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## SLOW TOURISM AT LAKE TISZA: EXPERIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS

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*Slow tourism is growing quickly in Hungary. It offers the opportunity to immerse oneself in a new way of life and experience an old-new way of life. It represents a sustainable form of tourism focusing on slowing down the pace of life and exploring local culture, nature, gastronomy and communities. The experiential approach to tourism aims to recharge the body, mind and spirit while minimizing the ecological footprint.*

*The study explores slow tourism at Lake Tisza, focusing on the Sarud Experience Village. It examines how the village uses local resources and resident involvement to create a distinctive slow tourism experience. The primary objective is to analyze the impact of the Sarud Experience Village on visitor satisfaction and the quality of life of the local community. The research aims to show how slow tourism principles enhance visitor experiences while meeting their needs. It combines quantitative and qualitative methods. Primary data were collected through a questionnaire survey among regular visitors to the Sarud Experience Village. Secondary data included a literature review on slow tourism and rural development, along with field visits and observations. The Sarud Experience Village successfully applies slow tourism principles by focusing on traditional lifestyles and a close connection to nature. Survey results indicate high visitor satisfaction with services, the environment, and staff professionalism, though feedback on pricing was mixed. The success of the Sarud Experience Village model suggests potential applications in other rural areas aiming to boost tourism while preserving local culture and environment. The project demonstrates that slow tourism can be a sustainable and impactful approach to rural development, offering economic benefits and improving residents' quality of life. The Sarud Experience Village exemplifies successful slow tourism by balancing visitor satisfaction with community development. The research highlights the importance of integrating local resources and resident involvement in creating authentic and sustainable tourism experiences.*

**Key words:** *slow tourism, rural development, Hungary, Lake Tisza, Sarud Experience Village.*

## ПОВІЛЬНИЙ ТУРИЗМ НА ОЗЕРІ ТИСА: ДОСВІД ТА ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ РОЗВИТКУ

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*Повільний туризм швидко розвивається в Угорщині і пропонує можливість зануритися у новий життєвий стиль та відчутти старий-новий спосіб життя. Він являє собою сталу форму туризму, яка зосереджена на уповільненні темпу життя та дослідженні місцевої культури, природи, гастрономії і спільнот. Експериментальний підхід до туризму має на меті зарядити тіло, розум і дух, мінімізуючи його екологічний слід.*

*Дана робота досліджує повільний туризм на озері Тиса у фокусі із селом розваг Шаруд. Проаналізовано, як село використовує місцеві ресурси і власних жителів для створення своєрідного досвіду повільного туризму. Основна мета дослідження – оцінити вплив діяльності села розваг Шаруд на рівень задоволеності відвідувачів, а також на якість життя представників місцевої спільноти. Робота має на меті показати, як принципи повільного туризму посилюють приємні враження відвідувачів, задовольняючи їхні потреби. Вона комбінує кількісні та якісні методи дослідження. Первинні дані були зібрані за допомогою анкетного опитування серед регулярних гостей села розваг Шаруд. База вторинних даних включала в себе огляд фахової літератури стосовно повільного туризму та розвитку сільських місцевостей поряд із польовою практикою та спостереженнями на місці. Село розваг Шаруд удадо застосовує принципи повільного туризму, акцентуючи увагу на традиційному стилі життя і тісних зв'язках із природою. Результати анкетування доводять високий рівень задоволеності відвідувачів послугами, середовищем, а також професіоналізмом персоналу, хоча думки стосовно рівня та діапазону цін суттєво відрізняються. Успіх моделі села розваг Шаруд спонукає на її потенційне розширення у напрямі інших сільських районів із метою підвищення туристського обороту, зберігаючи цим самим місцеву культуру та середовище. Проект доводить, що повільний туризм може стати стійким і значущим підходом до сільського розвитку, обіцяючи економічні переваги та покращуючи умови життя місцевих мешканців. Село розваг Шаруд є прикладом удадо створеного повільного туризму, балансуючи задоволеність відвідувачів із розвитком суспільства. Дослідження підкреслює важливість інтеграції місцевих ресурсів і участі локальних жителів у формуванні автентичного та стійкого туристичного продукту.*

***Ключові слова:** повільний туризм, сільський розвиток, Угорщина, озеро Тиса, село розваг Шаруд.*

**Introduction.** Slow tourism is becoming increasingly popular in modern society, where people are increasingly looking to compensate for the fast pace of life and spend quality time in nature, away from the stresses of everyday life. This type of tourism offers people the opportunity to slow down, reconnect with themselves and their environment, and have deeper, more meaningful experiences. Slow tourism is therefore not just a form of travel, but also a philosophy of life that focuses on conscious presence and sustainability. In the Sarud Experience Village, presented in our research, visitors can experience all the benefits of slow tourism: tranquillity, closeness to nature and an in-depth knowledge of local culture. The time spent in the Experience Village is not just about relaxation, but also gives visitors the opportunity to actively participate in the life of the local community, learning about its traditions and customs. This model shows that slow tourism is not just a temporary trend, but also a long-term change in the travel industry that has the potential to change the way we think about travel, leisure and our relationship with our environment.

**Literature analysis.** The slow movement started in the 1980s, counterbalancing the rapid spread of globalisation, its popularity has risen in recent decades, and the corona virus epidemic has brought people closer to nature again [1]. Travellers slow down [2], experience the sights and tastes, and immerse themselves in the local culture.

However, the concept of slow tourism is still not clearly defined, and its literature has been reviewed by Balaban and Keller [3].

Balaban and Csapody [4] discuss the importance of slow tourism, its relationship with sustainability, and the slow food and slow cities movements, based on literature and research. El Archi et al [5] found that there is a growing interest in sustainable tourism practices, with a focus on reducing the environmental footprint and promoting the SDGs. Accessibility plays a significant role in tourists' choice of destinations [6], which can be an important consideration when planning slow tourism where the focus is on local experiences.

Pécsek [7] created the slow tourism model, which has 4 pillars:

- locality,
- experiential,
- sustainability,
- social welfare.

Rural tourism also offers the opportunity to implement slow tourism at regional level and to catch up lagging areas. Tourism has a significant income generating potential in terms of both employment and quality of life [8], and can therefore greatly improve the competitiveness of a region, for example in the case of Lake Tisza. The development of this region for tourism purposes started already in the 1980s, and the spatial extent of the settlements has changed because of the developments [9]. Várhelyi [10] stated that success in Lake Tisza can only be achieved through complex tourism development, which in terms of infrastructure development mainly means road, port and beach development, but it is also important to develop an appropriate strategy to ensure that visitors choose the attraction as the place of their visit [11].

The main objective and task of the research is to analyse the impact of the Sarud Experience Village on the visitor experience. In addition, the research aims to show how the principles of slow tourism contribute to enriching the visitor experience.

The research identified the main components of the visitor experience of the Sarud Experience Village and analysed visitor satisfaction and the services provided by the Village. Moreover, the research made recommendations for the further development of slow tourism in the region.

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**Material and methods.** Our study analyses the Sarud Experience Village complex, located at Lake Tisza, where the implementation has several objectives: on the one hand, to experience slow tourism, to introduce the traditional way of life to the visitors, where they can get away from everyday life and relax, to learn about a new lifestyle, and, on the other hand, to create an active tourist centre with a wide range of related attractions, ensuring a meaningful and quality stay for several days.

The second objective is a mission: to highlight and develop the municipality of Sarud in order to provide living conditions and a vision for the future for its inhabitants, contributing to improving the quality of life.

The primary data collection for our study involved a questionnaire survey of regular visitors to the Experience Village, filling in an online questionnaire, analysing the results and summarising them graphically. The results were analyzed using statistical methods to ensure robust and reliable findings. Data were summarized graphically to facilitate a clear understanding of trends and patterns. The questionnaire included various sections to gauge different aspects of the visitor experience:

Visitor satisfaction: questions targeted at understanding the overall satisfaction levels with their visit.

Service quality: items assessing the quality of various services provided within the village.

Offer expansion: queries about the necessity and type of additional services or attractions that visitors might desire.

Value for money: questions evaluating the perceived value of the experience relative to the costs incurred.

Promotional effectiveness: assessments of the effectiveness of the village's promotional and marketing activities.

As a secondary data collection, we conducted an extensive literature analysis, including studies on slow tourism and rural tourism development, which provided a theoretical background for our research. This included academic papers

and case studies on the principles and practices of slow tourism. The theoretical framework provided a solid foundation for our research, allowing us to contextualize our findings within broader tourism development discourses. We also conducted field visits and personal observations of the Experience Village to gain first-hand information about the site and visitor interactions. This helped to gain a deeper understanding of visitor interactions and behaviors, and observing the operational aspects of the village.

Our main research question was: “How does the concept and implementation of the Sarud Experience Village affect the experience and satisfaction of visitors?”

**Research results. Introduction to the Sarud Experience Village.** The Village has a wide range of attractions to offer visitors a great time:

- Hungary's largest outdoor trampoline park was built here on 2200 m<sup>2</sup>.

- Pleasure beach: designed as an eco-market, cash-free zone, with only metal cans or glass bottles.

- Apraja's Beach: especially for small children, with a play forest, a model play farm and childcare.

- Battlefield: a team-building arena, where you can play quad, air soft, paintball, among others.

- Water amusement park: water bumper cars, water choppers.

- Support: possibility to rent a SUP, participate in courses, tours, supping with your own equipment.

- Lake Tisza Climbing Base: the largest high-altitude ropeway system at Lake Tisza, with a 300-metre-long ropeway system.

- Playground.

- S. port water base: water tour and water sports centre, sports equipment, boat rental, education, fishing tourism centre.

- EbPart: the first dog beach at Lake Tisza.

- Holiday boat mooring: there are suitable facilities for mooring and relaxation for holiday boats provided by MAHART. On request, extra activities are also provided on the holiday boats, as catering or wine tasting on board.

– Huculudvar Equestrian Centre: equestrian tourism centre, with training, camps, cross-country riding.

**Questionnaire research.** During our research, we also conducted a questionnaire survey among visitors to the Sarud Experience Village. We received 93 responses to the questionnaire, which are analysed below.

The majority of respondents are aged between 40 and 50 years, as shown in *Figure 1*, with families with young children being the main target group of the Experience Village. The age distribution of the respondents can provide important information on the preferences and needs of slow tourism. The predominance of middle-aged people may suggest that this group is more active in slow tourism, interested in relaxing, cultural and natural experiences that require more time and immersion. This information could help tourism operators to tailor their offer to the needs of this age group and to understand better the types of experiences that appeal to them.

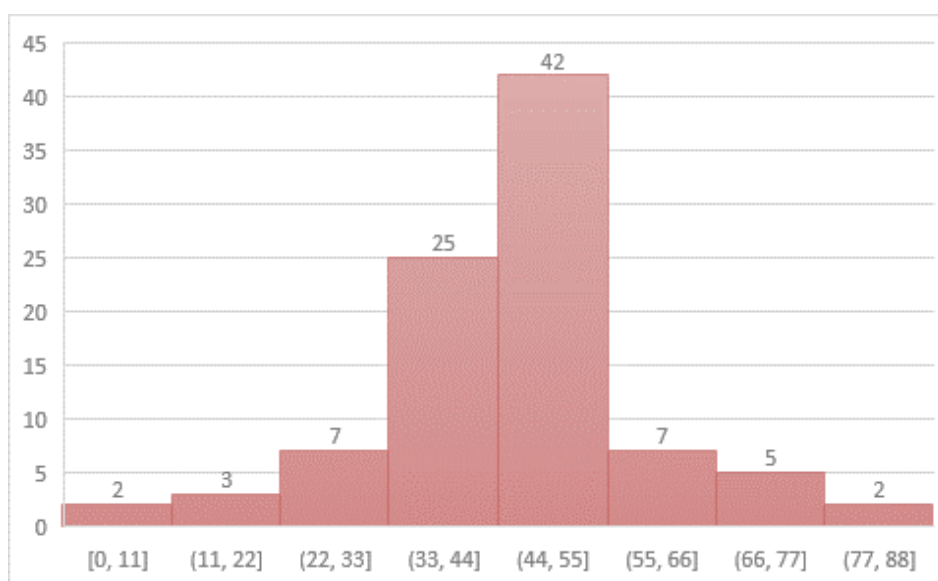
Respondents were also asked about the quality of the services available, and *Figure 2* shows that overall visitors are very satisfied with the services. The quality of services, satisfaction with prices, tidiness of the environment, staff training, technical and IT equipment, information available, choice of programmes. All aspects

except prices received the highest scores from most respondents, with a significantly higher proportion compared to the other scores. The quality of the services, the tidiness of the environment and the professionalism of the staff were rated as outstanding. For prices, 61% of the respondents rated it as medium or good, with a quarter of respondents also satisfied.

These results highlight areas where the visitor experience needs to be improved to make the Experience Village more attractive to visitors seeking slow tourism.

More than half of the respondents got their information about the Experience Village from the Internet, as illustrated in *Figure 3*. Referrals from friends and family are also significant, with a smaller proportion coming from leaflets and accommodation recommendations. Interestingly, however, no respondents mentioned Tourinform offices or radio and newspaper advertisements. This distribution suggests that the online presence of the Experience Village and word-of-mouth recommendations play an important role in providing information to visitors, which could be an important element of a slow tourism marketing strategy.

The Sarud Experience Village also has a number of impacts on the quality of life of the local community:



**Fig. 1. Distribution of visitors by age**

*Source: own editing*

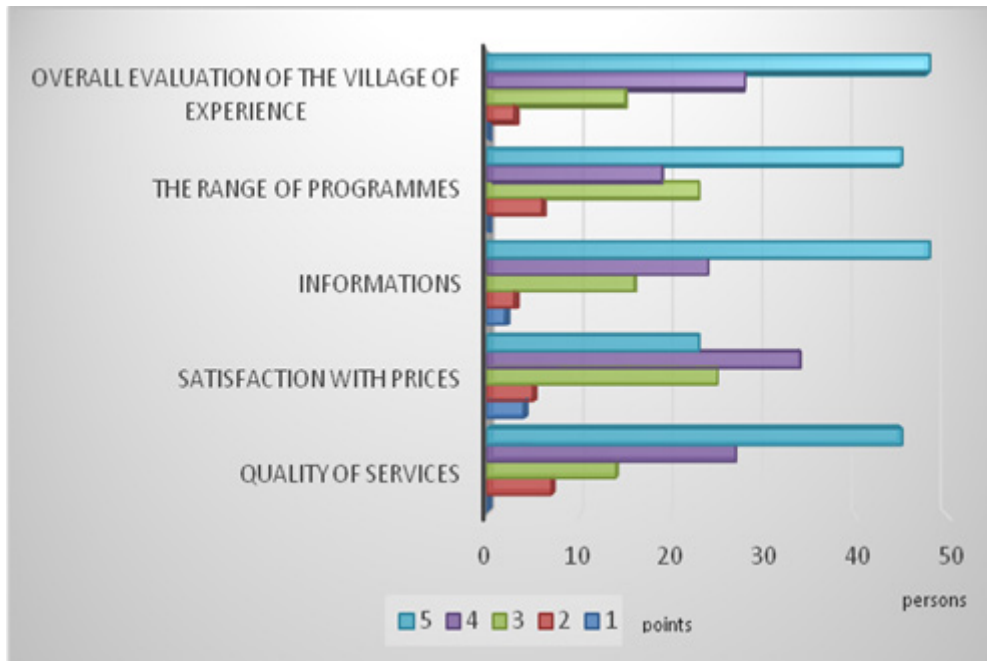


Fig. 2. Satisfaction with services

Source: own editing

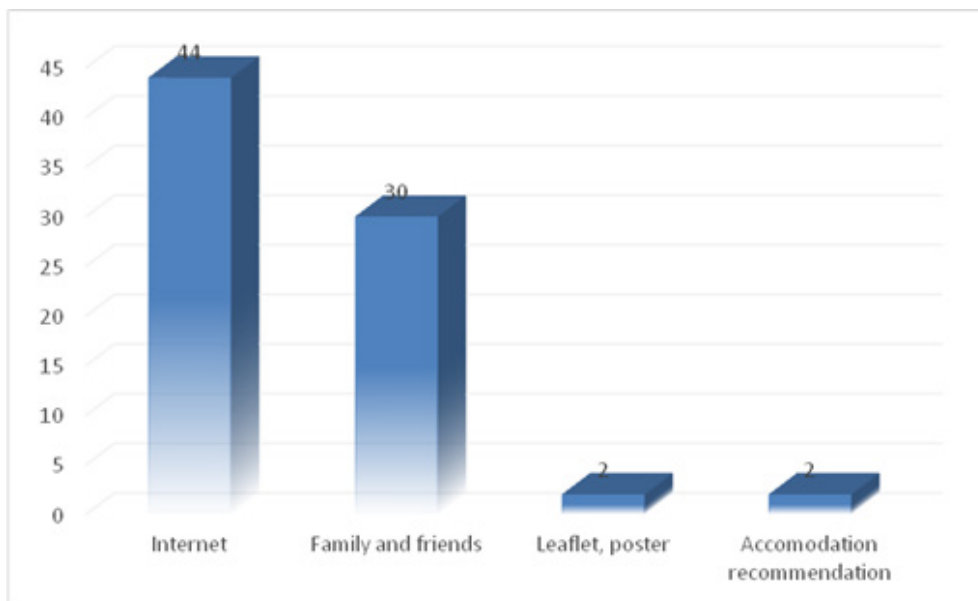


Fig. 3. Getting information about the Experience Village

Source: own editing

– Economic benefits – the development of the Experience Village has created many new jobs and contributed to increased revenues for local businesses.

– Community development – the Experience Village has helped to bring local people together and actively participate in the development of rural tourism. The Experience Village’s

programmes and events have strengthened a sense of community belonging.

– Environmental impact – the Experience Village emphasises sustainable tourism and the importance of nature conservation, which contributes to the preservation of the local ecosystem.

– Reducing the ecological footprint – the Sarud Experience Village’s environmentally

friendly measures reduce the environmental footprint.

**Summary.** The Sarud Experience Village is a unique model project of rural development in Hungary, where a complex tourist attraction has been realized without the involvement of significant public funds, and the development of the attraction significantly improves the quality of life of the village and its inhabitants. Through dedication and a shared will, a mission is being achieved which, through the concept of the living village, creates value and a vision as well as an opportunity to break out, and through which Sarud is also occupying a significant position on the tourist map in terms of slow tourism, and the comparison between slow tourism and the village environment is an area which has been poorly researched. Visitors can experience the local culture, gastronomy and nature, while at the same time gaining experiences and spending quality time with family and friends, learning about a new way of life. The research highlighted the key factors that contributed to the success of the project. At the heart of the services of the Sarud Experience Village are the natural values.

The results of the research show that the concept and implementation of the Sarud Experience Village has a positive impact on the experience and satisfaction of visitors, where the principles of slow tourism are implemented by emphasising traditional lifestyles and proximity to nature. The improvements made will play

an important role in improving the quality of life of the local community; by involving local people and exploiting local resources; the local economy will be improved, thus contributing to the identity of the municipality.

Satisfaction figures and a high rate of returning guests indicate that promotional activities are successful.

To summarize, slow tourism is a form of sustainable tourism that focuses on a deeper understanding of local culture, gastronomy and nature. It differs from mass tourism, which offers faster and more superficial experiences. Slow tourism focuses on the quality of the experience and the value of time and emphasises engagement with local communities and sustainability. Its areas of focus include slow food, slow cities (Cittaslow) and ecotourism.

The development of slow tourism in the analysed region requires the improvement of infrastructure, transport facilities and local services as well as the support and active involvement of local communities. Effective communication and promotion of the values of slow tourism is also important.

In conclusion, the research shows that the Sarud Experience Village successfully implements the principles of slow tourism and contributes to a deeper visitor experience, raising awareness of the lifestyle and improving the quality of life of the local community and the tourist attractiveness of the area.

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