

THE ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF CONFERENCE TOURISM IN SIÓFOK, THE “CAPITAL” OF LAKE BALATON

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Abstract: The human desire to meet and exchange ideas, the basis of conventions and meetings, is as old as humankind. Yet it was only in the second part of twentieth century that a rapidly developing tourist field came to life: conference tourism. It is seen as a high-yield area of the tourism industry and an important generator of tourism expenditure, foreign exchange earnings, investment and employment. Because of it, a more and more significant number of destinations consider the developing of conference tourism as a highly important field when they elaborate their tourism policy. Lake Balaton, after Budapest, is the second most important tourist destination of Hungary, its “capital” is Siófok. This study – which is based on interviews with hotel and touristic experts and entrepreneurs of Siófok and a questionnaire survey among 200 Siófok citizens – is examining the economic impacts of conference tourism in the town and seeking the answer of how they are considered by those concerned in this business.

Key words: Lake Balaton region, Siófok, conference tourism, economic impacts

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INTRODUCTION

The economic impacts of conference tourism in Siófok, the “capital” of Lake Balaton

Tourism is the main economic activity around the Lake Balaton and its effects are clearly experienced in some ways by entrepreneurs as well as the citizens living in this region. Siófok is one of the most well known holiday resorts on the shore, it is a town with a harbour on the southern shore of the lake. The town has 23.500 citizens in 2010, it was built around the Sió channel and is a lively and busy holiday resort whose population in summer turns five times as much as it is in winter.

Conference tourism is really important in the tourism of the town because its preferred months are May – June and September – October, so it is suitable to complement summer tourism. This has got a clearly visible effect on the economy since hotels and boarding houses where conferences are held order raw materials from suppliers, employ as many employees as in summer, pay more taxes to the central and local government and the incomes of the towns restaurants, shops, boutiques and other suppliers rise.

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There were two aims of the research. On the one hand, I wished to summarize and synthesize the academic findings that are concerned with the economic effects of conference tourism. On the other hand, due to the first synthesis, to examine and analyze the economic effects of conference tourism in Siófok, one of the settlements of Lake Balaton region, one of Hungary's most important touristic destinations.

The findings of the research may contribute to providing a theoretical basis for the further development of tourism in the settlement as well as provide a basis for further studies concerning its influence. It can be established that in case these studies are conducted in time, there is a possibility for the permanent monitoring and influencing the effects. In this manner, positive effects may be strengthened and negative ones may be weakened.

METHODS OF THE RESEARCH

During the research applying the triangulation principle (Babbie, 2003) many methods have been applied in order to be able to analyse and evaluate the effects of tourism in the area on the largest possible basis. There were primary and secondary methods of research among the used ones. The *secondary research* included elaborating the special literature concerned with the economic effects of tourism and the perceptions of those involved in this industry. In the course of *primary research* the following methods have been used:

- last quarter of 2009 interviews have been conducted with 14 tourist and hotel experts who either work in hotels where conferences take place or co-operate with such hotels;

- January 2010 the opinion of local citizens have also been collected. 200 inhabitants of Siófok have been given a questionnaire which was intended to examine how local residents feel about the economic effects of conference tourism in the town (citizens who took part in this research were parents of learners attending the Krúdy Gyula Secondary Technical and Vocational School – the school where I work as a teacher);

- last quarter of 2010 further interviews have been conducted with 23 local service providers and suppliers in order to examine whether they are in connection with conference venues or guests arriving for conferences, and to find out if conference tourism has a visible effect on their business activity.

THE ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF CONFERENCE TOURISM

The mass involved in tourism and its concentration in space and time has an obvious effect on the economic, environmental, natural and social factors of the receiving destinations as well as on people involved in tourism (Böröcz, 1996).

An analysis of impacts may be completed for many reasons. Analysing the environmental impacts is usually made obligatory by law in case of touristic investments. Economic impacts are usually important for central and local governments and the private sector. Analysing social effects is needed by the academic world or local communities. The aim of analysing the effects is to reduce the number of sudden changes, to moderate the negative effects of any unavoidable or unwanted change, or to make it possible to plan what to do or how to compensate in case of an unavoidable negative effect.

Subsequent effect analysis makes for those involved obvious what exactly has happened, what trends are working (therefore, provides the necessary knowledge to intervene) and, on the other hand, the findings can be a starting point for other areas in planning their development and analyzing the future effects of them.

“The economic impacts of tourism can be defined as the changes that occur in the structures and the features of the economy in the sender and receiver destinations, due to the development of tourism” (Puczkó and Rátz, 2005, pp. 60). Tourism is a sector of the national economy which, as a contrast with other sectors, provides a wider profitability for those involved in this industry. In case it is managed properly, the service

supplier as well as the budget gets a profit which, if returned in the economy, induces a rise in labour demand and profit. “*Conference tourism, compared with further fields of tourism, brings higher profit so the previously described effect is even stronger*” (Michalkó, 1999, pp. 136). According to Cameron (2009, pp.123), “*the economic effects of congresses and trade fairs are so intense that they are rather a means of economy development than part of tourism*”.

“*A large part of the effects of conference tourism are thanks to the spending of tourists*” (Dávid, 2004-2005, pp. 270). “*The spending of conference tourists is the highest if compared with other fields of tourism*” (Schreiber, 2004, pp. 136). It does not only include the amount of money that is spent on taking part on the sessions but the whole cost of the journey. Guests spend, for instance, on travelling, accommodation, food. They also buy in local shops, so the incomes that are realized around the environment of conferences must also be considered when examining the effects (Goschmann, 2000, pp. 184).

Conference tourists do spend more money in Hungary also than an average tourist. That is because they typically stay in top rated hotels. According to ex-chairman of Hungarian Hotel Association Ákos Niklai (Bihari, 2004), “*guests arriving in order to take part in conferences spend three or four times more money in the receiving countries than other guests. In Hungary, this proportion is even higher: their spending can be as high as six-eight times more than that of an average tourist’s*”.

Prestige consumption and purchasing services of the highest quality have a positive effect on the profitability of enterprises, too (Callan and Hoyes, 2000). Guests taking part on sessions usually have full board and typically take part on various programmes before and after conferences.

Local economic impacts of conference tourism can be summarized on the basis of Swarbrooke and Horner’s (2001, pp. 76) chart (figure 1). The positive economic impacts of conference tourism are that it brings income for enterprises of the destination as well as for local and central governments, creates jobs, has a multiplier effect on local economy, stimulates inward investment and injects foreign currency in the area. Its negative impacts are that there is a need for public funding or subsidies, the money that has been spent here could have been spent on different fields (e.g. education, health care or developing the image of the city) and the risk of congestion, traffic jams and air pollution if there are too many guests arriving for a conference.

One of the most important functions of conference tourism can be seen in the field of human resource management. It creates new jobs and this way it helps decrease the unemployment rate, which brings savings and income for the central government (Michalkó, 2007). Professions related to tourism are definitely difficult to define as these jobs not only include employees of hotels and restaurants but also jobs of the tertiary sector on which tourism has a direct or indirect impact (Puczkó and Rátz, 2005). In Hungary in 2004 – taking the multiplier effects in consideration – one in eight jobs was created through tourism. An estimated data of KSH (State Statistics Bureau of Hungary) shows that the number of employees was 398,000, which means 8.3 per cent of all employees in the country (Oláh, 2006, pp. 26).

As a conclusion it can be stated that the positive effects of conference tourism outnumber the negative ones in receiving areas. However, we must also admit that the situation is not as bright as it seems at first glance because:

- The largest part of spending of conference tourists usually goes to owners of hotels and transport companies. These enterprises are not typically owned by local individuals so the income leaves the destination.

- Local taxpayers who are not in touch with conference tourism (they are not suppliers of a hotel or do not work in a hotel) do not get a share of incomes from conference tourism. However, their taxes may be used to build a convention centre.

- Conference tourists do not always pay for the total cost of a session. That is

because a conference or a meeting is often held in a public building, so organizers of the conference do not charge anything for being there. On the other hand, incomes from conference tourism can be used for public projects, e.g. public works-programs or developing the image of a city.

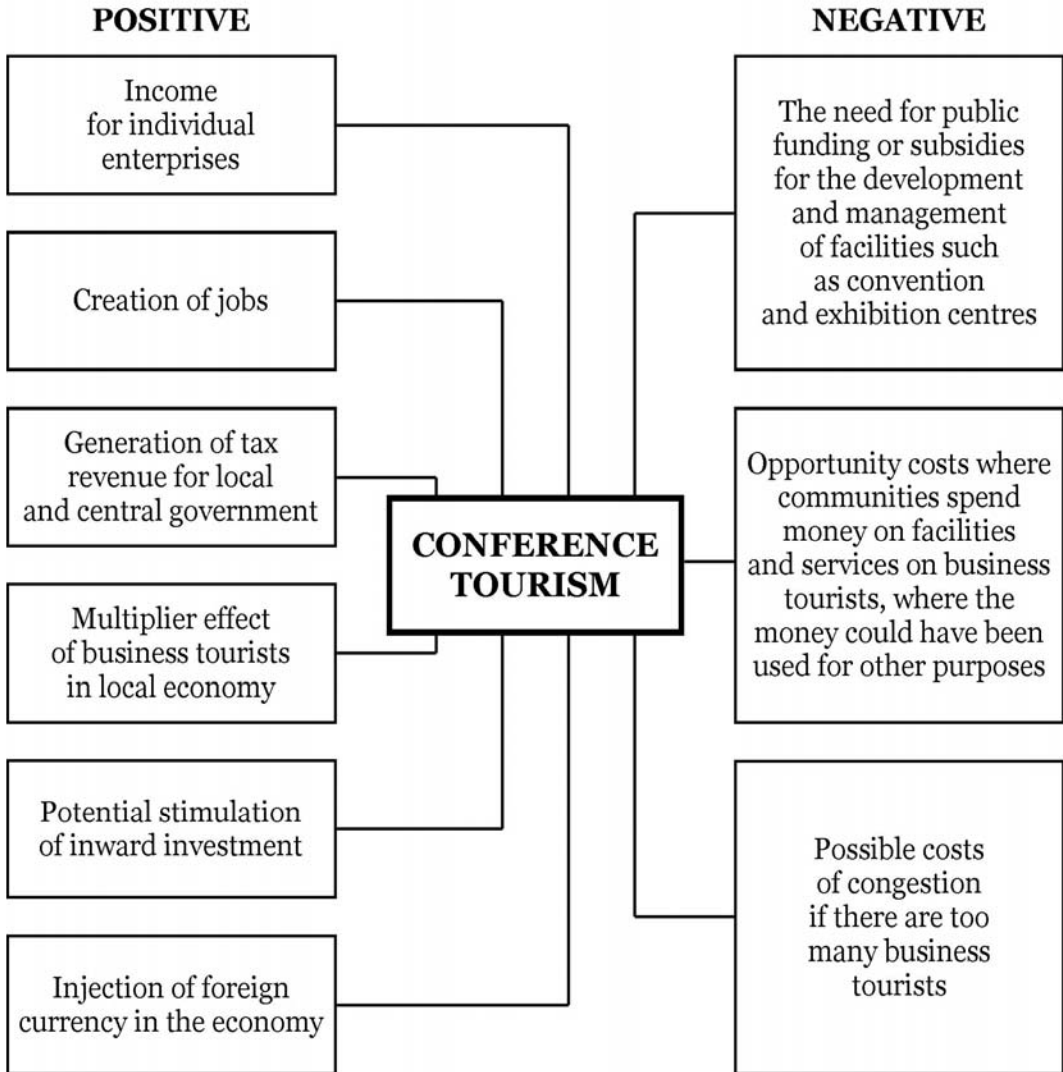


Figure 1. Local economic impacts of conference tourism
(Source: Swarbrooke and Horner, 2001, 76)

THE ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF CONFERENCE TOURISM IN SIÓFOK

Siófok has been a settlement in the region that is the most popular among conference tourists for many years (table 1). In my opinion, the position of each settlement in the table is owing to the fact that the settlements in the first part of the chart are easy and fast to reach by train and on roads. They are situated quite close to the capital city and the best venues for conferences and hotels have been built here. Much money has been invested in these settlements recently for building public parks, pavements, promenades, making the settlements more attractive for organizers of the meetings.

Table 1. Settlements in Lake Balaton region with the highest number of conference guests, 2006-2009
(Source: State Statistics Bureau of Hungary, 2010)

	Settlement	2006	Settlement	2007	Settlement	2008	Settlement	2009
1.	Siófok	41540	Siófok	47618	Siófok	49740	Siófok	32608
2.	Tihany	15167	Balatonfüred	17920	Balatonfüred	17031	Zánka	12620
3.	Balatonfüred	14501	Tihany	15072	Tihany	15145	Balatonfüred	8807
4.	Balatonalmádi	11205	Balaton almádi	13002	Tapolca	8807	Tihany	7171
5.	Balatonkenese	10847	Balatonkenese	11999	Zalakaros	8004	Balatonvilágos	5283
6.	Balatonszemes	6966	Tapolca	9490	Balatonkenese	7602	Zalakaros	5200
7.	Zalakaros	5082	Balatonszárszó	6065	Balatonalmádi	7354	Balatonföldvár	4904
8.	Balatonvilágos	4784	Zalakaros	5430	Balatonföldvár	6719	Balatonkenese	4880
9.	Balatonszárszó	4660	Balatonszemes	4235	Balatonszárszó	5300	Tapolca	4069
10.	Hévíz	4644	Balatonföldvár	3887	Balatonvilágos	5019	Hévíz	2843
11.	Tapolca	4366	Balatonvilágos	3807	Hévíz	3813	Keszthely	2726
12.	Balatonföldvár	4355	Hévíz	3356	Keszthely	2188	Balatonszemes	2650
13.	Keszthely	2705	Keszthely	2594	Balatonszemes	2185	Balatonőszöd	2503
14.	Balatonboglár	2581	Balatonboglár	1725	Balatonőszöd	2208	Zamárdi	2470
15.	Alsópáhok	1192	Alsópáhok	1446	Balatonboglár	1602	Balatonalmádi	2460

Economic impacts of tourism in receiving areas can be given a numerical value in four fields (Tribe, 1999):

- income effect: contribution to employees' and entrepreneurs' incomes and the income of local and central governments;
- effect on creating new jobs;
- effect on investment and development;
- effect on the country's financial statement (it is important when examining the international congress tourism but it does not seem to affect the case of conference tourism of Siófok, since only 1.1 per cent of international congresses in Hungary have been held in Siófok in 2009, according to Hungarian Congress Bureau).

Income effect

During spending of conference tourists enterprises (hotels, restaurants, shops, etc.) get revenue. From this amount of money they buy products and services and pay their own and their employees' salaries and expenses. Their suppliers, as well as suppliers of their suppliers use this money to buy products and services and pay their own and their employees' salaries and expenses as well. All the enterprises also pay taxes to the local and the central government.

After analyzing the interviews with employees of Siófok companies and entrepreneurs, it can be stated that development of conference tourism does not have the same effect on every enterprise. These sessions typically enlarge the revenue of wholesalers who supply conference venues with food and beverages. Such examples are Dreher, Coca-Cola, Sió-Eckes. Local greengrocers, fruit and vegetable sellers are not in business connection with conference venues but bakery products are usually ordered from local bakeries. A favourite evening program of conferences is a wine-tasting event which enlarges the revenue of local wineries (St. Kristóf, Konyári, Illés wineries). Photographers are usually invited to conferences, but services of a printing office are only rarely used (e.g. printing some business cards). Since not everybody arrives at the conference by car, taxi drivers earn more income by driving guests to conference venues from the railway or bus station. Thanks to the fact that congress guests like going out after the session is over for the day, the revenue of cafés and restaurants that are close to conference venues also mount up. On the other hand, conferences do not have a profit-growing effect on health and fitness centres, hairdressers and beauty salons since conference hotels all have these services.

Conference tourism also has a significant effect on incomes of local and central governments. It plays a direct role on the amount of collected taxes like industry and trade taxes or tourist tax, paid by guests after the number of nights spent in a particular settlement. An indirect effect is the tax incomes of the local governments and the subsidies given by the central government. Until 2010, each one Forint tourist tax paid by guests was completed by two Forints subsidy from the central government. Since 1 January 2010, this subsidy has been reduced and now it is only one Forint. This reduction may cause a loss of 1-1.5 billion Forints for local governments. *“This reduction has a double negative effect: it not only endangers the stability of the town’s budget and its obligatory duties but also sets back the competitiveness of the whole region”* (Balázs, 2010, pp. 8). Incomes from tourist tax show the importance of tourism in a settlement and its proportion in the town’s budget shows the development of tourist infrastructure of a settlement. The income from tourist tax in settlements around Lake Balaton has increased by 16 per cent between 2006 and 2009 (table 2).

Table 2. The amount of tourist tax in settlements in the Balaton region recommended for holding conferences by the Hungarian Congress Bureau, 2006 – 2009
(Source: State Statistics Bureau of Hungary, 2010)

Settlement	Tourist tax (thousand Forints)	
	2006	2009
Balatonfüred	93189	130358
Balatonvilágos	20118	9462
Balatonkenese	10190	12546
Balatonalmádi	22321	22400
Tihany	34355	31178
Hévíz	219235	227865
Keszthely	34107	28249
Zalakaros	78139	99842
Balatonmáriaifürdő	2796	2365
Tapolca	18737	3592
Alsópáhok	18194	25533
Alsóórs	2842	14544
Balatonfenyves	1744	2026
Siófok	84909	142514
Altogether	640876	752477

On 14 settlements, however, where the Hungarian Congress Bureau recommends holding conferences, the income has increased by 17.4 per cent. The largest increase has been in Alsópáhok (411%), in Siófok (67.8%) and in Balatonfüred (39.9%) in the past four years.

Statistical data clearly show that it is more than likely that conference tourism in Lake Balaton region has contributed to the fact that the amount of collected touristic tax has increased more steeply in settlements where conferences have been held than in settlements where they were not. Since Siófok is, after Budapest, the second in the league of towns receiving conference guests, it is obvious that conference tourism has played a crucial role in its increased tourist tax income.

Effect on creating new jobs

Tourism in creating new jobs plays a crucial role because it is a sector where lots of people are employed. It offers services that are grounded in personal contacts and the growth in quality usually induces employing more employees, e.g. in high standard hotels. It must be noted, however, that certain types of tourism need more employees. Such examples are spa tourism and conference tourism. Other kinds of tourism such as cycling or eco-tourism need far less employees.

One of the most significant characteristics of tourism around Lake Balaton is its seasonality. This is a kind of “*phenomenon*” around the lake which means that employers employ their colleagues only for a limited period of time. Since everybody is interested in a job that lasts for the whole year, it is extremely difficult to find reliable employees for some months or such a short period of time. This problem goes hand in hand with a special feature of services that they cannot be stored. Therefore, tourist ventures and employers have to realize the whole year’s profit in the high season. Incomes of off-season periods are often enough only for covering the costs. More and more young and educated hotel and catering experts choose to work abroad in hope of higher wages and better working conditions.

The number of employees employed in accommodation and catering industry in 2008 was 157.200 people. Their number increased by 8400 people between 2004 and 2008. While 2.87 per cent of all Hungarian employees worked in this sector in 2000, the figure increased to 4.1 percent by 2008. Statistics indicate that tourism plays a more and more important role in employment in Hungary (State Statistics Bureau of Hungary, 2009).

Table 3. Number of accommodation employees in Lake Balaton region, July 2001 and July 2009

(Source: State Statistics Bureau of Hungary, Veszprém County Direction, 2010)

July 2001				July 2009			
Settlement	Number	Settlement	Number	Settlement	Number	Settlement	Number
Alsóörs	25	Hévíz	1,581	Alsóörs	43	Hévíz	1,427
Alsópáhok	112	Keszthely	370	Alsópáhok	151	Keszthely	242
Badacsonytomaj	74	Balatonkeresztúr	24	Badacsonytomaj	53	Köveskál	11
Badacsonytörd.	35	Paloznak	24	Bad.tördemic	33	Révfülöp	70
Balatonakali	34	Révfülöp	60	Balatonakali	16	Siófok	965
Balatonalmádi	129	Siófok	1,260	Balatonalmádi	234	Szántód	30
Balatonberény	92	Szántód	82	Balatonberény	2	Szigliget	5
Balatonboglár	137	Tihany	501	Balatonboglár	46	Tihany	268
Balatonfenyves	26	Vonyarcvashegy	39	Balatonfenyves	47	Vony.vashegy	48
Balatonföldvár	306	Zamárdi	118	Balatonföldvár	232	Zamárdi	113
Balatonfüred	803	Zánka	53	Balatonfüred	645	Zánka	122
Balatongyörök	108	Lengyeltóti	59	Balatongyörök	82	Lengyeltóti	18
Balatonkenese	53	Nagyvázsony	12	Balatonkenese	197	Zalacsány	32
Balatonlelle	194	Pécsely	21	Balatonlelle	235	Tapolca	143
Balatonmáriaf.	40	Tapolca	45	Bal.máriafürdő	38	Zalakaros	463
Balatonőszöd	123	Zalakaros	287	Balatonőszöd	160	Csopak	25
Balatonszárszó	32	Csopak	94	Balatonszárszó	64	Fonyód	107
Balatonszemes	109	Fonyód	161	Balatonszemes	168	Gyenesdiás	49
Balatonszepezd	16	Gyenesdiás	24	Balatonszepezd	15		
Balatonvilágos	239	Further settlements	113	Balatonvilágos	101	Further settlements	143
Cserszegtomaj	136	Altogether	7,751	Cserszegtomaj	89	Altogether	6,932

Table 3 shows the number of employees employed in accommodation industry in Lake Balaton region, by settlements, in July 2001 and July 2009. It is clearly seen that the number of employees shows a decrease of 11.8 per cent in this period. This is due to the 20.4 per cent fall of number of nights spent in the region (In 2001 the number of nights spent in the region was 5,014,272, which dropped to 4,164,978 by 2009 (State Statistics Bureau of Hungary, Veszprém County Direction, 2010).

In spite of this, some settlements – Alsóörs, Alsópáhok, Balatonalmádi, Balatonfenyves, Balatonkenese, Balatonszemes, Zalakaros, Tapolca – can boast about a growth in the number of employees. These settlements have enjoyed building and development of hotels which made the hotels able to be open all year long. Since these are

usually high-standard hotels, as a result they could raise the number of employees. This fact is partly due to conference tourism because these settlements have an important role in conference tourism around the lake.

The number of employees in the region has only declined in settlements where the most typical form of tourism is holiday tourism. In Siófok and Balatonfüred, investment in conference tourism could not compensate the significant fall in the number of holiday-makers. This is the reason why the number of employees could not yet grow (in Siófok, for instance, the number of employees has fallen by 30 per cent). In the past, these settlements used to be the flagships of holiday tourism around the lake. After the change in demand, however, a large number of camping sites and one- and two-star hotels have closed down or has been welcoming far less number of guests than in the past. This has obviously led to the significant decrease of employees in the sector. Newly built or reconstructed hotels could employ some of these sacked employees but, of course, not all of them. One reason for it is that the number of low-quality hotels and camping sites that have closed down was significantly higher than the number of newly built, top-quality hotels. Also, employees of four-star hotels must suit higher requirements like their professional or foreign language skills.

Having examined the seasonality of employing employees in hotels in settlements of Lake Balaton region, it can be said that the most balanced data comes from Hévíz, Zalakaros and Tapolca, which is because of spa tourism that is typical in these settlements. In Siófok, Balatonfüred, Zánka, Tihany, Alsópáhok, Balatonalmádi, Balatonkenese and Balatonszemes, however, hotels can run well utilized not only in the high season but in out-of-season periods, too. This latter fact is partly due to wellness and conference tourism. In other settlements hotels are only able to employ workers for a relatively short period of time.

Effect on investment and development

The 2008 amount of investment in hotel and catering industry in Hungary was 58.4 billion Forints. This means a 10.9 per cent growth to the 2007 data while the whole national economy suffered a decline of 3 per cent (State Statistics Bureau of Hungary, 2009).

The effect on investment and development in Lake Balaton region can be seen in the fact that reconstructed 3 or 4 stars hotels are suitable to house meetings and conferences. This means that top-quality hotels in the region tend to count not only on holiday tourists but on business tourists as well. There are seven Siófok hotels on the list of recommended hotels by the Hungarian Congress Bureau and only these hotels welcome conference guests since the city does not have a conference centre. In 2010 Hotel Balaton, a newly reconstructed hotel opened its gates. Hotel Európa and Hotel Lidó are awaiting reconstruction and these hotels will also be able to welcome some meetings.

The most typical economic impacts mentioned by Siófok hotel and tourist experts

The experts who agreed to answer the questions in the interview have mentioned the amount of money spent per tourist, the increase of incomes of the local governments and local residents, whole-year employment, the increase of profits of local enterprises and suppliers and the increasing number of sold tourist products as the most important economic effects of conference tourism in Siófok. They also think that conference guests who are satisfied and happy with the services of the hotel and the town are likely to return later, this time during their holidays with their family members.

More experts emphasized that conference tourism contributes to the positive image of the town as these sessions and meetings are often a news item in the media. Typical guests of these conferences are often well-off people working in a high position who have an important role in opinion-shaping.

Judgement of Siófok residents about conference tourism and hotel development connected to conference tourism

“The most important factor of tourism is the local residents. Without them tourism can not be operated and is impossible to work if local residents do not benefit from it” (Lengyel, 1995, 51). Therefore, local residents mean much more than merely being people who are possible sources of employment. Residents mean a layer of society that – with its characteristics and features – has a clear effect on the success of a development project. Local residents can get involved with conference tourism and tourists through their own jobs, being private suppliers or an average man of the street. Guests may have a different effect on life of local residents. Their attitudes or behaviour may play a crucial role in forming this effect.

The age division of residents taking part in the questionnaire survey was the following (figure 2):

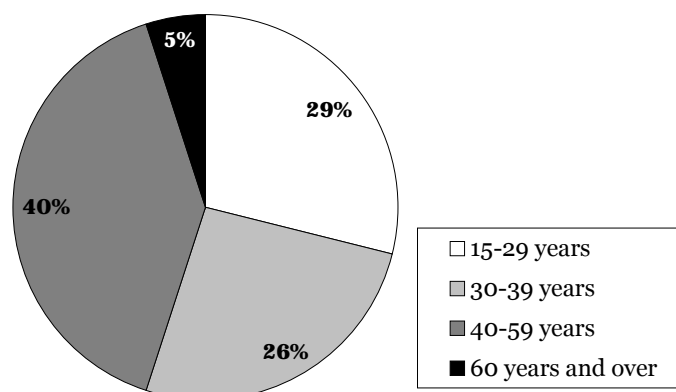


Figure 2. The age division of residents taking part in the questionnaire survey
(Source: Own work)

24.5 per cent of those who have filled in the questionnaire work in tourism or study to be an expert of tourism, the rest of them do not. 61 per cent of them have been living in Siófok for more than ten years. These people can really observe the development of conference tourism in the town since it started growing around the year 2000. But those who have been living in Siófok for less than ten years may also give useful pieces of information as they may have moved to the settlement because of tourism.

51 per cent of the people involved in this research are happy about the presence of conference tourism in Siófok, for 45.5 per cent it is indifferent and only 3.5 per cent is not happy about it. 77.5 per cent of them do not have a personal contact with conference tourists, they merely see them walking in the town. 16 per cent of them have a business or official connection with them, 4.5 per cent regularly talks with them. It must be noted that the presence of conference tourists may also have an effect on life of those who merely see them.

Two third of the respondents feel a difference between themselves and conference tourists (28.5 per cent stated that this difference is significant, 39 per cent feels that they are only a slightly different). 49 per cent said that the difference can be seen in different financial status, 28 per cent mentioned lifestyle and leisure time activities while 23 per cent said that the difference is in their behaviour.

76.5 per cent of the population stated that the nationality of participants of conferences does not matter. Some, however, named countries where they would happily greet visitors from. These countries were Britain, France, Germany, Austria and Italy.

The presence of conference tourists does not bother 86.5 per cent. Some who stated it does bother them may live not far away from conference hotels because they typically mentioned traffic and parking problems. Unfortunately, there are some parking and

traffic problems since hotels do not have parking lots that are large enough for cars of participants of a conference attended by hundreds of participants. That is the reason why they sometimes park in the street.

Only 66.5 per cent of local residents stated that the effects of conference tourism can also be seen in off-season periods. This means that a number of Siófok citizens do not feel the presence of conference tourists in the town, they do not meet them in shops, restaurants or in the street. The reason for it may be that some participants spend all their time in the hotel and do not go out in the town.

43.5 per cent of the population answered that conference tourism has a major positive effect on the image of Siófok. 43 per cent feels that it has a minor positive effect on it and 2.5 stated that it has a kind of negative effect on it. This means that the majority of people think that media reports on conferences have a positive influence on people's perceptions of the image of Siófok.

28 per cent of local residents think that the number of conference tourists in Siófok needs a significant increasing. 47 per cent feels the need of a moderate increase, 22 per cent stated that the number of them is exactly what is important. Only a 3 per cent minority feels that a deteriorating of their number would be useful (figure 3). As a conclusion, it can be stated that the vast majority of residents support the further development of conference tourism.

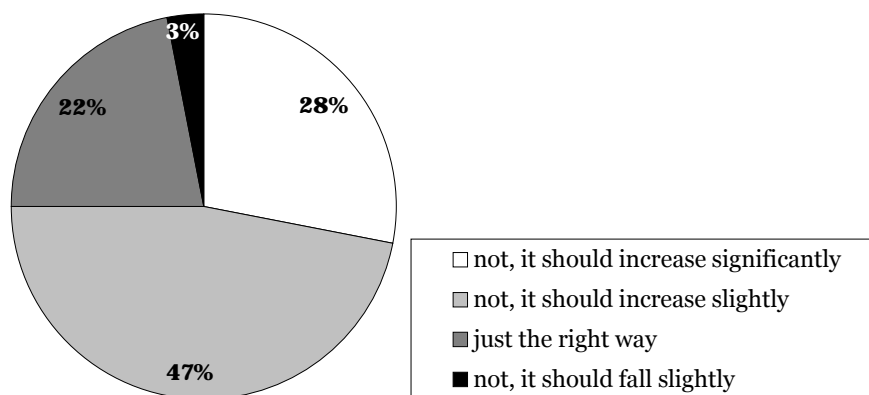


Figure 3. The opinion of local residents about the number of conference tourists
(Source: Own work)

Effects of conference tourism on the factors examined

Local residents had to give their opinions about 15 factors in the questionnaire. They had to express their opinions on how these factors are influenced by the conference tourism. They had to rate the factors with numbers. Grade 5 means a significant positive effect, Grade 4 means a moderate positive effect, Grade 3 symbolizes a neutral effect, Grade 2 shows a moderate negative effect and Grade 1 means a significant negative effect.

Table 4 shows the economic effects of conference tourism on these factors. Answers of Siófok residents clearly show that they feel and sense both positive and negative effects of conference tourism. Marks "+", "-" and "o" indicate the summarized positive, negative and neutral effect on the given factor.

It is easy to see that residents see the most positive effect on employment possibilities (3.90), the tax incomes of the settlement (3.88) and the quality of restaurants. In many cases they stated that there is no real effect on a certain factor, examples are cultural services, sport and shopping facilities. According to the survey, the most negative effects are on the increase of prices of products and services (2.95), deterioration of traffic conditions (2.96) and the growth of overcrowding (3.24).

Table 4. Effects of development of conference tourism on some factors in Siófok, according to the opinions of Siófok residents
(Source: Due to own research)

	Average	Scatter	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Employment possibilities	3.90	1.06	+		
Tax incomes of the settlement	3.88	1.10	+		
Quality of restaurants	3.86	0.89	+		
Meeting famous people	3.67	1.06	+		
Income and life standard	3.66	0.96	+		
Infrastructure	3.62	0.76	+		
Decrease in unemployment	3.61	1.04	+		
Cultural services	3.37	0.87			0
Changing of consumer preferences	3.34	0.91	+		
Sport facilities	3.30	0.76			0
Shopping facilities	3.26	0.76			0
Prices of real estates	3.26	1.15	+		
Overcrowding	3.24	1.07		-	
Traffic conditions	2.96	1.04		-	
Prices of products and services	2.95	1.00		-	

Examining the data of scatter we can see that the highest value (1.15) can be seen at the factor “*Prices of real estates*”. This is because only people living close to conference venues can feel this factor, people living further can not. The price of a detached house may get higher because of its rooms can be rented for tourists since not everybody can or wants to pay the price of a four-star hotel.

The second highest value in scatter (1.10) can be seen at the factor “*Tax incomes of the settlement*”. This is because few people know that hotels serving as conference venues pay a huge amount of taxes to local governments. Alas, this amount of money often has no effect on life of residents. Local governments do not spend this money on the development of the image of the city, building parks, planting flowers or buying public litter bins but on running their institutions (e.g. schools, kindergartens), development of hospitals or paying social security benefits. Since incomes from tourism are not always spent on development of tourism, local residents are not conscious of its value.

The third highest value (1.07) is to see at “*Overcrowding*”. This factor divides the population because only people living close to conference venues feel the traffic jams in case of a conference with hundreds of participants, people living further do not.

CONCLUSION

Tourism is the most important economic activity in Lake Balaton region which has an obvious effect on life of residents and enterprises. In the research the economic impacts of conference tourism has been analysed in Siófok, which is a leading town of the region. This town has been the flagship of conference tourism around the lake for many years. Conference tourism plays a central role in Siófok’s tourism because its preferred seasons are spring and autumn months so it is excellent to expand holiday tourism which is typical in summer months.

On the basis of interviews with local entrepreneurs it can be stated that conference tourism increases the revenue of food and beverage wholesalers, taxis, cafés, restaurants and wineries. Local greengrocers do not have business contact with conference venues but bakery products are usually ordered from local bakeries. Conferences do not have a profit-growing effect on health and fitness centres, hairdressers and beauty salons since conference hotels can supply all of these services.

According to the opinion of hotel and restaurant experts, the increase of incomes of the local government, whole-year employment, the increase of profits of local enterprises and suppliers and the increasing number of touristic products that has been successfully sold are the most important economic effects of conference tourism in Siófok. It is also very important that conference guests who are satisfied with the services of the town may return to the settlement during their holidays with their friends or families.

As for local residents, they feel that the most positive effects of conference tourism are growing employment data, increasing tax incomes of the local governments and the increase in quality of restaurants. They see the increase of prices of products and services, the deterioration of traffic conditions and the growth of overcrowding as some of the most important negative effects.

As a conclusion, having compared the positive and negative effects of conference tourism in the town, I can say that there are more positive effects than negative ones. This hypothesis is confirmed by local experts, entrepreneurs and residents who all believe that conference tourism has a positive effect on the image of the settlement.

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Submitted:
28.01.2011

Revised:
20.04.2011

Accepted:
28.04.2011

Published online:
03.05.2011