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### World Heritage Sites through the Eyes of New Tourists – Who Cares about World Heritage Brand in Budapest?

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#### ABSTRACT

Budapest is one the most emerging tourism destinations in Central-Eastern Europe, and besides the popularity of the regenerated “multicultural and design” district, its cultural heritage, particularly those on the list of the UNESCO World Heritage, assure its growing attractiveness. However the cultural sites are the most visited sightseeing attractions, our proposition was that the tourists are not aware of the fact, that they are visiting UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS). The main aim of the paper is to highlight the importance of the WHS in cultural tourism, and to introduce the significance of place branding in it.

A structured content analysis were taken out to analyse the reviews of the Tripadvisor considering the attractions of Budapest, with the objective of crystallizing the main motivations and awareness of the tourists visiting the world heritage site of Budapest. Further on our objective was to analyse their satisfaction with interpretation, attraction, and visitor management issues. Then their overall experiences, development needs and ideas for the world heritage sites attracting cultural tourism were taken into consideration. Our presupposition was that new technologies can improve a site’s popularity by pulling the attention on its real values that can be experienced by the visitors.

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**Keywords:** Transformation of Cultural tourism; Budapest World heritage Site; Heritage Tourism

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Budapest újra az európai fővárosok egyik divatos, népszerű desztinációja lett, köszönhetően a városban látható felpezsdült kulturális életnek, amelyet kiválóan mutatnak a várost ért kitüntetések a kreatív iparágak, így a design területén.

Habár fetételezésünk szerint a Budapestre látogatók sorra felkeresik az UNESCO világörökségi attrakciókat, de még sincsenek tudatában, hogy világörökségi helyszínen járnak.

Mindennek tekintetében kiemelten fontos kérdés az, hogy a klasszikusnak tartható örökségturizmus, világörökség-turizmus hogyan illeszkedik ezen trendekbe. Jelen cikk fő célja annak vizsgálata, hogy a kulturális turizmus új motivációi szerint (is) utazó turisták körében Budapest, mint világörökség helyszín mennyire jelenik meg, illetve az általuk népszerűnek vélt budapesti attrakciók körében a világörökségi helyszínhez tartozó attrakciók milyen szerepet töltenek be, milyen megítélésben részesülnek, és milyen fejlesztésre van szükség a trendekhez való illeszkedés érdekében.

Ezen célok elérésére strukturált tartalomelemzést végeztünk a legnagyobb véleménymegosztó turisztikai oldalon, a Tripadvisoron, amely természetéből adódóan jellemzően az „új”, komplex kulturális turisztikai motivációkkal utazókat vonzza. Feltételezésünk szerint a átalakuló kulturális turizmus új termékfejlesztés igényeit hordozza.

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**Keywords:** Kulturális turizmus transzformációja; Budapesti világörökség; örökségturizmus

## Introduction

The WTO-ETC (2004) research has drawn the attention to the fact that beyond cultural tourism the traditional attractions (in the inner circle of cultural tourism: art, museums, galleries, festivals, historic buildings and locations), more and more emphasis is laid on the so-called outer circle of cultural tourism. This regards the local lifestyle, the acquaintance and involvement in the local creative industries.

According to these transformations, it has become crucial to realise the extent to which World Heritage Sites and their tourism can comply with their requirements of these emerging new touristic trends and their opportunities. Our research is looking for an answer to these issues by making an attempt to investigate the situation of the above described trend in the case of the Budapest World Heritage Site, the trends of the city's touristic activities reflecting the modifying cultural tourism as well as its approaches and characteristics. We equally present here the research methodology and its achievements. The methodology was a content analysis of Tripadvisor opinions about the Budapest world heritage site including an assessment of how it meets the new cultural touristic trends and what are the main lines of development required in order to proceed with the support of this touristic progress.

### 1. The transformation of cultural tourism

The transformation is especially attractive in the case of the simultaneous consumption of the classical and local culture: most tourists, especially the young ones want to have creative experiences, see contemporary artistic creations, shopping, but also visits to world heritage sites. The transforming cultural tourism must include classical culture, contemporary art and it has become inevitable to add the experience of involvement and information provision by learning and meeting creative industry (Smith & Robinson, 2006).

It leads us to creative tourism focusing even more on the interaction between the community culture of the travellers and the destinations, as identified by the UNESCO:

The meaning of “creative tourism,” emphasizing that it includes more access to culture or history (“less museums, more squares”), involves doing something experientially, and an authentic engagement in the real cultural life of the city. “Creative Tourism” involves more interaction, in which the visitor has an educational, emotional, social, and participative interaction with the place, its living culture, and the people who live there. They feel like a citizen. This third generation requires that managers also evolve, recognizing the creativity within their city as a resource, and providing new opportunities to meet the evolving interests of tourists” (UNESCO, 2006, p.2.).

Creative tourism can be identified as Culture 3.0. according to Sacco (2011) (after Culture 1.0. in the pre-industrial societies with a limited access to cultural products; followed by the Culture 2.0. where cultural production and creative industries expand

the accessibility of cultural products). In the case of Culture 3.0. the audience can use their own creativity to reshape the supply of the city so that they can “consume” it.

This connection between tourism and creativity is more and more important which results in the change of cultural tourism going from tangible towards intangible heritage that is present in the everyday life of the destinations. As the process happens in the case of other scientific branches, it is also difficult to be identified but it means that creative people prepare products, participate in the processes of local life and the visited locations are open to introduce them the processes and teach them (Richards, G. 2011).

According to Richards (2014) creative products can serve as tourism attractions, as well as the baseline for atmosphere to feel by tourists and residents, and creativity can be used on the following ways to develop tourism: “1. Developing tourism products and experiences; 2. Revitalisation of existing products; 3. Valorising cultural and creative assets; 4. Providing economic spin-offs for creative development; 5. Using creative techniques to enhance the tourism experience; 6. Adding buzz and atmosphere to places.” (Richards, 2014, p.2.)

Consequently, today’s cultural tourism is a complex touristic product, satisfying a large scale of requirements where classical culture, heritage, world heritage, contemporary art and active involvement are equally important strengthening local authenticity and creative industry. Cultural creative industries (CCIs) are industrial branches related to the production of cultural goods and services like visual and performing arts, special events, festivals, aboriginal traditions, rural craftsmanship, language, gastronomy, industrial heritage, museums and their commerce related activities as well as art exhibitions, selling of cultural products, contemporary architecture, design industry and publicities (Smith, 2015).

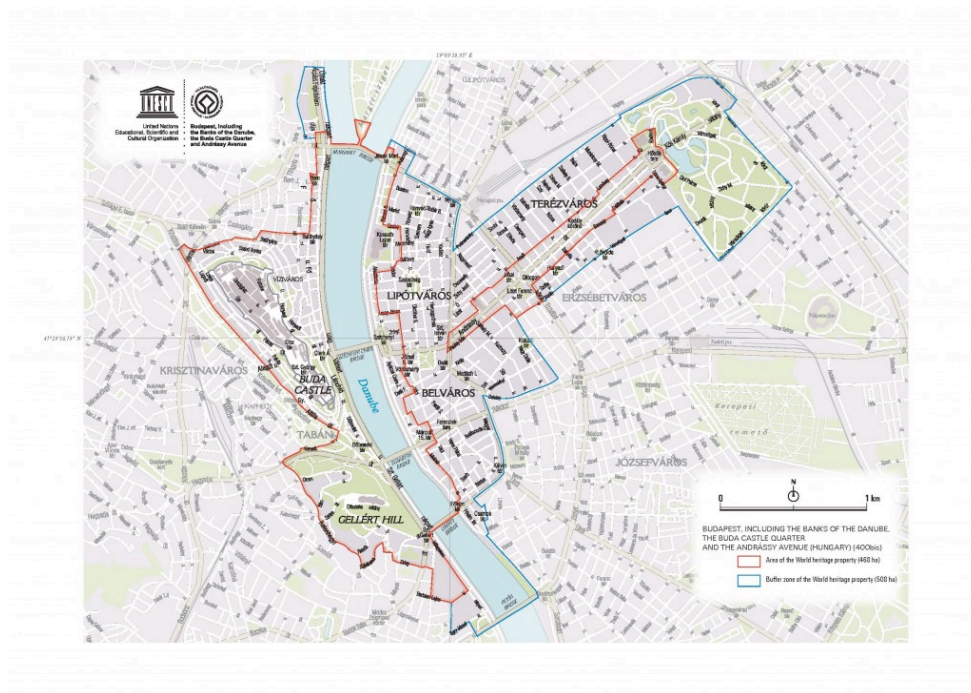
Further on in creative tourism relationships are included: instead of individual knowledge networks are highlighted, and the way how visitors and creative service suppliers are connected in interactivity, and co-create the experience (Castells, 2009). The deepening embeddedness of culture and creativity in the city’s life, creative tourism started to focus on showing the everyday life, and the life of creative clusters for tourists (Pappalepore et al., 2010).

## **1. Budapest as a world heritage site and a tourism destination**

The 1972 World Heritage Convention is a unique tool for linking together the concepts of nature conservation and the preservation of cultural properties in order to control the way in which people interact with nature, and the fundamental need to preserve the balance between the two (UNESCO, 2016). The Budapest World Heritage Site was inscribed on the List in 1987. The territory of it encompassed from Margit Bridge to Liberty Bridge around 60 acres. In the course of the 2002 World Heritage Committee session the site was extended by the Andrásy Avenue, the Hero’s Square and the Millenary Underground below it, and since then the official name of it was changed for Budapest, including the Banks of the Danube, the Buda Castle Quarter and Andrásy

Avenue.

As a centre for receiving and disseminating cultural influences, Budapest is an outstanding example of urban development in Central Europe, characterised by periods of devastation and revitalisation. Budapest has retained the separate structural characteristics of the former cities of Pest, Buda and Óbuda. One example of it is the Buda Castle Quarter with its medieval and characteristically Baroque style, which are distinct from the uniquely homogeneous architecture of Pest (with its historicising and art nouveau styles) which is characterised by outstanding public buildings and fitted into the ringed-radial city structure. All this is organized into a unity arising from the varied morphological characteristics of the landscape and the Danube, the two banks of which are linked by a number of bridges. The urban architectural ensemble of the Andrásy Avenue (“The Avenue”) and its surroundings (Heroes’ Square, the City Park, historic inner city districts and public buildings) are high-quality architectural and artistic realisations of principles of urbanism reflecting tendencies, which became widespread in the second part of the 19th century. The scenic view of the Banks of the Danube as part of the historic urban landscape is a unique example of the harmonious interaction between human society and a natural environment characterised by varied morphological conditions. Gellért Hill with the Citadel and the Buda Hills partly covered with forests, the broad Danube with its islands and Pest’s flat terrain rising with a slight gradient (UNESCO, 2016). Figure 1 shows the map of the Budapest World Heritage Site delimitation.

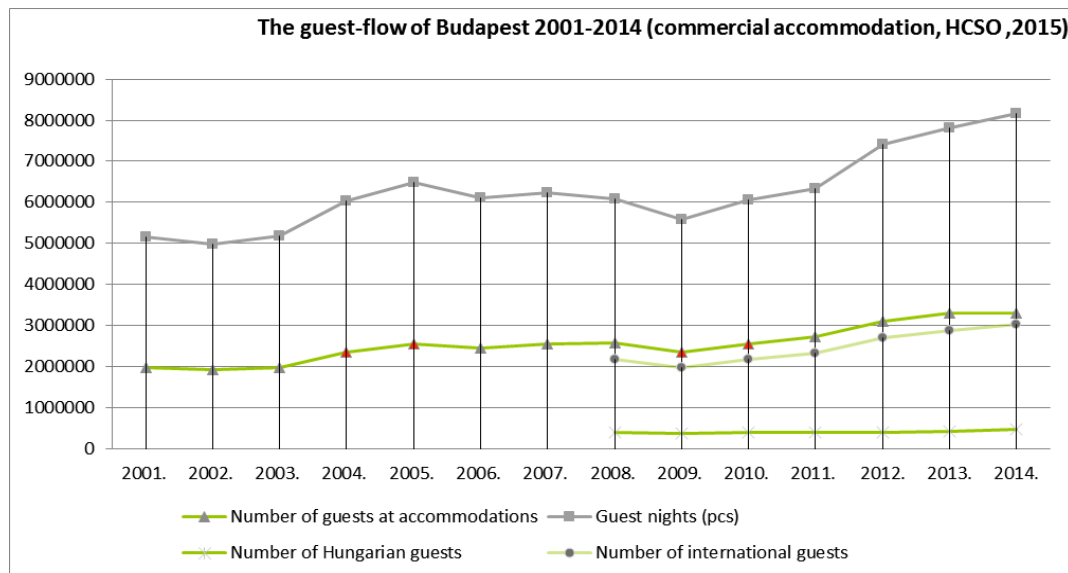


**Figure 1:** Map of WHS in Budapest

Source: <http://www.vilagorokseg.hu/budapest-4>

## 2. Budapest as a tourism destination and WHS

Figure 2 represents the number of international and domestic tourists visiting Budapest, that of guest nights between 2001-2015. Based on this, the following information is to be underlined:



**Figure 2:** The guest-flow of Budapest 2001-2014 (commercial accommodation).

Source: HCSO, 2015

The 2008 economic world crisis had a strong impact on the touristic branches as well. By 2009, both the number of guests and guest nights had significantly decreased. Following the tendency in Budapest, the deepest point was in 2009. Tangible change can only be seen since 2012 where – as compared to 2009 data – 25% increase can be seen, namely the number of guest nights registered was higher by 1,819,069. As compared to 2012 data, in 2015, the increase was 18% which means 1,300,010 more guest nights. On Figure 1, it can be well seen that rising is continuous that is not as intensive as between 2009-2012, but definitely proves a positive growing tendency which let us think that Budapest has overcome the crisis.

For Hungarian visitors, the capital is still not a potential touristic target. As it can be seen on the Figure, the number of Hungarian guests does not show a significant change, whereas the number of foreign guests is significantly growing, the number of Hungarian guests stagnates or slightly increases.

From the point of view of cultural tourism, a research was carried out by the Budapest Cultural Work Group in 2009. The results of the assessment was carried out based on cohort, citizenship, motivation and related to answers about the Budapest Card. The evaluation of 2009 showed that the main motivation was the town visit and culture. The most outstanding attractions of Budapest proved to be culture and world heritage, as 82% of the answers included them. This was followed by 45% naming the baths and 40% marking built heritage. Important attractions also include events, festivals, cultural

programs (38%) as well as wine and gastronomy with its 24%. The most popular cultural programs were museum visits, cultural events, festivals, folk dances (including the Hungarian speciality of intangible heritage: the Dance Houses), folk music. When selecting the travel target, 56% of the people are influenced by the cultural offers of a city (Nyúl-Ördög, 2009).

A change can be seen in the nature of cultural tourism in Budapest: in 2009, the main motivation of the Budapest visitors was the panoramic view, built heritage and cultural heritage (Nyúl and Ördög, 2009.). In 2012. Smith and Puczko (2012) highlighted the change regarding cultural tourism experiences in Budapest, which includes creative products as well. Among the most popular programs on Tripadvisor in Budapest in 2015 (based on the number of reviews) the followings could be seen: sightseeing tours, nightlife, sights and landmarks, spas and wellness. This list can support the statement of Smith-Puczko (2015): the cultural tourism programs, and motivations in Budapest are in change, and new, creative elements have been explored.

### **3. Methodology**

The main research question was: to what extent do today's cultural travellers know the world heritage site of Budapest when they arrive and what experiences they take home related to them and resulting of this, what developments are to be made to comply with the changing cultural touristic requirements.

The platform of our investigation was the biggest opinion sharing webpage Tripadvisor, where 50 million users have published 320 million opinions about more than 6.2 million touristic service providers and attractions all over the world in 2015. (Tripadvisor, 2015). In order to analyse the opinions, a close-coded content analysis has been used, emphasizing the research of interpretation, supplementary services and overall experience. Regarding the methodology the following researches were used as baselines: Kladou and Mavragani (2015), analysing the image of Turkey based on finding and selecting special reviews with closed-coded analysis; Michalko et al. (2015) understanding the meaning of term "Balkan" based on the comments.

The research was executed in two stages. First we identified the attractions on the Budapest page which are the parts of the world heritage site. Then we selected the most popular 70 attractions. The selection was partly done based on popularity, partly on relevance (depending on the number of comments). Here we also paid special attention to general assessment of world heritage attractions and their role among popular attractions. In the next step, the contents analysis of the related comments took place, in the course of which three elements (Buda Castle Quarter, Banks of the Danube panoramic landscape and Andrassy Avenue) of the Budapest site were individually examined. In the case of each element, 5-6 attractions of the most popular ones in these areas were selected depending on professional evaluations of their importance. In the case of the given attractions we defined the types of comments to be analysed by content analysis. We were striving to select 50-50 comments for analysis from both the "excellent" and "horrible" categories, as well as to find the comments of the years 2010 and 2015 in order to examine the results of big renovations having taken place in this period.

Based on data from December 2015, 88,000 evaluations of 341 attractions were processed, and finally 14 attractions (1400 reviews) were selected for deeper analysis by the above described method. For the precise analysis, the MA students of Tourism Management specialisation of the Budapest Metropolitan University can highly be appreciated. The research was led by the Ivett Sziva and Lia Bassa in the framework of such a professional cooperation where two other organisations – the Association of Cultural Heritage Managers and the Budapest Festival and Tourism Centre Nonprofit Ltd. – supported the work, because the outcome could also contribute to their activities in connection with the Budapest world heritage site management and the related touristic factors.

The research method obviously sets limits for the investigation, as resulting partly from the qualitative methodology tools (not aiming at representativity), partly from the analysed comment sample, regarding the fact that average opinions (good, medium evaluations) are left out from the assessment. Moreover, the examined 100 elements can be considered as appropriate, typical comments in case of a given attraction for learning about good and bad experiences but the available conclusions must be handled with care and further researches are required by the analysis of the whole range of comments to obtain a general statement.

#### **4. Research results**

##### *4.1 The popularity of the attractions of the WHS*

Among the selected 70 most important attractions, 41% of them are located in the WHS area, while the rest is along the Banks of the Danube. Among the 10 most popular attractions, the following ones can be mentioned: the Parliament, the Fishermen's Bastion and the attractions of the Buda Castle. It can be said that these attractions of Budapest in the WHS area are particularly popular.

The extent to which the reviewers are aware of visiting a WHS was the following issue to be examined. Using the keywords connected to the WHS, only 263 reviews (in the selected 4 languages, in English, French, German and Italian) mention the WHS, which number is particularly low, regarding the 205 thousand reviews concerning other Budapest locations. It can be seen that those arriving to Budapest hardly know that they are at a WHS. Two reasons can be named for explaining this phenomenon: first, the visitor management system of the WHS (signs, information) is not appropriate; second, the attractions of the WHS are popular and tourists arrive because of this without the concrete, primary motivation of a visit to the WHS.

This finding is strengthened by the results of Yang et al (2011) and Huang et al. (2012): the brand of WHS is not strong enough to attract tourists.



#### 4.2 Evaluation of the attractions

The reviewers can evaluate the attractions on a scale of 1-5 on Tripadvisor. According to the results, the attractions selected to the analysing database, gained positive reviews with an average of 4.55. Some of the reviews with concerns are related to the attractions of Buda Castle area. As it was mentioned before, in Budapest three elements of the WHS were regarded by focusing on the typical and atypical reviews, with the results below.

##### *Andrássy Avenue*

There were six attractions within the 70 selected elements on the Andrássy Avenue from which 5 attractions were deeply analysed with the following details: 374 reviews were analysed with 66.8% of positive content. The list of the selected attractions are below (Table 1)

**Table 1:** Attractions of Andrássy Avenue on Tripadvisor

Site	Rank on popularity list	Average (1-5)
Opera House	14	4.4
Budapest Operetta Theatre	23	4.3
Heroes' Square	28	4.3
House of Terror	40	4
Andrássy Avenue	72	4

Source: research data

The main motivation at visiting the Andrássy Avenue (from the analysed 61 reviews) is sightseeing (42.6%), but the special architecture (31.2%) and shopping (26.2%) is also important. Regarding the comments considering the main attractions of the street, the positive evaluations were mentioned particularly considering the architecture (“amazing, better than the Opera in Vienna”, “the heaven for statues”), atmosphere (“the history come alive”, “Just walk through and feel the elegance”, “Come here if you want to be happy”), and gastronomy (“just take a coffee and sit out there” [Heroes' Square]).

While the negative reviews highlighted the negative elements of atmosphere, mainly, “noisy”, “depressing state of some buildings”. The negative opinions considered the guided tour as not informative, and found the level of the so called “mini-concert” in the State Opera as “karaoke”, further on found the visitor management problematic, because of the crowd, and long waiting time (Kormos-Hernyik, 2015).

As a summary, it can be said that Andrássy Avenue is evaluated as a positive site of Budapest, and can be addressed as a place for feeling the elegance of Budapest however the management issues of the attractions hold further challenges.

### *The Banks of the Danube*

The most popular attractions of Budapest, the Danube itself, and the Parliament are located on the Banks of the Danube. Further 13 attractions can be seen from the selected 70, with the following 5 attractions of further analysis, with a positive overall opinion (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Attractions of the Banks of the Danube on Tripadvisor

Site	Rank on popularity list	Average (1-5)
Parliament	1	4.4
Banks of the Danube	5	4.3
Gellért Hill	22	4.3
Gresham Palace	27	4.3

Source: research data

Positive evaluations can be seen regarding the architecture (“the most beautiful building in Europe”), the “breathtaking” view and “romantic” atmosphere particularly at night. The new issue of photography as a concrete motivation should be highlighted in the case of the Danube, particularly the Parliament (“Take a photo of it from the Pest side, and have a cab and go to make one from the other side of Danube”). The negative opinions appeared considering the polluted Danube, the overrated services of the cruises and the visitor management issues, particularly parking places and signs. (Szakály-Gulyás, 2015)

Regarding this area a positive change could be seen in evaluations from 2010 to 2015: in 2010 a lot of reconstructions were started in the city, especially on the Banks of the Danube, with reviews echoing the noise, dust and the chaotic situations, while in 2015 the results of the regeneration project were realized by the reviewers in admiring new parks, renewed buildings.

### *Castle of Buda*

Castle of Buda is the site where the reviewers realize and highlight of being on a World Heritage Site (47% of the reviews mentioning Budapest as WHS) with 10 attractions of the most popular 70 ones, and the 5 below analysed in detail (Table 3).

**Table 3:** Attractions in the Castle of Buda on Tripadvisor

Site	Rank on popularity list	Average (1-5)
Fishermen’s Bastion	2	4.4
The Royal Palace	18	4.4
Matthias Church	11	4.4

Hospital in the rock	19	4.4
The Castle Bazar	56	43

The positive evaluations appeared regarding the view (“Breathtaking view to the Danube”), the architecture (“amazing church in charming atmosphere”, “beautifully renewed”), the photography (“best place for taking photos of the Danube”), the gastronomy and street music (“fantastic cakes”, “just have a glass of wine and listen to the violin”). Although the Castle District is among the most popular and exciting areas of Budapest, the majority of negative opinions also appeared here, mainly because of the bad price/value ratio. Among the negative reviews, the followings could be highlighted: price/value (“ambush for tourists”); visitor management (“it is such a secret place, that you cannot find it”) and interpretation (“the translation of the text in the museum was not proper”, “it is an empty palace”) (Szuláné-Taba, 2015).

Summarizing it can be said that Castle of Buda is the site, where visitors can feel the atmosphere of the Budapest world heritage, and further steps, mainly product development and quality management is needed to fill the important site with interpretation.

The reviewers on Tripadvisor (the so-called net savvy generations) are the members of the segments interested in the most recent trends of cultural tourism and their (sometimes particularly critical) opinions are appropriate to answer our main question whether the supply of Budapest attractions meet the newest requirements of tourist trends. It can be seen that the most popular attractions are located within the area of the Budapest WHS, so the world heritage tourism is well focused, even if it is unconsciously done. It should be also highlighted that the new tourists search new experience-elements, like photography, gastronomy and the recent trends of interpretation.

## Conclusion

In the course of our investigation, we were attempting to find an answer for the following question: how classical heritage tourism, world heritage tourism fits into the transformed, cultural touristic trends set up by the new, individual travellers. We could make the statement that Budapest as a cultural destination is more and more popular among travellers which can be supported by hospitality data as well as by the results of our investigation based on Tripadvisor comments.

The majority of the assessments is positive and their tendency is increasing. Within Budapest, the Buda Castle Quarter has got the leading role, which is seemingly a “must to see” for the tourists. Nevertheless, it is also a great disappointment for them as well based on the evaluations. The Banks of the Danube is also a popular element of the visit, whereas the Andrásy Avenue is appreciated for its elegance and the Opera House. In the examined evaluations, the world heritage as primary motivation has not appeared, although the actual WHS assures the cultural touristic roots of Budapest.

The main reason for this contradiction is that the information management of the site does not sufficiently contribute at all to the awareness of the tourists.

Altogether, it can be seen the Budapest WHS is hardly known by the visitors, so its outstanding values still contain unattended attractions, which also means that raising awareness and making more use of it are still among the most urging tasks of the site management. The appearance of the world heritage brand is not significant in Budapest: many more signs with the WHS logo are needed on site, in leaflets, on web pages of the destination and underlining and supplementing services are equally required (thematic walks, guided tours).

Based on our research, it can be clearly stated that among new travellers the site is popular but the changing cultural touristic requirements need better local interpretation and visitor management that can be achieved by conscious planning, using modern tools so that the authenticity can be sufficiently assured for the purpose of going beyond traditional values by adding new ones like e.g. gastronomy and photography.

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