tourism development. Development in tourism can only be sustained if interests of all the people involved are safeguarded and compromise is reached. Sustainable tourism activity is competitive, but tourism

competitiveness is not necessarily sustainable. Tourism competitiveness though takes the aspects of environmental and social sustainability into consideration only partially. The first thesis is based on the above statement.

Thesis 1.

Sustainable tourism is competitive, but competitive tourism is not necessarily sustainable. The main purpose of tourism competitiveness is to satisfy the needs of the tourists and ensure economic growth of tourism, but it does not attempt to raise the standard of living of the local people or protect the environment. Whereas, the main purpose of tourism sustainability is to satisfy the needs of the tourists, to ensure economic growth of tourism, to raise the standard of living of the local people and to protect the environment.

Summarizing the results of the tourism competitiveness related research, we can state that *all the factors that construct tourism may influence tourism (destination) competitiveness*. According to research, factors defining tourism competitiveness are the following:

- factors qualifying destination
- characteristics of demand in tourism
- resources of supply
- factors of management
- factors supporting tourism
- combination of local society
- macro environment of tourism

3.2. The new model of tourism competitiveness

Prior to the new model, I had evaluated five international models of tourism competitiveness according to pre-set criteria. I have made the following inferences from the examination of the models:

- Although two models emphasize the link between tourism competitiveness and sustainable tourism, the factors of the models only include the connections between the interests of the local people and tourism competitiveness partially or they do not include them at all.
- Only two models took into account that tourism competitiveness starts with destination choice. According to this, examining the factors that influence choice of travel is substantial.
- None of the models took into account that the tourist gets into contact with various services of tourism during traveling to the destination which may influence judging the whole travel/holiday.

My new model represents the close links between the underlying principles of competitive and sustainable tourism. Therefore, I strongly believe that the aim of competition between the destinations on the international market is to increase the number of guests, to ensure economic and professional growth in tourism (increase in tourism related incomes, guarantee profit for the businesses, positive judgement of destinations) and to raise the standard of living of the people involved. A region can

only be competitive in the long run if increase in tourism related incomes and higher standard of living is ensured. Thus the region can develop significantly.

According to the “holistic” interpretation of tourism competitiveness, my definition regarding destination competitiveness includes the following observations:

A destination can only be competitive if the experiences it can provide are more satisfying for the tourists and on the other hand, it can provide more advantages originating in tourism in the long run for the tourism professionals and local people than any other destination or region. According to this, a competitive destination assumes the following:

On a higher level than the rivals it ensures

- *guest satisfaction*
- *profit for tourism-oriented businesses and growth in tourism of region*
- *rise in standard of living of local people*
- *protection of the environment*

According to all this, unlike the above mentioned models, the factors of the new model and their links put greater emphasis on the interests of the local people. Furthermore, unlike the majority of the examined models, the new model takes the framework of tourism and the whole process of travel/holiday into account.

The new model is based on the principles of sustainability and *endeavours to reach a compromise between all three interest groups on a higher level.* The three target groups are: tourists meaning the demand, local people who get into contact with the tourists and businesses and professionals involved in the tourism of a region. Tourism competitiveness is guaranteed if the needs of all three interest groups are satisfied (Crouch, G.I. – Ritchie, J.R.B., 2000). Satisfaction with travel/holiday is in the best interest of the tourist. For the businesses and professionals involved in tourism the main goal is steady profit coming from tourism related activity, positive judgement of the region and increase in tourism related incomes. Rise in standard of living and quality of life is in the best interest of the local people both in the short and long run.

(1) **Tourists.** Choice of destination is the basis of tourism competitiveness. In other words, it determines why we choose one destination over the other. This is why it is necessary to examine the factors that may be influential for the tourists in choosing a particular destination (Crouch, G.I. – Ritchie, J.R.B., 2000, Kim, C. – Dwyer, L., 2003). On top of this, experiences coming from the destination and services received before and during travel all influence the overall holiday experience and thus the tourist’s judgement regarding the holiday as such (Neal, J. – Sirgy, J.M., – Uysal, M., 1999, 2004, 2007). In case of positive experiences and judgement of travel and holiday, the tourist is most likely to become a frequent tourist, hence recommending the destination to others as well. Tourism competitiveness of a destination may manifest in the number of arriving and returning tourists. *I was looking at those factors that define travel/holiday for the tourist. Ensuring the high standard of these factors supposedly contributes to tourist satisfaction, hence to positive judgement of destination and reach of the competitive edge.* According to the above mentioned aspects, I was looking at the following factors with regard to the tourists:

- so-called defining factors of destination (these play an essential role in choice of travel)
- services received before and during travel/holiday
- services used during stay at destination

(2) **Tourism professionals.** Ensuring steady profit for businesses involved in tourism, positive judgement of the region, increase in growth of tourism related incomes and development of tourism on the whole is in the best interest of professionals working in the tourism sector.

The growing number of tourists and the growing number of returning tourists are indicators of tourism efficiency in any given region. This happens when tourists are satisfied with the services they receive in a given region. Therefore, they become loyal to this region and return willingly (Yoon, Y. – Uysal, M., 2005). According to this, the main task of the tourism professionals is to satisfy the needs of the tourists on high levels and to provide services specific only to that region.

On the other hand, improving the choice of supply of the region and ensuring the positive effects of tourism are in the best interest of tourism professionals. These factors have beneficial effects on the life of the local people and professionals involved in that region. Tourism may guarantee economic, social, cultural and physical advantages.

Beneficial economic, social, cultural and physical effects of tourism may guarantee fertile ground for tourism activity. The economic effects may be realized in the creation of jobs and new businesses, increasing earnings and widening the scope of tourism infrastructure etc. The social, cultural and physical effects may include the widening of educational opportunities, recreation of forgotten trades, appreciation of local traditions, improvement of the image of a settlement, refurbishment of deserted buildings, preservation of the local architecture etc.

As regards tourism professionals, I was looking at the defining factors of travel/holiday from the point of view of the tourism related businesses and professionals involved in a certain tourism region. I wanted to find out what they thought about the factors that may contribute to the combination of demand and supply in tourism: a more complex satisfaction of the demand occurring in tourism, an increase in the quality of supply, an increase in tourism performance, in other words, a comprehensive development of any given region. Based on the above mentioned aspects, I was examining the judgement of the following factors with regard to tourism professionals:

- defining factors during travel/holiday
- effects of tourism on the life of people living in the region
- factors of management influencing destination competitiveness
- factors of the macro environment

(3) **Local community.** Competitiveness models did not take into consideration one of the main features of destinations, i.e. the fact that a destination is not only a target but also a receiving area. In receiving areas, locals also perceive the effects of tourism developments. These tourism developments can especially be successful if they are carried out with the approval of the local population, and if locals also participate in them (Williams, D.R. et al, 1995). Therefore I find it significant to examine the impacts

of tourism on the local community when examining the competitiveness of tourism. The positive impacts of tourism may improve the population's living standards (Puczko, L. – Rátz, T., 1998), their attachment to the region, the sustainability of its long-term development, and thus competitiveness.

The positive impacts of tourism on the local population result in the long-term development of the region. The positive economic impacts of tourism on the population may appear in the form of more jobs, a wider range of entrepreneurial possibilities and improved infrastructure. Social impacts include the results partly emphasised above, such as the expansion of educational possibilities, improved possibilities of entertainment, and population growth. Among the cultural impacts of tourism, the increased importance of local cultural values and the renaissance of traditions must be mentioned. Physical impacts may occur, among others, in the conservation of natural values and the protection of local buildings.

If the local population perceives the positive impacts of tourism on their living standards, they are likely to become more attached to their region (Williams, D.R. et al, 1995). Their increasing attachment to the region may create a competitive edge for the region and may improve its population-retaining ability. As far as the population is concerned, I examined the tourism factors that may have a positive impact on them. The model reveals the factors that the population considers important. There might be factors that ensure the satisfaction of tourists, however, they have a negative impact on the locals' living standards, and consequently on the long-term development of the region. In that case, regional planners need to supervise further developments thoroughly considering the extent of tourism impacts. Based on the above mentioned facts, the following factors need to be evaluated in connection with the population:

- the economic, social, cultural and physical impacts of tourism.

The model will enable us to examine the state of the tourism competitiveness of present Hungarian destination management systems in comparison with both domestic and foreign destinations. The model examines the requirements regarding the determining factors of travel and holidays from the points of view of all the three target groups, as well as the opinions regarding these factors in the Mátra Region. Although most models applied so far have considered the elements influencing tourism competitiveness, they have disregarded the relationships between the elements. My model is based on multilateral comparative examinations, which enables the user to reveal deeper, more integrated correlations. Moreover, my model, unlike previous ones, considers the determining factors of all the process of the travel/holiday.

The elements of the model

Deviating from the tourism competitiveness factors defined by research published in specialist literature, and from the findings of model examinations, the new tourism competitiveness model takes into consideration the interests of each target group. As another new element, it also considers all the factors determining travel/holiday, including the services provided before and after travel, which may also affect the travel experience. Among the factors, tourism infrastructure has become one of the key factors, which is in accordance with most tourism competitiveness factors identified by

the specialist literature, but deviates from the examined international models. As far as the other factors are concerned, both their composition and their emphasis are almost identical with those revealed by research in specialist literature and by the examined foreign models, however some minor differences may occur.

Table 1.

The factors of the new tourism competitiveness model	
Determining factors before and during travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – services provided before travel decision made – services provided during travel
Factors determining selection of destination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – image – accessibility – weather – security – value for money – high-quality services – experience – hospitality
Key factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – attractions – tourism infrastructure (accommodation, catering outlets, transportation, recreational facilities)
Support factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – basic tourism infrastructure – supporting tourism infrastructure
Management factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – planning, development, control – product development – providing conditions necessary for receiving guests – tourism information system – pricing policy – distribution channel management – promotion – tourism cooperations – resource management
Impacts of tourism on living conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – different impacts of tourism on local community: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • economic • social • cultural • physical
Factors of macro environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – economic – social – political – natural – technological – cultural factors

Source: own research (2009)

The correlations of the factors of the model

I considered the following factors when creating my new model.

- Tourism competitiveness is closely related to the principles of sustainable tourism. Competitive tourism can be achieved on condition that it strives to reach a compromise to serve the interests of all its participants (adding that it should not only be sustainable but also of a higher quality than its competitors). Unlike earlier models, the new model puts greater emphasis on the following factors.
 - From the point of view of the tourist, tourism competitiveness is related not only to the experiences gained in the destination, but also to the selection of the destination. Moreover, the quality of the services before and during the travel also affects the tourist's opinion about the travel, and as a result, it affects its competitiveness as well. It means that tourism competitiveness is influenced by the entire process of travel/holiday.
 - Tourism competitiveness is connected to the level of development of the region, which is reflected by the living standards of the population and the possibilities provided for its tourism businesses. Therefore, in the new model I found it important to examine opinions about the positive tourism impacts enhancing regional development.

Management factors contribute to the examination of the motivations, buying habits and attitudes of potential customers, which influences the contents and trends of developments, and may affect the composition and types of available products. The examination of the tourism products provided by a destination can paint a detailed picture of the present state of the region, and serve as a basis for further development. It also helps examine whether the requirements of the destination's potential customers are in accordance with the services provided by the destination. Meeting the requirements and demands of tourists contributes to their satisfaction. It is the task of the management system to meet tourists' demands through the marketing tools of tourism. A competitive destination contributes to the rise of the earnings of tourism businesses, the increase of the tourism revenue, and also to creating a more positive image of the region. Management activities and the trends of tourism developments are affected by the factors of the macro-environment, their decisions and measures, which is beyond the scope of destination management systems.

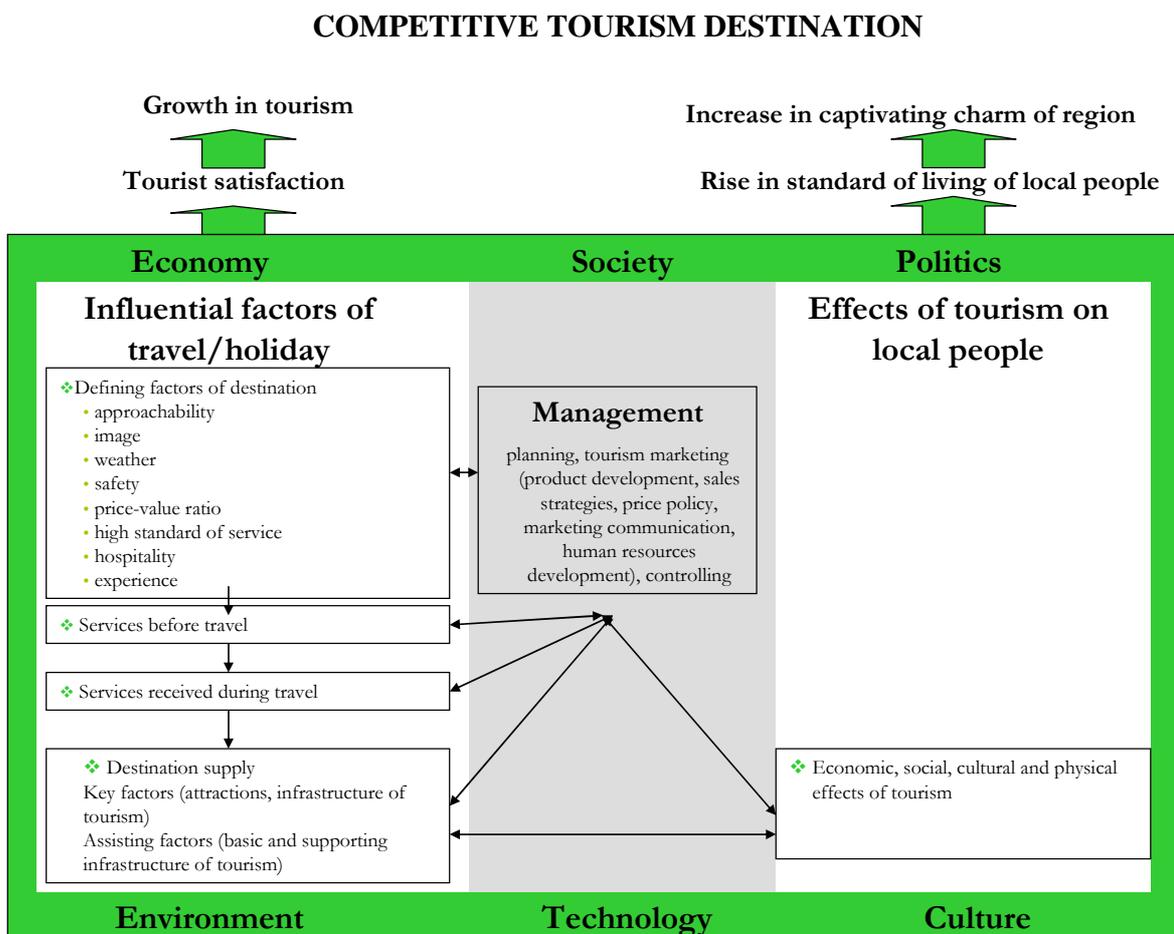
The decision of the tourist is influenced by the factors promoting the selection of a particular destination, as well as the services provided before travel. A tourist's opinion about, and as a consequence, his satisfaction with the travel/holiday is affected by his experiences regarding the services provided during the travel and in the destination. The basis for a destination to be attractive is provided by its attractions, the tourism infrastructure built around those attractions, and the experience ensured by them. The success of the key factors of a destination is enhanced by the support factors. Support factors include the basic infrastructure that ensures the basis for the tourism services of the destination, as well as all the services used by tourists apart from the tourism infrastructure. The attractiveness of the destination and the quality of the services influence the tourist's satisfaction to a great extent. The attractiveness and competitiveness of a destination are closely related. A

destination can be competitive if it is secure, hospitable, and is good value for money, provides high-quality services and an overall holiday experience.

In ensuring the competitive edge of a region in the long run, the opinions of the locals about their region is also determining. The economic, social, cultural and physical impacts of tourism activities on the living conditions of the local population affect the living standards and the quality of locals' life. If the living conditions are stable or are improving in the long run, they strengthen the community's attachment to the region, which is one of the basic factors of its sustainable development. The improvement of the quality of the population's life is the sign of the economic and social development of the region (see *Figure 1*).

A competitive destination is capable of ensuring satisfaction for tourists, economic and professional benefits for tourism professionals, and higher living standards for the population at a higher level than its competitors.

Figure 1.



Source: own research (2009)

3.3. Main conclusions regarding competitiveness of tourism in the Mátra Region

Based on my research, my statements regarding the tourism competitiveness of the Mátra Region are as follows.

Tourists

General assessment

The majority of tourists arrive at the region in order to hike in the mountains, while the least popular motive is medical treatment. Consequently, the region does not have sufficient spa and wellness facilities, even though it possesses some unique elements (e.g. Mátraderecske – mofetta, mountain air). The majority of tourists is as satisfied or, in some cases, more satisfied with the services of the Mátra Region than with services in other, similar destinations. Although most of them find the services suitable, one quarter of tourists describe them as ‘average’, which may draw professionals’ attention to the necessity of the preservation and continual improvement of the quality of services. As a vast majority of tourists say they would return to the region and recommend it to friends, it would be a major marketing task for tourism destination management organisations to ensure the continuity of feedback for tourists leaving the destination. Findings show that the Mátra Region is a tourism destination for up to seven days providing relaxation and special interest tourism facilities. Therefore it is necessary to provide tourism services and programmes suitable for seven-day stays.

Thesis 2.

The most important factors for tourists during their travel/holiday: quality of accommodation, security of destination, standard of catering outlets. In the Mátra Region, tourists are most satisfied with the following factors: accessibility of the destination, length of journey to the resort, quality of services in the resort. Although accessibility, value for money and the choice and features of attractions were expected to be the most important factors for tourists during travel/holiday, findings show that tourism infrastructure and security are among the three most important factors. The findings are also partly opposed to the expectations regarding the factors tourists in the Mátra Region are most satisfied with (i.e. accessibility, value for money and the choice and features of attractions), as they are most satisfied with the accessibility of the Mátra Region and with certain general characteristics of the destination (high-quality service).

During their travel/holiday, tourists find the following three factors *most important*:

1. quality of the accommodation
2. security of the destination
3. standard of catering outlets

According to the statements formulated in the hypotheses, the most important factors for tourists during travel are accessibility (1), price image (2) and the choice and characteristics of attractions (3).

On the basis of my research, the first part of the hypothesis can be neglected as instead of accessibility, price image and the choice and characteristics of attractions, the most important factors for visitors are the quality of the accommodation, the security of the destination and the standard of catering outlets. Accessibility comes in only the 20th, price image the 10th, while the choice and characteristics of attractions in the 5th, 6th and 11th. Consequently, the first part of the hypothesis can be rejected.

In the Mátra Region, tourists were satisfied with factors different from the ones they found generally important during their journey. Visitors were the most satisfied with the following factors in the Mátra Region:

1. accessibility of the resort
2. length of journey to the resort
3. high standard of services in the resort

According to the hypothesis, visitors in the Mátra Region are most satisfied with the following determining factors during their travel/holiday: accessibility (1), value for money (2), choice and characteristics of attractions (3).

According to my findings, satisfaction with the accessibility of the destination is among the three most important factors in the Mátra Region. The other factors mentioned in the hypothesis (i.e. 'value for money' and 'choice and characteristics of attractions') are not mentioned among the three most important factors. Satisfaction with 'value for money' is in the 17th place, while with 'choice and characteristics of attractions' is in the 15th, 16th and 21st. Therefore, the second part of the hypothesis is only partly true.

Thesis 3.

During their travel/holiday, visitors find the standard of tourism infrastructure more important than that of supporting tourism infrastructure. In the Mátra Region, tourists are also more satisfied with the factors of tourism infrastructure than the factors of supporting tourism infrastructure. When comparing the importance of and the satisfaction with certain factors during travel/holiday, satisfaction in the Mátra Region does not reach the level of importance. Thus, it is essential to develop tourism in the Mátra Region in order to meet the expectations of tourists.

According to my research, visitors find the standard of tourism infrastructure more important during their travel/holiday than that of supporting tourism infrastructure. Among the determining factors of travel/holiday, the conditions of green areas first took the 9th place (in the Mátra Region, the 6th place). The remaining factors of supporting tourism infrastructure, such as the state of public parks, the quality of public services, the range of retail outlets, and the range of public services took some of the last places of the list.

In case of several factors, tourism infrastructure and supporting tourism infrastructure are listed higher in the order of importance than in the extent of satisfaction with them in the Mátra Region. There are, however, some factors of tourism infrastructure and supporting tourism infrastructure that have higher visitor satisfaction in the Mátra

Region than importance (factors of tourism infrastructure: range and quality of services before travel, range and quality of services during travel, quality of tourism information; factors of supporting tourism infrastructure: size of green areas, state of public parks, state of public buildings).

However, it must be stated that factors of tourism infrastructure in general are more important for visitors than supporting infrastructure of tourism. Furthermore, findings show that visitors to the Mátra Region are also more satisfied with the factors of tourism infrastructure than with those of supporting tourism infrastructure.

Major findings of comparative studies among tourists

For tourists, the most important factors during travel/holiday are the general characteristics of the destination (security, wide range of experiences provided), tourist attractions (choice of attractions), and tourism infrastructure (standard of accommodation and catering). None of the factors of supporting tourism infrastructure is listed among the five most important factors. In the Mátra Region, visitors are most satisfied with certain factors of the tourism infrastructure (standard of accommodation) and certain general characteristics of the Mátra Region (accessibility, length of journey to the resort, high level of services in the destination, experiences provided by the destination). In the Mátra Region, the factors connected to tourist attractions and supporting tourism infrastructure are not among the ones generating the highest level of visitor satisfaction. Among the five least satisfactory factors, there are mainly factors of the tourism infrastructure (choice of recreational facilities, number of informing notices) and certain factors of the supporting infrastructure of tourism (range of public and retail services, standard of public services).

It can be stated that in the Mátra Region, the most important factors for tourists during travel/holiday are not the most satisfactory, therefore their planning and development are necessary. Altogether, the choice of attractions, their visitor-friendly character, and their state should be improved. The entire supporting tourism infrastructure and certain parts of the tourism infrastructure, such as the range of recreational facilities or the number of informing notices should also be improved.

Local community

General assessment

In the Mátra Region, local communities are greatly or mostly attached to their region. In the past years, the majority of locals have experienced development caused by tourism in their settlements. Nearly half of the population indicated that their bonds to the region became stronger as a result of those developments. So tourism development is essential in order to achieve and retain stronger attachment to their settlements among local people. Although they perceive the ongoing developments and their effects, the majority of the population do not participate in those developments. In the future, the leaders of settlements and the planners and implementers of developments should involve the population of the region in greater proportions. The majority of the population work in their home village or town, i.e. most people are not forced to commute to other settlements to do their job. So the above mentioned settlements of the region are able to provide employment for the majority of the population. More than 10 per cent of the respondents said they worked in tourism, mainly in catering.

Thesis 4.

According to local people, the economic impacts of tourism are generally more important than its social, cultural and physical impacts. Also, local communities in the Mátra Region perceive the positive economic impacts of tourism to a greater extent than its positive social, cultural and physical effects. In the Mátra Region, each impact of tourism is considered by the population weaker than their importance. Thus, it is necessary to develop tourism in the Mátra Region in order to provide local communities with the generally required level of positive economic, social, cultural and physical impacts.

The ninth block of questions of the questionnaire is about 'how important' locals consider 'the impacts of tourism on the economy, society, culture and the physical environment in general.' The tenth block of questions, on the other hand, refers to 'to what extent' people in the Mátra Region 'feel the impacts of tourism on the economy, society, culture and the physical environment.' Findings show that each type of tourism impact has a lower level of perception than required.

According to my survey, local people find the positive economic impacts of tourism more important than its positive social, cultural and physical ones. Local communities in the Mátra Region also perceive the economic impacts of tourism to a greater extent than its social, cultural and physical ones.

Thesis 5.

According to the hypothesis, the longer people live in the examined destination (the stronger the bond is), the less satisfied they are with the impacts of tourism on the quality of their life, thus they see their living environment (less attractive and) less competitive. The survey proved the opposite of this hypothesis. In the examined destination (in the Mátra Region), the longer people live in a given settlement (the stronger the bond is), the more satisfied they are with the impacts of tourism on their quality of life, and thus, they find the given settlement (more attractive and) more competitive.

People who have lived in the region for 15-20 years perceive the fewest, while people between 30-35 years of age feel the most positive impacts of tourism on the region's economy and society. According to the hypothesis, the longer people live in a destination, the less satisfied they are with the impacts of tourism on the region, and in particular, the settlement. According to the survey, however, people who have lived in the region for a longer period of time are more satisfied with the impacts of tourism on the region's economy and society than those living there for a shorter period of time. Moreover, it can also be stated that the opinions of the different groups based on the length of time they have lived in the Mátra Region are very varied concerning the impacts of tourism on the economy and society, that is they do not depend on the extent of the attachment to the given settlement.

Major findings of comparative studies in local communities

Within the economic impacts of tourism, local people consider its job creating and income increasing role the most important. People in the Mátra Region, too, feel the effects of tourism when it creates jobs and increases income. According to local communities in the Mátra Region, the effects of tourism are least noticeable in the improvement of transportation, the expansion of the range of retail services and the selection of products and services. As far as its social, cultural and physical impacts are concerned, the most perceived ones in the Mátra Region are the improvement of the state of public parks, green areas and human relationships. The least perceived tourism impacts are the improvements of the population's qualifications, and the increase in the number of the population and holiday-home owners. It can be stated that each positive economic and social impact of tourism is perceived by the people living in the Mátra Region to a smaller extent than the importance attributed to those impacts. This means that it is necessary to develop tourism in the Mátra Region so that its positive economic and social impacts required by local communities can be realised.

Tourism professionals

General assessment

According to tourism professionals, the competitiveness of a destination is mainly ensured by a wide selection of experiences, backed by an adequate range and quality of tourism infrastructure, attractions and events. Furthermore, a destination should also offer suitable transportation facilities, a diversified product range and good fund-raising abilities. According to tourism professionals, the tourism competitiveness of the Mátra Region could be promoted by high-level management activities (fund-raising, communication activities, efficient tourism cooperations, reviving traditions) and by high-quality tourism infrastructure. Tourism professionals believe that the development of the tourism of the Mátra Region can be realised primarily by using efficient management tools (efficient organisational system, cooperations, communication activities) and through efficient product development (reviving local traditions).

Thesis 6.

The determining factors of travel/holiday are considered to be less important by travellers than tourism professionals. In the Mátra Region, tourists find the determining factors of travel/holiday higher quality than tourism professionals. So tourists are less critical of the tourism of the Mátra Region than tourism professionals are.

Tourism professionals find all the determining factors of travel/holiday more important than tourists. The only one exception is weather, which is considered to be more important by tourists than tourism professionals. Both tourists and tourism professionals mentioned the following factors as the most important ones: security of the destination, a wide range of experiences, high-quality services, high-quality tourism infrastructure and attractive sights. Again, both tourists and tourism professionals find the following factors the least important: the range and number of public and retail services, and how developed the infrastructure of the destination is (e.g. transport facilities, informing notices).

Altogether, tourism professionals in the Mátra Region are more critical of (i.e. give lower scores to) the determining factors of travel/holiday than tourists are. There are only four factors that have higher results in their assessment: accessibility, the range, quality and number of public and retail services, and the range and quantity of the infrastructure of the destination. Both tourists and tourism professionals believe that there should be development in the areas of the most important determining factors of travel/holiday, such as the range and quality of attractions, the range, quantity and quality of the tourism infrastructure, the selection and quality of events and the quality of the general infrastructure of the destination.

Thesis 7.

Local people consider the impacts of tourism on the quality of their life more important than tourism professionals do. In the Mátra Region, people perceive the positive tourism impacts on the quality of their life to a greater extent than tourism professionals do. Consequently, the difference between the expected and perceived tourism impacts is smaller in case of the local communities of the Mátra Region than its tourism professionals.

Assessment of economic impacts

Based on the opinions of the population and tourism professionals, the survey shows that local people find the economic impacts of tourism more important than tourism professionals. There is only one exception – the expansion of entrepreneurial possibilities are considered to be more important by professionals than the population. Tourism professionals find the positive economic impacts of tourism less important than local people do. In the Mátra Region, tourism professionals give a much more critical evaluation to the positive economic impacts of tourism (weak, lower scores than ‘satisfactory’) than local communities do.

Assessment of social, cultural and physical impacts

Locals and tourism professionals identify the same social, cultural and physical impacts of tourism as the most important ones only in certain cases (improvement of the state of public parks and green areas). There are bigger differences between the population and tourism professionals concerning the least important social, cultural and physical impacts (tourism does not change the composition of flora and fauna, or there is no rise in the number of holiday-home owners and population). Altogether, the positive social impacts of tourism are also considered to be less important by tourism professionals than local people.

In the Mátra Region, the social, cultural and physical impacts of tourism most perceived by locals and tourism professionals are identical only on one point: both groups can feel that tourism makes public parks better looked after. While local people think tourism has resulted in the improvement of the conditions of buildings, tourism professionals mention it among the least perceived impacts. Both the population and tourism professionals think that the following impacts of tourism are among the least perceived ones: population growth, rise in the number of holiday-home owners, better qualified locals. Altogether, tourism professionals are far more critical of the positive

social, cultural and physical impacts of tourism on the quality of people's life in the Mátra Region (they describe them as much weaker) than local people are.

Major findings of comparative studies concerning tourism professionals

- *Evaluation of determining factors of travel/holiday from the point of view of tourism professionals.* They think that both the characteristics of the attractions and the quality of tourism infrastructure should be improved in the Mátra Region. Furthermore, they find it necessary to improve the standards of services, and create a region offering excitement to tourists. In the Mátra Region, the highest scores were mainly given to the general features of the destination (e.g. accessibility, security, weather, general environment of the destination), however, the most important motivating factors, such as the characteristics of tourist attractions, the range, quantity and quality of tourism infrastructure, as well as the range and quality of events were given the lowest scores. It can be stated that the most important demand-influencing factors of competitiveness identified by tourism professionals received low scores in the Mátra Region.
- *Evaluation of tourism management tools influencing competitiveness.* Certain management activities (promotion, fund-raising) considered by tourism professionals important in increasing competitiveness received better evaluation in the Mátra Region as well. Further factors considered to be important in increasing competitiveness (e.g. activities encouraging investment) received weak scores (except for the role of education in the region). There are significant differences between the opinions about the management factors considered to be important and the ones that most influence the competitiveness of the Mátra Region. Thus, each management factor should be improved in the Mátra Region.
- *Opinions about the impacts of tourism on the quality of life from the point of view of tourism professionals.* They think the most important and the most perceived positive impacts of tourism on the quality of people's life coincide only partly. The tourism impacts considered to be the most important (e.g. creating jobs, increasing income) were mentioned by tourism professionals among the least perceived ones in the Mátra Region. There are, however, impacts that tourism professionals do not find so important and still they are perceived to the greatest extent in the Mátra Region (e.g. relative stability of the composition of the flora and fauna). So there are significant differences between the impacts considered to be important and the impacts perceived the most, that is tourism professionals believe it is necessary to increase the positive impacts of tourism on the local community. Thus, it is essential to develop tourism in the region.

3.4. Summary of the mathematical-statistical analysis

Summary of the findings of the discriminant function analysis. On the basis of the biggest quotient of the dispersion of opinions within and between the different groups, it can be seen that the eigenvalue and consequently the discriminant function analysis were most successful in case of tourism professionals. It can be explained by the fact that tourism professionals have the most critical opinions about the situation of tourism in the Mátra Region compared to its expected level. This is reflected in the result of the ranking, which was 94.2%. In case of local people, the eigenvalue is lower as the expected and perceived impacts of tourism on the Mátra Region show little difference. Thus, the success of the ranking is only 64.4% on the basis of the examined factors. As far as tourists are concerned, the eigenvalue is between those of the other two target groups. It results from the fact that tourists are less critical of the tourism of the Mátra Region than tourism professionals are (*Table 2.*).

Table 2.

Comparison of the indicators of the discriminant function analysis

	Eigenvalues	Wilks' lambda	Canonical correlation	Results of rankings
tourist	0.354	0.738	0.512	71.50%
tourism professional	2.477	0.288	0.844	94.20%
local community	0.174	0.852	0.385	64.40%

Source: own research (2009)

Summary of the findings of the concordance analysis. Due to the significant differences between the groups of respondents, it was not suitable to carry out a concordance analysis. That is why I analysed the factors expected during travel/holiday and the opinions about these factors in the Mátra Region from the viewpoint of all the three target groups (*Table 3.*).

Table 3.

Comparison of the indicators of the concordance analysis

Title of questionnaire	W (concordance-coefficient)	Significance level (P error %)	N (number of factors)
tourist	0.759	3.4	30
tourism professional	0.634	8.7	55
local community	0.861	2.1	21

Source: own research (2009)

When fewer factors are examined, the possibility of corresponding opinions is higher. Thus, the fewer questions are examined, the higher the W concordance coefficient is for the three target groups of the table.

The most favourable value of the W coefficient (0.861) was found in case of the local community since people attached to their settlements gave higher scores and more similar opinions about the impacts of tourism on the region. Tourists in the examined destination could have different purposes and the length of stay could also differ. Correspondingly, their opinions may be better or less founded, and the order of importance may also show bigger differences.

The statistical significance of the findings is proven as an error level of 5% is accepted in humanities as well. The error for the questionnaires of tourism professionals (the highest number of questions) is higher (8.7%), but it is still below the accepted 10%. The expansion of the professional questions resulted in a rise in the difference of professionals' opinions.

4. Possible applications of research findings

The findings of the research may be applied by local and regional tourism destination management organisations, which are being established in Hungary nowadays.

This kind of application is enabled by the following characteristics of the new model:

- it is able to identify the factors determining competitiveness;
- it makes it possible to examine the level of competitiveness of a region's tourism;
- it enables us to compare the position of different destinations regarding their tourism competitiveness;
- it helps decision-makers focus on the factors that ensure the long-term sustainability of a region;
- it identifies the tasks that destination management organisations face when trying to ensure the competitive edge of a destination, and it shows what actions are the most important in destination management;
- it is a method of examination that provides the basis for strategic and operative decisions in tourism by showing the level of its competitiveness, thus increasing the significance of tourism both in the public and private sectors.

The aim and main task of my future work will be to compare regions with similar character with other regions with similar character, and also work out a model/method that measures tourism competitiveness.

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Author's participation in the following theme-related projects

- Europe's Cultural Capital 2010 Project of Pécs County Seat – working out the strategy of tourism development and the destination management system, 2007.
- Working out the tourism development concept of Miskolctapolca, 2007.
- Working out the tourism-specific living standard index; commissioned by ÖTM Tourism Secretary of State, 2006-2007.
- Assessment of the level of preparedness and professional content of major projects – commissioned by the National Development Agency (DHV, COWI, EconoConsult consortium), 2006.
- Assessment of Interreg programmes – commissioned by VÁTI Regional Development and Urbanism CIC, 2005-2006.
- Rácalmás – resort development: establishing a thermal bath and recreational facilities; working out a tourism and property development plan, 2005-2006.
- Promoting integrated local development activities. Jewel of the Danube bank: Establishing a convention centre in the Jankovich Mansion. Component 3, working on the PHARE Project No. HU 2002/000-315.01.06, 2003.
- Promoting integrated local development activities. Rehabilitation of Albertirsa town centre. Component 3, working on the PHARE Project No. HU 2002/000-315.01.06, 2003.
- Establishing the Cooperative Research Centre of Innovation Management at the University of Miskolc, working on Project GVOP 3.2.2, 2004.
- Rehabilitation of Gyál town centre, working on Project ROP 2.2., 2004.
- Restoration of the narrow-gauge railway between Szob-Nagybörzsöny for tourism purposes, working on Project ROP 1.1., 2004-2005.
- The Palóc Route as a tourism product; working on the fundamental study, 2004.
- Determining the functions of the Blaskovics Mansion in Mezőszilas; writing the implementation study, 2003-2004.
- Organising the 'Culture and tourism' regional tourism conference, 2000, 2001, 2002.
- Arrangements for Nógrád County's participation in the Travel Trade Fairs of 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003.
- Launching and editing the Túrabakancs (Hiking Boots) tourism magazine, 1999-2003.
- Preparation of the regional development concept of North-Hungary, and consulting during the work of development, 2000.
- Assessment of tourism project proposals submitted to the Regional Development Committee of Nógrád County, 2000.
- Preparation of the tourism development concept of Nógrád County, carrying out a tourism survey in its settlements, 1999.