

TOURISM TRENDS IN BORSOD-ABAÚJ-ZEMPLÉN COUNTY SINCE THE MIDDLE OF THE NINETIES

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Abstract

In the beginning of the nineties important changes occurred in the tourism sector of Hungary. After the political changes the openness of Hungary reached the level of the free world's countries. Before the changes most of the foreign tourist arrivals came from the former socialist countries, and Hungarians practically could only travel to the Eastern European "friends". Since 1990 everything changed and tourist departures and arrivals are mostly connected to the Western European countries, while the Eastern European traffic remained also significant, because the neighboring situation of several former socialist countries. But in general the proportion of business journeys became more significant in this relation.

It is a good starter to know that tourist arrivals continuously decreased since 1990 and in 1999 this indicator didn't reach 60 % the value of 1991, while tourist incomings of the country in US dollars were three times more [1]. We can suppose only by these hard facts that remarkable variations succeeded in the Hungarian tourism sector both in supply and demand. In this paper I analyze the changes of the tourism sector in North-Hungary, from the point of view of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county, and I examine the most significant variations with the help of the existing references.

In the case of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county I summarize the most important causes which have led the county's tourism sector in a quite unfavorable situation, than I will make a short review about the existing opportunities of the county. In my paper I collect the most important factors which are definitely needed for the competitiveness of the tourism sector of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county.

Introduction

In the last one and half decades the role of tourism has increased significantly in Hungary. Tourism supply has been widened more and more experts have started to deal with tourism. While the number of the

experts has significantly increased far too many have only superficial knowledge about tourism. In the course of my research I have realized that only few Hungarian publications deal with statistical analysis about tourism. In general very few statistical indicators are evaluated which often lead to improper conclusions.

I have chosen Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county as field of my research because as a local inhabitant I would like to see this territory in progress and especially in the tourism sector the county has a great potential.

This can explain the need of a deeper analysis based on statistical indicators of the tourism sector of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county in North-Hungary

Methodology

First of all a database was created on the basis of Territorial Statistical Yearbooks of the Hungarian Statistical Office. This database helped to create new indicators so territorial processes could be analyzed properly.

Finally I summarized the results of this analysis, and the former publications.

Tourism in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county

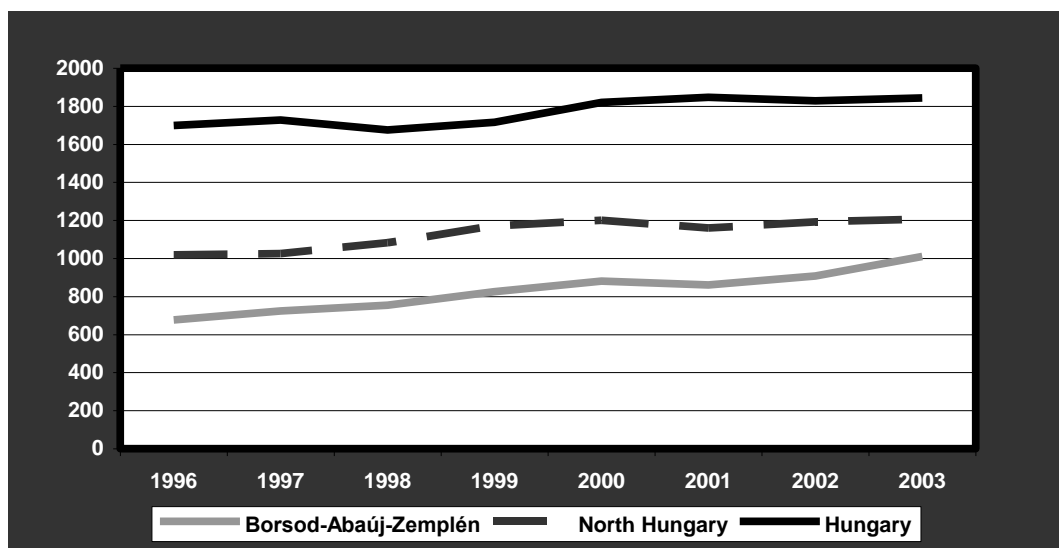


Figure 1 Tourist nights per 1000 inhabitants in public accommodation establishments 1996-2003.

Source: Territorial Statistical Yearbooks, CSO. Budapest, 1996-2003.

During the 1996-2003 period the performance of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county is below both the national and the regional average from the point of view of tourist nights per 1000 inhabitants in public accommodation but a slight betterment can be observed, but it is also to be mentioned that most of the tourist nights (29,7 percent in the case of B-A-Z county) were spend in other public (low cost) accommodations, which is definitely below the national average (62,9%). Examining the trend of this indicator moderate decay is visible since 1996 (34,1 percent) to 2003. But this light decay of the indicator can be the result of the fast growing other public accommodation sector.

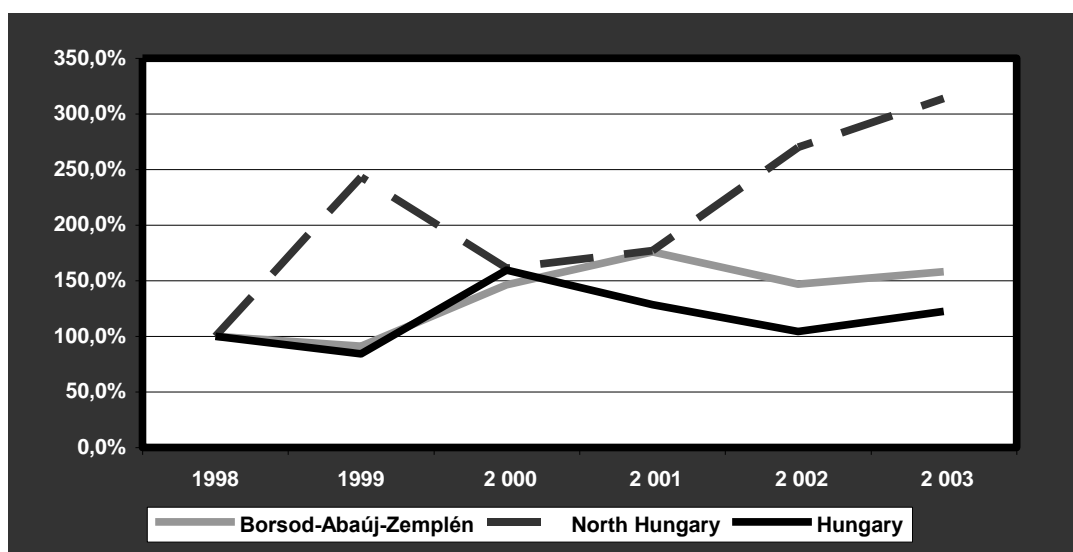


Figure 2 Tourist nights of farmhouse accommodations (1998=100 percents) 1998-2003.

Source: Territorial Statistical Yearbooks, CSO. Budapest, 1998-2003.

The growth of tourist nights of farmhouse accommodation in B-A-Z county is quite impressive and since 2000 it is above the national average. It is not an incidence, since 1990 the development of rural tourism has got high priority in national regional and local development plans.

In the beginning of the nineties very often was mentioned that rural tourism could help to develop rural areas. On one hand it is certainly right because there are certain underdeveloped areas which have no other opportunities, but often the very same territories have no significant attractions which are indispensable for the measurable positive effects.

Unfortunately rural tourism in general means very cheap accommodations (not even self-supporting without central aid). We can

have a picture of the importance of the rural tourism with the help of the indicator of tourist nights per 1000 inhabitants of farmhouse accommodation which was 63,7 in 2003 (the national average is 114,8).

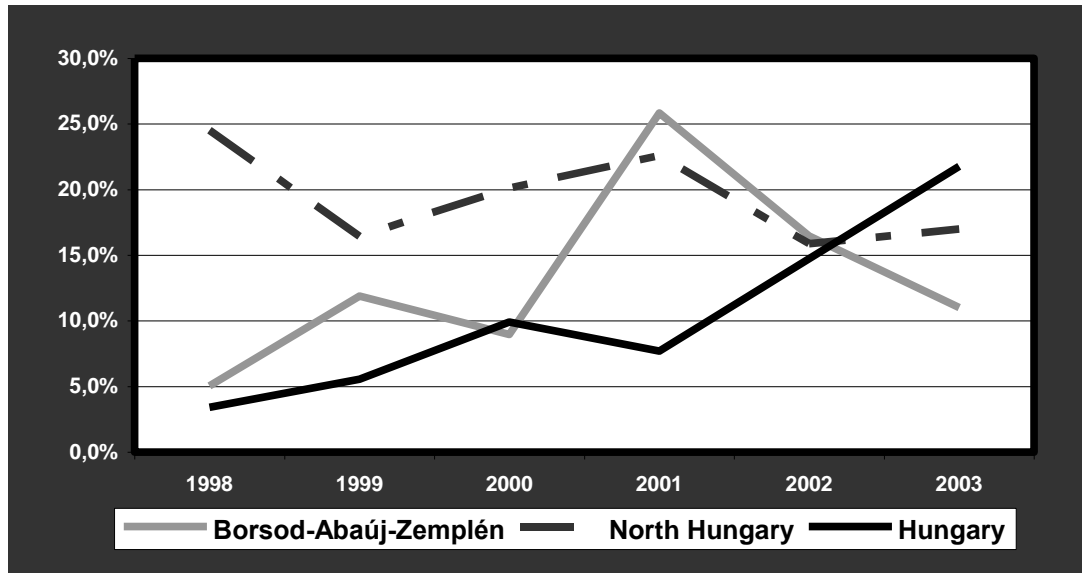


Figure 3 Proportion of international tourist nights of farmhouse accommodation (percents) 1998-2003.

Source: Territorial Statistical Yearbooks, CSO. Budapest, 1998-2003.

During the observed period capacity usage of farmhouse accommodation was 2.8 percent!! in B-A-Z county (while the national and regional average were 3.8 and 4.1 percents). This means that farmhouse accommodations are rarely used even if we have to take in account that most of the tourist nights of this sector are invisible for the National Statistical Office.

International tourists are important for the rural tourism because they spend more time and money in general. Since 1999 the proportion of foreigners decreased from 51.2 percents to 32.1 percents in Hungary while a moderate advance can be observed both in B-A-Z county and in the region. The composition has changed to the favour of the internal tourist which can be explained by the growth of the internal demand, while the foreign tourist arrivals are below the average growth.

It is like enough that the quality the composition and the price of the proffered services and marketing means are positioned mainly for the national costumers.

In a former research I realised that marketing tools of the rural tourism, the dissemination of the relevant tourist information is quite unorganised and incidental. Getting the proper information is difficult

even for the Hungarian travellers, but for foreigners is almost desperate because of the lack of the contents in foreign languages.

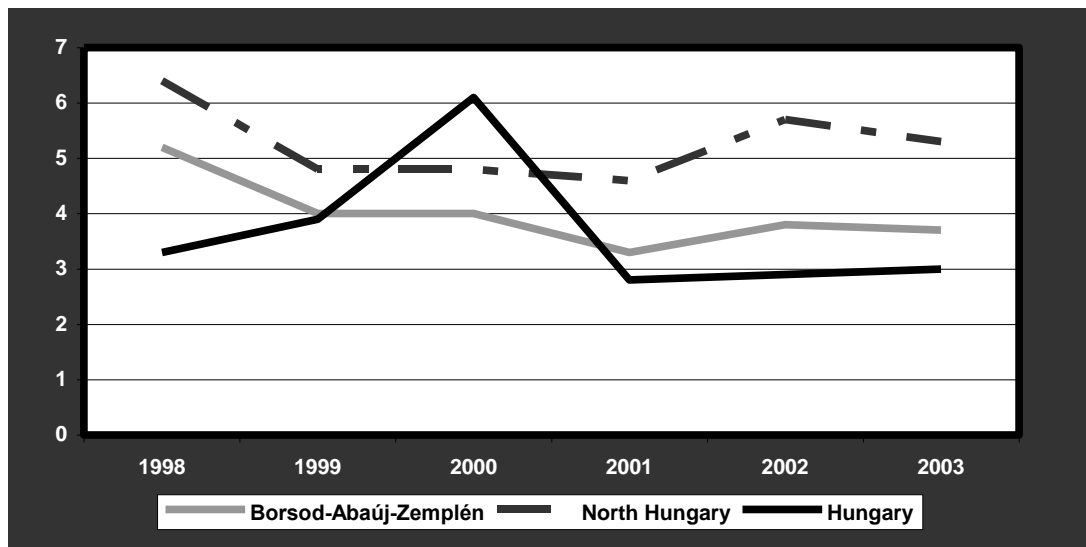


Figure 4 Average length of stay in farmhouse accommodations (nights) 1998-2003.

Source: Territorial Statistical Yearbooks, CSO. Budapest, 1998-2003.

It is to be mentioned that the average length of stay in farmhouse accommodation is longer than in public accommodation.

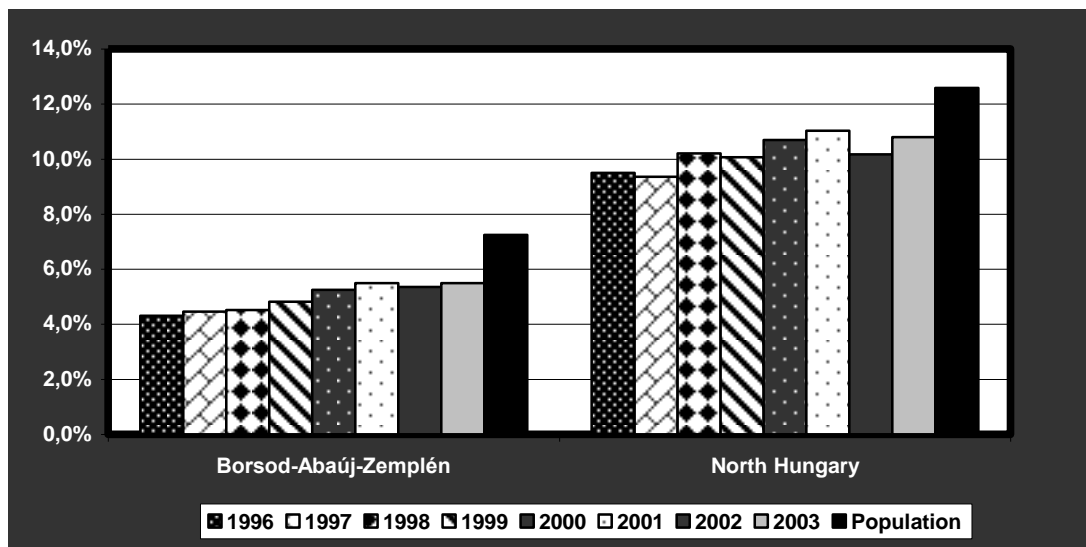


Figure 5 Territorial distribution of bed-places in public accommodations (Hungary=100 percents) 1996-2003.

Source: Territorial Statistical Yearbooks, CSO. Budapest, 1996-2003.

Shorter values of average length of stay are observed in this market in the recent years which is explained by the change of the behavior of costumers: shorter but more frequent holidays [2]. This happens on one hand because of the employers let their employees unwillingly for a longer period going on vacation on the other hand because of the higher stress of several workplaces - employees prefer more frequent holidays.

Tourism is one of the tools of territorial development. Thanks to the tourism construction activities are growing, new workplaces are created, the “invisible export of the territories is increasing [1]. The variation of the number of bed-places is a good indicator of the investment of tourism sector.

Watching Table 5 perceptible melioration can be observed in B-A-Z county, several higher class accommodations were built in the recent year. This indicates us a stronger position of the county on the internal accommodation market and a growing demand for higher class hotels.

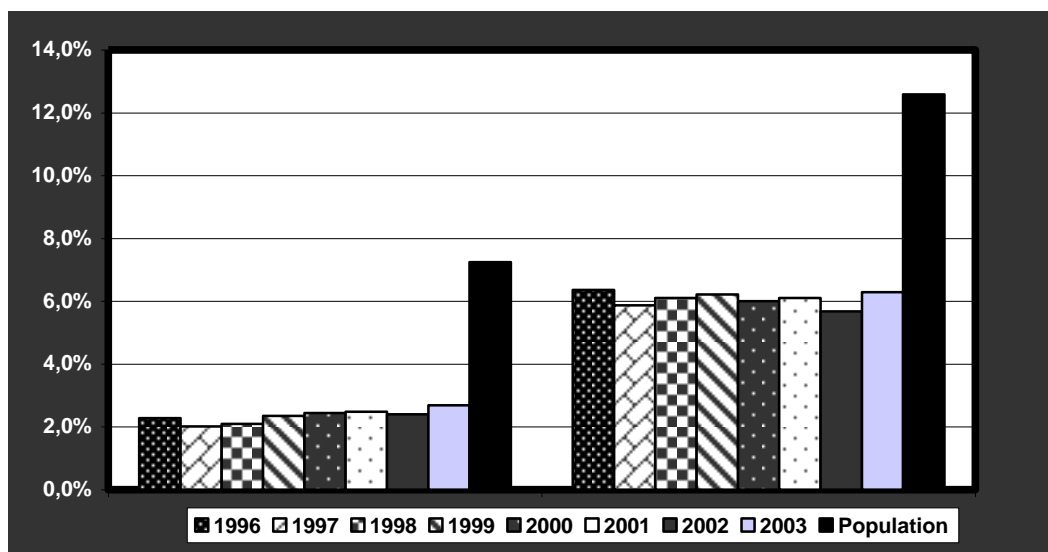


Figure 6 Territorial distribution of bed-places in hotels (Hungary=100 percents) 1996-2003.

Source: Territorial Statistical Yearbooks, CSO. Budapest, 1996-2003.

The number of bed-places in hotels in B-A-Z county grew by 45,9 percents between 1996 and 2003[3], but it didn't reach the proportion of its population. Only the performance of Heves county in North Hungary can be compared to the national average. The region in general is not in an advantageous situation from this point of view. We can't forget the capacity usage of the public accommodation establishments which is

something around 11 percents both in North Hungary and in B-A-Z county.

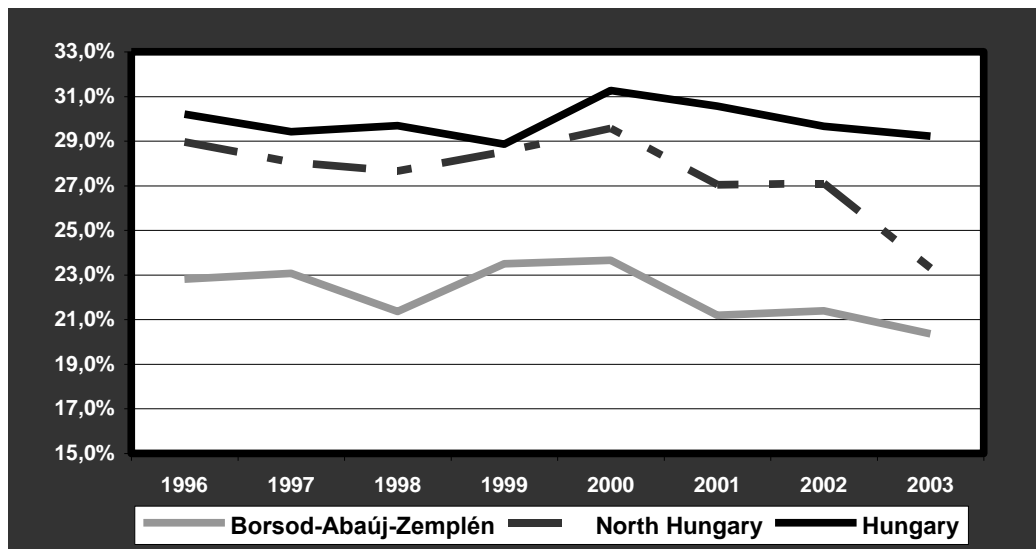


Figure 7 Capacity usage of bed-places in hotels (percents) 1996-2003.
Source: Territorial Statistical Yearbooks, CSO. Budapest, 1996-2003.

There is a better situation in the hotels where values of 20-25 percents can be observed, but trends are negative in the last four or five years which is explained by the growing supply of accommodations and by the changing costumers behavior (to the better quality services) [3]. Totally new and reconstructed higher class accommodations have appeared on the market recently, but it is also to be mentioned that luxurious accommodations are almost missing in the region only one five start hotel is open.

Summary

As it was mentioned in the introduction there were significant changes in the composition of tourism of B-A-Z county which are shown in this paper with the help of statistical indicators. Thanks to the diversified approach a definite picture has been built about the situation and trends of the county's tourism. With the help of the statistical indicators easily can be explained that the region' and the county's situations are almost above the national average.

The rural tourism is under fast development, but we can't forget the problems of its efficiency. In Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county a few signs of the development can be explored. 'tourist nights' and the capacity of public accommodation are growing slowly. Regionally the

most dangerous problem is the lack of capacity-usage of the accommodation establishments, especially in the case of the other public and farmhouse accommodations.

In my opinion serious changes will happen in the tourism sector in the next few years. Several inefficient, low-end accommodations will have to be closed while new better quality bed-places will be created. Especially those who work in the rural tourism will have to leave the market if they don't have clear marketing strategy so they are not able to work economically.

References

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