

ALMA MATER

**TOURISM AND ICT ASPECTS OF
BALKAN WELLBEING**

**A BALKÁN JÓLLÉT TURISZTIKAI ÉS IKT
VONATKOZÁSAI**



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Wellbeing dimensions of the tourism representation of the Balkans¹

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Abstract

The Balkans used to be a citadel of tourism in Europe. Regime changes, the Yugoslav wars, global recession and their political, as well as economic and social consequences reshaped the region's tourism oriented offer significantly and in connection with it, the volume and composition of demand. In spite of the changes that took place during the past quarter of a century, tourism continues to be a driving sector of the region and its success has an impact on the local population's quality of life. Indicators of tourism turnover can be influenced significantly by the "mental" image of the Balkans. Thanks to internet-based social media and state-of-the-art mobile communication means any associations with the region can be confirmed or changed, in particular the recent tourism experiences which shape the notions associated with the region are now accessible to everyone. As the essential elements of the Balkans' image can be viewed quite well in the comments uploaded to the Tripadvisor travel portal, this study proposes to understand the tourism related aspects of this concept by analyzing this database. The study is an attempt at exploring the Balkans-specific connections in the triad of image-tourism-quality of life.

Keywords: *image, tourism, Balkans, well-being, quality of life, Tripadvisor*

Introduction

There are few people older than 40 in the former socialist states in Eastern Europe who have not heard of the name Surda. Most of them remember well the main character Borivoje Šurdilović from Warm Wind, a Yugoslavian TV show produced in 1980, who has become a cult figure with his clumsiness and whose comic days were presented in 10 episodes on screen as a crooked mirror which was a sort of social criticism too. Surda and the Yugoslavian reality surrounding him can be construed as a specific historic picture of the Balkans: the main character unable to find his way in the quirks and quagmires of market economy transpiring through the cracks of socialism evaded the challenges by taking refuge in his siestas on the grounds of his low blood pressure. The messages of the TV show were easy to decipher and inspired many associations with the region which are vivid even today. It should be mentioned that for Yugoslavian society (and synonymously the Balkan or perhaps South Eastern European society) known for its ethnic diversity, components of well-being (subjective quality of life) prevailed over the elements of well-being (the objective quality of life).

Against this backdrop, a peaceful, stress-free life, a lot of relaxation, love of music and day-dreaming can be construed as key values in the locals' philosophy of life.

Although Yugoslavia no longer exists, the feeling of life caricatured and embodied in Surda's character remains part of the Balkans image which most of the successor states would gladly get rid of. While the so-called Yugo-nostalgia (VÁRADI-ERŐSS 2013) can be sensed everywhere, the countries in question want to seem modern, competitive and not least, European, and the stabilization and catching up process following the Yugoslav wars indeed follows this direction. As the perceived closing of gaps in terms of quality of life is slow, so is changing the "mental" image of the region and the two processes are interconnected. The happy and content locals form a social environment which can exert an attractive power over tourists in terms of tourism oriented offer and their image of the Balkans following visits could change for the better in these countries.

This study has two goals; first, it points out the associations in the region with unfavorable indicators of quality of life (in comparison with other European countries); secondly, it attempts to explore the general and tourism-specific elements of the Balkans' image. (The study starts with the assumption that visitors to the Balkans have a multidimensional image of their destination, coloured by information, prejudice, stereotypes, etc., which affects perceptions as a result of expected and actual experience combined and then becomes transparent in the "this is typical Balkans for you" comments on the internet.

It is assumed that the region's competitiveness in terms of tourism partially depends on the mental image of the Balkans: a more positive meaning is associated with being Balkan and if the Balkans becomes a nice sounding brand, then the increasing tourism demand will lead to improved indicators of quality of life. Thanks to feedback, tourist flow could gather momentum and this self-fuelling process would sooner or later lead to the desired increased development of the Balkans.

To achieve the objectives of the study, the researchers processed the national and international literature on the Balkans, then analyzed the UN happiness and MERCER livability database, conducted a secondary analysis of the information derived therefrom, and illustrated the results on a map. Then they analyzed the content of comments on the Balkans from the international travel portal Tripadvisor; this information was grouped thematically and their content in terms of tourism was evaluated.

1 The psychology of being Balkan

To know and understand the Balkans have been wishful objectives of travelers, thinkers and researchers from various fields for centuries (HAJDÚ 2003, BRACEWELL–DRACE-FRANCIS 2009, KŐSZEGI 2010, SANGUIN 2011, NAGY 2012). MEZŐ (2000) pointed out that similarly to the Caucasians, the Balkans cannot be analyzed based on algorithms of Western European thinking, and often the processes of knowing and understanding are bound to fail because of incorrect assumptions. While indeed Balkan stability is a vital issue for the European Union, one direction of the discourses about the security policy for the region is to explore the psychology of being Balkan and once explored, to facilitate economic-social recovery (ANASTASAKIS 2000).

The Balkans is a specific geopolitical structure. Its geographical framework, the Balkan Peninsula was named after the Balkan Mountains located in the territory of Bulgaria (SZÉKELY 1970). Delimiting the Balkan Peninsula is in itself an issue which triggers disputes among experts: 17 different boundaries can be found in literature; however, the researchers agree that the Danube, Sava and Kulpa rivers represent a certain boundary (PAP 2013). The term South Eastern Europe used as a synonym of the Balkans makes it easier to discuss the social and economic processes taking place in the region from a historic point of view with a less axiological dimension, while it also ensures a more politically correct approach (KOCSIS 2007). The latter one is a prerequisite to the expansion of the European Union in the region, as the prejudices and stereotypes relating to the Balkans could hamper its success.

The Balkans is one of the geographical names with negative connotations; as a result, the concept of being Balkan designates a darker side of the world. PAP (2010) offers a graphic illustration of the prejudices and stereotypes the Balkans are charged with, more specifically of the region's "mental" image: a savage, pastoral mountainous area with an uncivilized religious diversity, colored by settlements dominated by Islamic elements and Eastern mood, where an authoritarian society lives in a duality of poverty and opulence, characterized by strong ethnicity, which handles its conflicts with violence. This interpretation of being Balkan is not new and it is not a fruit of the historic vicissitudes of the 20th century, but can be traced back much earlier. The region turned into a warzone starting from the Ottoman conquerors of the 15th century; its history can be defined as a constant struggle for existence and territory, which shaped the psychological structure of the locals in every generation, as well as the outsiders' attitude towards the Balkans, and which maintained poverty and under-

development in this region (MAZOWER 2004, ÁBRAHÁM 2007, M. CSÁSZÁR–PAP 2011). The pictures drawn about the Balkans at the turn of the 19th/20th century (“Europe’s sick man”, “a ticking time bomb”) are still very much common concepts about the region (HAJDÚ 2007). The negative connotations of being Balkan are intensified by the “balkanization” term widespread in English and American social scientific literature, used to describe the fragmentation and dividedness of a community or a nation (ELLIS-WRIGHT 1998).

As the pejorative associations representing the Balkans in public mentality are rather cultural than geographic (REDEPENNING 2002, GARDE 2007), changing the associations of such concepts poses quite a challenge (CSEPELI 2003) in spite of the positive signs (CARTER-NORRIS 1996). As a result of a study conducted among students, SEBEN (2007) pointed out that the central core of the cognitive content of social representation (the way one sees and approaches things) regarding the Balkans is full of negative connotations in spite of the fact that associations existing in the minds of the respondents (mountains, seaside, holidays, cultural diversity) include several positive elements which can be leveraged in tourism.

So, being Balkan expresses a regional correlation between phenomena and processes relating to the Balkan countries (often the simplification of such a connection), but it also designates a homogenization of the particularities which come from the historical and cultural traditions of the region and are experienced in everyday life, used as a transfer of values. Objective and subjective elements are both combined in it, but the result rarely triggers positive associations. The concept has a strong social-economic connotation which directly and indirectly refers to the quality of everyday life.

2 Being well and being Balkan

Measuring well-being (happiness in some places, subjective quality of life in others) is one of the greyest areas of social scientific research (BABBIE 1999). While some experts try to take into account the subjective pillar of quality of life of the community studied using so-called proxy indicators, most researchers agree that the quality of life experienced by an individual is difficult to measure and the extent of well-being hard to assess based on characteristics observed by an external party (HEGEDŰS 2001, SZABÓ 2003). Experts measuring quality of life assume that society’s members react with roughly identical outputs to the same inputs (RAHMAN et al. 2005). Although life does have some factors which

underlie well-being, the cultural differences and individual life situations can change the theoretical outcome considerably. As studying the subjective component of quality of life is quite an unstable ground for the researchers embarking on this task, international comparisons place a much stronger emphasis on objective indicators.

Quantification and indexing of quality of life is a much more complex issue than an international comparison of working hours spent on buying a Big Mac, for example (NUSSBAUM-SEN 1993, ONG 1997). An eloquent illustration of the difficulties is the fact that as to this day, there is no international consensus on what methodological tools could be used to grasp quality of life best. The so-called complex quality of life indicators are as many as stars in the sky, but most of them can hardly be combined and most often they consist of components selected and weighted arbitrarily (LENGYEL 2002, SEBESTYÉN 2005). The Human Development Index (HDI) which is based on the concept of human development, which is quite widely used in international practice, consists of three components: health (life expectancy at birth), quality of life (GDP per capita) and schooling (ratio of illiteracy and various degrees of education) represent the central elements of the measuring tool used by the UN (JÓZAN 2008). It also served the basis for the World Happiness Report (HELLIWELL et al. 2013) published by the UN, whose primary goal is to monitor the achievement of sustainable development. While studying the most diverse measuring tools, authors of the document concluded that satisfaction with life determined on the basis of an index which combined six variables resulted in indicators which were comparable on an international scale, too. Appropriate weighting of GDP per capita, healthy life expectancy, social support, perceived corruption, solidarity and freedom of choice is suitable for assessing the happiness of certain countries.

Based on the database of the World Happiness Report 2013, the list of the 156 countries studied was topped by Denmark, while the ranks of most Balkan countries were far from the happiest region of the world. Only Slovenia could acquire a relatively favorable position in the international comparison, ranking 44th in 2013. Croatia (58), Albania (62), Greece (70), Turkey (77), Montenegro (80) and Romania (90) lagged behind ranking medium, while Serbia (106), Bosnia-Herzegovina (107), Macedonia (118), Bulgaria (144) had the worst indicators of happiness (Figure 1). Considering that the database does not allow for a deeper examination of the happiness index, here it can only be concluded that the Balkan quality of life lags behind considerably compared to other European countries.

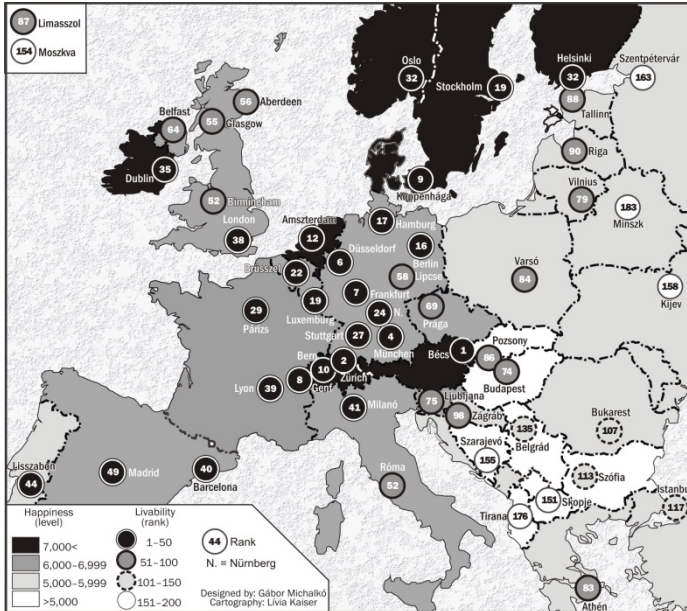


Figure 1. Quality of life and livability in Europe, 2012
(Source: MERCER, 2014, HELLIWELL – LAYARD – SACHS, 2013).

Differences between the livability of a town and quality of life of its inhabitants can be attributed primarily to the objective nature of the former concept (SUFIAN 1993, LUBNA 2007). Expected satisfaction of the livability criteria has a favorable impact on the international competitiveness of the given town, but the norms used for evaluation are standardized according to the demands of the developed world. Public safety, drinking water supply, internet access, retail variety - albeit they do influence the quality of everyday life - are incapable of exploring the human relationships which can truly make happy those who inhabit or visit those places (ÁGOSTON 2007; BRÜLDE 2007; BRUNI-PORTA 2007).

The “earthly paradises” rated by an international consultancy company, MERCER² i.e. the most livable cities in the world, are topped by European cities. According to an index based on New York, among the first ten in 2012 were three Swiss cities (Zurich, Geneva, Bern), three German ones (Düsseldorf,

² www.mercer.com

Frankfurt, Munich) and one Austrian city (Vienna), which clearly shows a correlation between livability and order in the good sense (a functional city with efficient local administration, a rule-abiding and enforcing community).

Based on the MERCER index, Balkan cities (mostly capitals) presented a rather diverse picture in terms of livability. None of the cities ranked in the first quartile of the list of cities studied i.e. the 50 most livable cities in the world. The second quartile included the Slovenian, the Greek and the Croatian capital: Ljubljana (75), Athens (83) and Zagreb (98) ranked among the cities in the medium range with better ratings than others. In the third quartile, cities of medium range can be found but with a less favorable rating: Bucharest (107), Sofia (113), Istanbul (117) and Belgrade (135). Lagging far behind the top range, the cities rated most unfavorable in terms of livability, ranking in the fourth quartile, were Skopje (151), Sarajevo (155) and Tirana (176). Considering the complex nature of the MERCER index, it would be difficult to explain why the Balkan cities occupied places between 75 and 176 in terms of livability; but it is a fact that capitals belonging to the European Union did obtain better ratings than those outside. In terms of livability of cities, the rating was governed by EU norms which some of the Balkan cities (capitals) cannot fully measure up to.

3 Tourism aspects of being Balkan in the light of Tripadvisor

3.1 Method

One milestone in getting to know the international image of the Balkans is exploring the tourism aspects of the meanings behind the words “Balkans/Balkan”. If we know what tourists visiting the Balkan countries see as typically Balkan, then it is possible to get closer to their mental image of the Balkans by capturing the specific elements of the image. To do this, the researchers focused on the database of one of the most popular travel portals, Tripadvisor. Tripadvisor is an interface for rating tourist destinations and services used (traveling rating), expressing opinions about them (review) and establishing a dialog with the stakeholders and interested parties (forum), with excellent search options, but also with many limitations of the validity of scientific conclusions derived from it (AYEH et al. 2013). The researchers conducted the research based on the information uploaded to Tripadvisor until 30 September 2013.

To collect the phrases, attributive compounds and connotations related to the Balkans from the descriptions of tourist experiences, a relatively manageable database of the search results for the searched term had to be created (4487

reviews). In the course of the analysis, only texts were used which contained the term Balkans/Balkan in the descriptions which rated tourist experiences. All the comments in which the geographical terms analyzed were only used to designate the location (e.g. hotel located in the Balkans) or in the service providers' names (e.g. Hotel Balkan, Balkan Restaurant, Balkan Holidays) were excluded. Furthermore, any texts which referred to a tourist destination outside the studied area (see Footnote 1) (e.g. Balkan restaurant operated in the USA) or comments of citizens from the Balkan countries were not included (the former category was excluded for the sake of authenticity, while the latter on the grounds of limited objectivity). Considering that Tripadvisor is dominated by English and to be able to categorize the phrases, only entries made in the English language were considered. Phrases written in British English were searched for striving to avoid any exclusion caused by words mistyped by users (e.g. misspellings) and when grammatically incorrect phrases were noticed, they were taken into account after correction. For the reasons presented above, a much narrowed database of 64 longer or shorter comments was obtained, and its substance was analysed using the qualitative methodology of tourism studies (STEPCHENKOVA 2012).

3.2 Results

In dividing tourist experiences of specific Balkan countries, the expressions containing the words "Balkans/Balkan" in the Tripadvisor travel portal can be grouped into three major topics, based on context: cuisine (23 comments), hospitality (17 comments) and atmosphere (15 comments) representing nodes in connection with which the experiences were published as being "Balkan" (comments included in other categories are not analyzed here). Although the topics defined were overlapping in the case of certain comments, they could still be separated based on their main message. Below the Balkan specifics of certain topics based on the comments included in the those categories for the purpose of analysis are presented (the most frequent English terms are included in parentheses).

- **Balkan cuisine** (Balkan dishes/food/cuisine/meal/kitchen)

Presenting the variety of meals and drinks, tourists love to describe the offers of the given catering place as being typically Balkan. Among the dishes mentioned most frequently were grilled meats (barbecue), fresh vegetables, enticing sweets, tasty wines and home-made liqueurs. The offers named specifically included mostly chevapchichi, rakia and shopska salad.

A large number of the travelers who rated the Balkan cuisine confined themselves to a general appreciation, as reflected by the post of a Polish tourist who visited Serbia:

*“After whole day of visiting Belgrade, it is a perfect place to enjoy delicious **Balkan cuisine**”*

Naturally, satisfaction with Balkan cuisine is not complete; a British tourist used to Italian espresso who visited Bosnia-Herzegovina objected to the quality of the local coffee, which fell short even of the generally accepted catering standards of the Balkans (considered reasonable by this tourist):

*“The only let down for me has been the coffee, which on at least 2 occasions is not up to **Balkan standard**”.*

- **Balkan hospitality** (Balkan hospitality/style/mentality)

Service to tourists, attitude towards the customers, the price/value ratio of services used, deemed to be Balkan, were dominant in the comments of tourists who visited the places. Restaurant or hotel personnel were described as Balkan based on friendliness, helpfulness, on the one hand, and pushiness or impoliteness, on the other hand. A similar dividedness characterizes the comments on the price/value ratio of services; in this case, tourists tended to interpret their negative experiences as being Balkan. Various tricks or attempted tricks were not left uncommented on either and often they were commented on as being Balkan.

A Dutch citizen visiting Bulgaria described the unparalleled hospitality of the Balkans as a result of his/her favorable experiences in a hotel’s nightclub:

*“Don’t forget to visit the nightclub in the basement with their typical **Balkan hospitality**”.*

The fact that restaurant staff tries to please the guests constantly may seem burdensome to people coming from certain cultures and may trigger the opposite effect than that desired by the catering unit. Such was the experience reported by a tourist from the United Arab Emirates visiting Croatia:

*“Dishes are beautifully arranged but with little **Balkan style** of which people from there can not escape”.*

Human behavior caused by disorganization experienced on certain travels, such as ignoring of the most common conventions could inspire the use of the term Balkan. A British guest visiting Serbia presented a temporary chaos related to queuing at hotel reception as being typically Balkan.

*“There was total and utter chaos at the reception, as 70 trippers arrived all at the same time to register: the general and ugly shove and push of **Balkanic queuing** ensued. When will the Serbs learn civilised queuing habits?”*

Hospitality involving the mindful, but not pushy service of the guest and detail-oriented service today is a standard of the European tourism industry and guests expect this to be reflected in the price/value ratio. If a tourist feels that they did not receive the quality of service for which they paid, they feel offended and rate the experience as being Balkan, as was the case of an Austrian citizen visiting Romania or an Indian guest spending his holiday in Croatia:

*“Western European prices for a **Balkan experience**. [...] The estimated times for preparing the food (from the menus) were way off. The toilets are ok and clean enough (for Eastern Europe)”*

*“Middle-class hotel with **Balkan mentality**, at Monaco prices. No real service. [...] Huge disappointment, first (and last) time I was in Croatia, cheat other people from now on instead of us.”*

- **Balkan atmosphere** (Balkan atmosphere/feeling)

The physical environment, squares and facilities full of sound, scents, lights reflecting history and culture are a major segment of comments on the Balkans. Numerous reports emphasize the unbearable music flowing from everywhere and the sense of discomfort caused by the lack of modernity. The garbage-ridden environment is also present in comments on the Balkans, which is described as a Balkan particularity, as is the obsolete infrastructure.

Reports associate music mostly with the catering units, describing discrete live music as a source of joy and the playback music “blaring” from audio devices as hard to bear. In certain cases, music is mentioned as being specifically ethnic, as a part of the folklore, while other comments described it as Balkan disco, technopop or rap. A good example of this is a British tourist visiting Romania and for the second one a Danish citizen also visiting Romania:

*“[...] a real gem for the traditional Romanian cuisine and an amazing **Balkan experience**, due to the live music shows they display every evening”*

*“[...] your enjoyment of the tranquility may find itself challenged by next-door teenagers doing their bit to escape the dullness of it all by blaring out **Balkan-style techno pop (manele)** on their stereo at full volume for open windows”*

Hotel ambiance, especially the interior design drew the attention of many tourists, but the “aesthetics” of the obsolete, unrenovated furniture was often mentioned together with deficient convenience services which were also deemed to be typically Balkan. A Belgian tourist visiting Macedonia commented on Balkan baroque, while an Austrian tourist visiting Albania reported Spartan conditions:

*“The style was **Balkan baroque** but ok. not top quality renovation overall (quite a few things loose here and there) but ok.”*

*“Spartanic furniture in typical **Balkan style** (TV not functioning, old closets, old carpets, etc).”*

The Balkan is often identified with a dirty and disorderly environment and lack of appropriate infrastructure; this dissonance, as a visible element of the setting, was pointed out by a Polish citizen visiting Bulgaria:

*“Outside of Golden Sands really **Balkan conditions**, dirt and lack of infrastructure”*

Compared to hotels and catering units, tourists in the Balkans reported fewer typical experiences about the physical conditions of the towns; perhaps a German citizen’s report about Montenegro reflects best the complexity of perceptions of the environment and its atmosphere:

*“Budva is definitely a nice party city, **Balkan feeling** is in the air”*

3.3 Tourism related substance of being balkan

The analysis above suggests that the meaning behind the Balkan attribute can be grasped easily in the case of tourists who shared their experiences of the Balkan countries through the Tripadvisor travel portal. Presumably, travel events were

experienced as being Balkan because the concerned tourists had a first-hand experience of certain elements of a mental Balkans image in their minds. During their stay, mosaic elements came to life which were already there in their own minds based on the information acquired during their studies, reports of relatives and acquaintances, media and internet, readings, etc. Earlier ideas became reality on the setting and remained there as being Balkan based on a tendency to simplify the world surrounding the tourists. These processes could be intensified by the expected experience, the desire for authenticity and in some cases, the cultural shock.

The Balkan term can be construed as an umbrella concept of two experiences occasionally overlapping: the first is meant to express the simplified geographical identification of experiences from Balkan countries on the experiencing parties' mental map; the second (partially related to the first one) is a rating with an axiological substance too, which is positive in some cases, contrary to common myths. The geographical substance of the Balkan phraseology refers to the impressions acquired there, which can be associated specifically with the given location, cannot be experienced elsewhere and stay with the mental image of the Balkans or an element of it. The axiological substance of the term examined comes from the tourists' set of standards and is often imbued with an emotional dimension. Everything which surpasses the standard expectations of the tourist is favorable and everything which falls short becomes negative, and the trip gains an emotional dimension intensified because of the experiencing party's state of mind, also expressed verbally.

The fact that a tourist rates something as Balkan in a Tripadvisor entry is an expression of the expected experience in most cases; this means that it can be construed as a manifestation of an experience in a Balkan country corresponding to the pre-existing expectations (this can be positive, too, for example when tasting Balkan cuisine delicacies, or negative, for example regarding the facilities or cleanliness in a Balkan hotel). But there are cases where the experiences of the tourist acquire a Balkan attribute not in the light of expectations, but prejudices i.e. the negative ideas about the region in their minds are connected with a case experienced in an intensive state of emotions, to express dissatisfaction (typical events like this are feeling cheated or pushiness).

The tourism related dimension of the Balkans was expressed best perhaps by the British tourist visiting Romania who focused on the cultural dimension of the concept in his entry on Tripadvisor:

*“This is a **Balkan country** and if you don’t know what this means from a cultural point of view you are missing the charm of visiting foreign places.”*

The term “charm” is the best expression of the ungraspable nature of Balkan experiences and character. Whoever visits a Balkan country will be enriched with an unparalleled experience of life and impressions which are nourished by the cuisine, hospitality and atmosphere of the region, as this study confirms. Experiences rated as being Balkan appear mostly in a context reporting basically about satisfaction with a positive content; therefore, the term Balkan does not necessarily carry unfavorable connotations.

4 Conclusions

During the decades preceding the regime change, the Balkans was a tourist-paradise for the socialist region; the holiday resorts by the Adriatic Sea and the Black Sea represented the number one destinations for waterside holidays for citizens of the countries on the east side of the iron curtain (DUDÁS 1970; GYURICZA 2008). The collapse of socialism and the Yugoslav wars and their political, social and economic consequences practically ruined the formerly flourishing tourism in the Balkans, which was intensified by the global recession. Regions whose historical heritage could be perceived in their lagging development thus lost a source of profit, which widened even more the gap in the quality of life of the local society in comparison with the happier part of Europe. Among the nation states created after the collapse of the former Yugoslavia, the tourist offer of Croatia underwent a dynamic restoration which led to a spectacular expansion of demand; Slovenia generated a significant traffic demanding accommodation capacity, as well as considerable transit traffic, while the tourism statistics indicators of the other states remained extremely modest (UNWTO 2013). While Romanian and Bulgarian tourism is just a pale reflection of its former size, Greece and Turkey maintain their position in the European front line in terms of tourist traffic, in spite of smaller or greater fluctuations (UNWTO 2013). As the preliminaries in literature (MICHALKÓ 2010, SMITH–PUCZKÓ 2010, UYSAL et al. 2012) and processing of the databases within this study confirmed, better indicators of tourism statistics are mostly associated with higher happiness and livability indices, therefore tourism is vital for creating stability and closing the gaps in the Balkans. This does not only imply development of the material conditions for tourism and a more efficient exploitation of the quite significant tourism potential, but also the improvement of receiving capacity and the organizational and subjective conditions of tourism.

This content analysis based on the Tripadvisor database aimed at the tourism related aspects of Balkanism confirmed that the conceptual associations relating to the Balkans focus not on the attractions of the region primarily, but on the particularities of hospitality and atmosphere, therefore the elimination of their negative content and strengthening and conscious communication of the positive elements could make a brand out of the Balkans. Thus, being Balkan is a value which could be construed as a factor that can improve the quality of life of the local society and be utilized in tourism too by conscious brand-building (PAPP-VÁRY 2013).

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