

EXAMINATION OF HOLIDAY HABITS IN HUNGARY, WITH SPECIAL REGARD TO RURAL TOURISM

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Citation: Darabos, F., Kőmíves, C., & Molnar, E.I. (2022). EXAMINATION OF HOLIDAY HABITS IN HUNGARY, WITH SPECIAL REGARD TO RURAL TOURISM. *GeoJournal of Tourism and Geosites*, 44(4), 1403–1410. <https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.44427-959>

Abstract: The paper aims to examine the demand for rural tourism, targeting the design of offers following the period of the pandemic. The topic of the present study, is the examination of the holiday habits of the Hungarian population focusing on rural tourism. Following the theoretical background regarding rural tourism, rural tourism destination and tourism motivation, the primary research investigates the holiday habits of various age groups and the differences between these, the frequency of traveling and planned overstays, and the optional programs as recreational and gastronomic activities, their willingness to spend for the offers that form an integral part of the rural tourism. The survey method was chosen and the respondents were assigned via a random sample. The collected data was processed via IBM SPSS 25 program, in which unary and binary operations, correlation analysis was done. The study highlights that there is a high demand for rural tourism in the countryside in the post-pandemic period, is a general need for recreation irrespective of age, educational background, or residence. The respondents would participate in a genuine rural program irrespective of age, educational background, or residence. It was also proven that there is a significant difference between the travelling frequency of the various groups, according to which, the middle-aged respondents travel most frequently to the countryside, followed by the seniors and the youth.

Key words: rural tourism, tourism destinations, tourism motivations, holiday habits

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INTRODUCTION

The sector of rural tourism shows continuous development. Besides the potential that lies in nature, folk traditions, and gastronomy, innovation has its role in this sector too. The spirit of hospitality, and that of the entrepreneurial farmer both mark the rural tourism product. Destinations with the possibility of active tourism in nature combined with a healthy diet are favoured by the tourists conscient of the importance of a healthy lifestyle (Demirović et al., 2018). The unique characteristics of a natural potential found in a territory are considered positively determining factors for the respective environment (Plokhikh et al., 2022). Today's tourism is much more accessible than in other periods, the population travels more and finds information about destinations and services, so when choosing a holiday, many choose a natural and sustainable environment (Kyriakaki and Kleinaki, 2022). The motivation for rural tourism can be define as naturalistic and cultural orientation. Consequently, tourist demand is directed to products with local rural elements (gastronomy, events, traditions, etc.). A broad significant motivation is the desire for relationships “to establish an empathic relationship with residents, through their involvement in their daily life” (Belliggiano et al., 2021:3).

Just like the natural landscapes, the rural image is constantly changing also and, depends a lot on the rate of change of visitors' perceptions regarding rurality and its relationship with sustainability (Panzer-Krause, 2020). The transformation of the tourist, respectively the influence of the decision for a specific destination is facilitated by the liminality of the destination, also the perception of difference is another factor to be taken into consideration (Pung et al., 2020). To facilitate tourist decision-making, marketing could play an important role. Rural tourism needs online marketing, so it could ensure an extension of the season and even activity in the off-season (Su et al., 2022). Inspired by rural diversity and multi-functionality, the organizers' objective should be creating travel packages with programs based on tourist supplies combined with sights, and attractive elements of neighboring villages in favour of the tourists who prefer tourist packages against individual tours (Panyik et al., 2011). Both rural heritage and cultural heritage are a component of rural tourism which is a link between past and present offering historical legacy and a model in an ever-changing world (Soare et al. 2011). Cultural routes, landscape and rural tourism are tight connected with each other (Bambi et al., 2019).

Identifying trends of the market, the tourists' needs as well as their degree of satisfaction must be a continuous aim: “Long term success requires constant adaptation to the changing environment” (Raffai, 2013:759).

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LITERATURE REVIEW

The definition is the best illustrated by UNWTO "a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's experience is related to a wide range of products generally linked to nature-based activities, agriculture, rural lifestyle / culture, angling and sightseeing." (UNWTO - Rural Tourism) Altogether, rural tourism services and entertainment programs are offered by hosts - who could be residents of that given area- in order to attract tourists to their region and thus, get some extra income. In this respect, rural tourism does not include only agrotourism and providing accommodation, but the potential of near-nature holidays, the rural atmosphere and further services such as gastronomy, festivals, hobbies (horse-riding, fishing, cycling, etc.), sales of handicraft products or agricultural goods, or even rural health tourism. In fact, in this value chain, rural lifestyle plays a central role (Gannon, 1994). As the study focuses on rural tourism in Hungary, it is worth mentioning that Hungarian Government Decree No 239/2009 (x/20), modified and republished, on the activities of accommodation categories only the villages with inhabitants below 5.000 (100 persons/km²) can be considered settlements part of rural tourism that it presents rural living conditions, local rural tradition and culture, agricultural traditions in a complex way, together with related services where appropriate, and that may provide food for guests as an alternative services, while maintaining the rules on home-based catering. Accommodation in the private and other systems is grouped to others accommodation categories (239/2009) (X. 20). According to Negelchenko et al., (2021) rural tourism can be categorized as active tourism and can be implemented in four areas in terms of recreation:

“- agritourism: recreation based on the rural households involved in agricultural production: horticulture, gardening, milking cows, caring for horses, sheep shearing, etc.

- staying in the village: the pastime of tourists in the rural house with the provision of additional services: cooking in the Russian oven, the power from the infield, learning various crafts

- hunting: leisure tourists, as the host-mediated and direct participation in the extraction of the hunting resources; - gathering mushrooms and berries: leisure tourists, as the host-mediated and direct involvement in gathering mushrooms, berries, and fruits” (Negelchenko et al., 2020:446).

Logistics plays an important role when carrying out rural tourism activities. The quality and the efficiency of tourism services depend on the existence and proper functioning of logistics processes ensuring the development of rural tourism offers. Analyzing rural tourism, we can observe different supply chain structures which depend on the stage of development of the region (Tadić and Veljović, 2020). According to Machado & Almeida, tourists would appreciate if investments and improvements were made in terms of outdoor activities in nature, but are willing to pay only small amounts of money which contributes only to a very small extent to a return to the investment (Machado and Almeida, 2021).

Rural tourism providers do not display an active attitude in terms of marketing, thus, giving rise to discontent as far as their businesses are concerned, they become pessimistic, do not invest in their business, and all this may cause great frustration (Pato and Kastenholz, 2017). However, to be competitive in rural tourism, they must identify the opportunities available, to create offers having in mind both the local and regional potential at hand that can be harnessed. Travel intention is determined by several evaluated factors that influence the travel and travel behavior in an individual way (Jang et al., 2009). It is influenced by information and experiences from previous trips influencing people's perceptions and travel motivation (Zheng et al., 2021). In terms of motivational factors for rural tourism, the following categories of tourist can be identified: tourists who want to rest and recreate, tourists who are looking for contact with nature, tourists who would like to experience cultural activities and traditions, and tourists interested in gastronomy (Devesa et al., 2010). Some categories may share these motivations, while others do not, depending on the one hand on their social status, age, or educational background, on the other hand, on the tourist destination offers. Studies show that in various regions motivation of women and men differs in terms of rural tourism. In India, for example, the main reason for rural tourism both for men and women is socializing, however, for women relaxation is equally important (Kumar, 2019). According to Zheng et al., familiarity represents an important motivation and it influences decision making when choosing a tourist destination (Zheng et al., 2021). Thus, the relationship between “socializing” and “familiarity” may be significant in rural tourism and it is worthwhile studying it in the future.

Darabos also supports the above: “The main motivation in favor of rural areas is the free-time tourist products and their combinations. The role of gastronomy plays a particularly important role in rural hospitality” (Darabos, 2020:10). During pandemic period the gastronomy habits was also reevaluated, peoples' eating habits have changed, the priority has been limited only lunch or dinner (Kómvés, 2022). The whole humanity faces many challenges nowadays, one of them being the change in eating habits. Rural areas are the ones that produce food, so many research is focused on analyzing the functions of these areas, food production having a primary role. (Novák et al., 2020) Depending on the information already available before the trip or based on the experience experienced on the spot, tourists will benefit from certain local products encountered during their stay. Tourists buy local products and spend more on them than on holiday or other services during their stay (Skuras et al., 2006). The wine-growing areas usually located in rural areas represent also an important attraction factor for rural tourism, thus also can be a component element of the rural tourism offer (Bento, Marques and Guedes, 2022) Relaunching the wine-route as a tourism product, with adequate strategies, can be a solution for the sustainable development of viticulture, implicitly of rural tourism (Ingrassia et al., 2022). For hospitality - the concept that covers a wide range of activities needed to do rural tourism - the literature in the country offers numerous alternative definitions. Act No. CLXIV of 2005 defines it in the following way: “the distribution of ready-made or locally made food and drinks, predominantly to be consumed locally, including related entertainment and other service activities” (Act No. CLXIV, 2005).

At this point, the significance of the rural welcome table as an item of supply must be mentioned which stands for the presentation of the activities connected to gastronomy traditions and domestic groceries produced for home-made, family meals, and the sales of these self-made products for at least fifteen visitors a day (Szalók, 2016). In order to be able to offer

a rural welcome table, hosts must have a primary producer certificate and must have the special, host infrastructure prescribed by The National Food Chain Safety Office (NÉBIH). The pig-killing rituals (pig slaughter), for example, can only take place using domestic animals kept at the private premises based on prescribed housing conditions.

Regarding this regulation from 1 January 2022, the legislation 239/2009 was modified and is very important for rural accommodation providers. According with the new rule the rural accommodation service providers can also provide catering services to the guests as an alternative service, subject to the rules governing catering in the home. Identifying these natural and cultural resources, traditions, and gastronomy, along with other attractions that can be found at a destination must be implemented before starting a rural tourism activity. Depending on the resources, a tourism product can be created targeting a segment of tourists with precise motivation. The tourism market is in a permanent change, and having in mind the situation created by the pandemic, on a global level, tourism is undergoing an unprecedented crisis. According to Korodi et al., (2020) it is necessary to differentiate the tourist packages in terms of the customer segment, respectively the age groups that travel either individually or together (Kóródi et al., 2020). Also, the lifestyle of a person or group is different, consequently the needs will be different. Thus, the lifestyle of young people, for example, is an essential factor in choosing a tourist destination (Ramadania et al., 2021). As in other fields, innovation is present in rural tourism. Studies conducted in Romania show that innovation is the result of personal experience and concerns, and that the source of inspiration is the tourist and his needs, but not neglect the competition from neighbours (Cosma et al., 2014). The rural tourism product includes nostalgic elements, with a positive effect on the consumer, because " Nostalgia brings back positive memories from our past, from our past childhood, and the life that was in the villages" (Christou et al., 2018:45). Through their wishes, tourists contribute directly to the formation of the tourist product, and through local and authentic experiences, the tourist destination becomes popular (Csurgó and Smith, 2021). Rural areas have their own authenticity, and the perception of this authenticity by tourists through the tourist experience helps to form the identity of the place, thus becoming a destination (Wang et al., 2022)

Although rural tourism has been considered a factor contributing to local development (Iorio and Corsale, 2010), nowadays, this sector joins the other branches in tourism and holds a spot on the tourism market. Thus, the offer and the demand in the sector are factors that contribute to the existence and the development of this branch of tourism. In this respect, marketing activities can be essential. It is important the participation and involvement of local communities in making decisions regarding tourism development and "host communities' positive perceptions of tourism impacts have a significant direct effect on community participation in tourism decision making" (Alim et al., 2021:1479). Rural tourism has an economic and social impact on local and regional communities. The factors involved in organizing rural tourism, public and private institutions play an important role, and in these cases a lack of knowledge of the way the system works in various cultures as well as their specific character (Billore, 2018). „Local culture may also be used as a primary element of the tourism" (Awasthi, 2018:160). The tourist activity offers to the local community economic benefits, but it has an important contribution to the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage, thus creating quality at the level of the individual life, implicitly of the family and of the community (Obradović et al., 2021). In rural areas, visiting heritage monuments contributes to local economic development, but the social effect must also be taken into account, to be carried out in a sustainable form and without disturbing the local serenity (Caciora et al., 2021). The development of tourism in inappropriate conditions could have a negative outcome on tourist destinations on a demographic, economic, and socio-cultural level. To avoid and minimize the unfavourable effects on a local or regional level responsible decisions must be taken throughout the entire development process (Stankova, 2010). In Hungary, according to the 2020 report on tourism trends released by the Hungarian Tourism Agency (Magyar Turisztikai Ügynökség - MTÜ) (the distribution of overnight stays in rural tourism and other private accommodation was 39% in the surveyed year, while that of hotels was 41% (pensions 7%, campsites 5%, hostels 5%, holiday homes 3%). (MTÜ Turisztikai Trendriport 2020, 2021). The opening of the summer season in the period following the pandemic raised small-capacity, but safe, accommodation facilities to the level of hotels (MTÜ, 2020).

In general, the period of the pandemic has caused great damage to the tourism industry, the rural tourism sector has suffered fewer losses, since domestic tourism was the first sector that had been relaunched in the period immediately following the lifting of the restrictions. Being perceived and promoted as "safe," rural destinations, protected areas, and places "off the beaten path" were destinations more in demand in this period (Đorđević-Milošević and Hyvaerinen, 2020).

As far as sustainable development of rural tourism is concerned, opinions vary. Research shows that some believe that rural tourism would not improve the quality of life, while others confirm the belief that rural tourism serves economic growth and in the long run, it helps to hold the risk-benefit balance on an economic-social level, the aims that many settlements and regions struggle to attain (Polukhina et al., 2021). The sustainability of the activity in rural tourism is different and depends on several factors. The seasonality has an important role, with an impact on the economic and social development in case of a high seasonality. A high level of seasonality would increase the pressure on destinations during the peak season, but low season with reduced activity, could ensure continued activity with lower profits (Martinez et al., 2019). Given that the segment of individual tourists has a high degree of awareness of sustainable tourism, these tourists are more open to conventional rural tourism (Panzer-Krause, 2020). Rural tourism means nature. The nature has always been friendly with people, it just needs to be found. We need a more harmonious and balanced relationship with nature. Knowing our environment will help society meet challenges, be they unknown to the environment, social or economic (Agnoletti et al., 2020). Tourism professionals are constantly challenged in compiling tourism programs that meet the expectations of tourists. The activities in natural areas "help position tourism and travelling as a tool to promote happiness and wellbeing both at an individual and societal level" (Pung et al., 2020: 10).

Creative tourism has an extremely important role in rural tourism diversification, these can ease attracting new typology of tourists, for instance the urban tourist. Creativity, the ability to offer an active way for them to participate in

educational activities, could lead to tourist number expansion (Sasu and Epuran, 2016). Creativity can manifest in many ways in rural tourism. For example: incorporating local specifics and resources, traditions and natural factors as well, creating by them an authentic local based tourism product (Morgan et al., 2009). The visitors are looking for authenticity, uniqueness, friendly environment (Kastenholz et al., 2012), active lifestyle, but also for traditional arts, gastronomy, and in most cases the travellers' searching ways for participate in these activities and to provide connection with local communities, to take part of the living culture (Jarábková and Hamada, 2012). The accommodation infrastructure in rural tourism often offers diversified tourist products (holiday at a winemaker, active holiday at a village house/cycling, nature trips) all in an organized form. Product development sets the course for defining target groups and product success. (Darabos and Printz-Markó, 2018) Based on this principle, it can be seen that one of the most basic tourist motivations is getting rid of the daily routine, the demand for new experiences, self-seeking and enrichment, exploration, learning and recreation as well (Streimikiene and Bilan, 2015). During the SARS Cov-2 pandemic, rural tourism was considered the least affected, the determining factors being the lower population density, free space, nature). Thus, it is expected that rural tourism will receive more attention from public policy in the future (Duro et al., 2021).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data for the present research was gathered during the period of the SARS CoV-2 pandemic, more precisely between January-June 2021. The mixed methods research was used. The survey aims to examine demand in rural tourism focusing to be able to design optimal offers in the period following the pandemic.

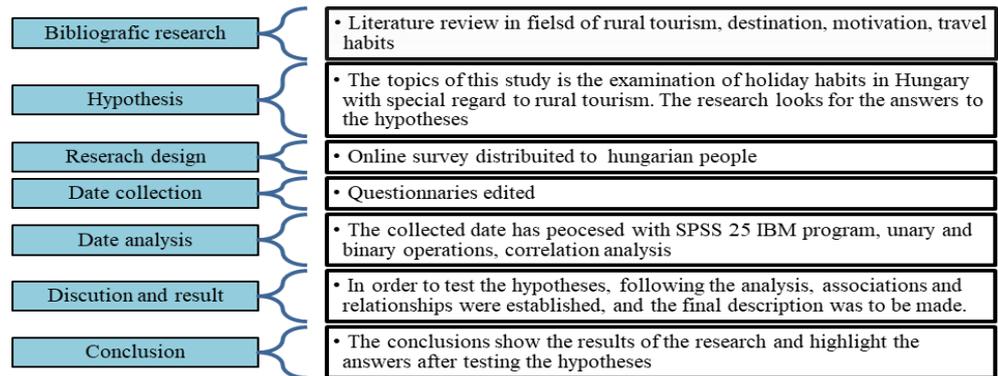


Figure 1. The adopted methodology (source: authors)

The topics of this study is the examination of holiday habits in Hungary with special regard to rural tourism. The research looks for the answers to the hypotheses below:

H1. Various age groups holiday habits to rural areas show a significant difference.

H2. The length of time various age groups stay at rural destinations does not show a significant difference.

H3. Willingness to spend money on accommodation in rural areas by the various age groups do not show a significant difference.

H4. Willingness to spend money on optional complementary services - free-time activities- in by the various age groups does not show a significant difference.

The survey method was chosen and the respondents were assigned via a random sample (with cluster sample). Besides the query on demographic and educational dates, the questions cover the following main areas.

- The holiday habits of the respondents,
- The preferences regarding the length of holiday time in rural areas
- The willingness to spend money on accommodation in this time
- The preference of complementary services as optional programs in the rural area, especially for gastronomic and recreational activities.

The questionnaire consisted of twenty-eight scaled questions (20 had 4-level Likert items, while 8 had 8-level Likert items, in which 1 stood for strongly agree, while 4 or 8 stood for strongly disagree), 12 multiple-choice closed questions, and an open one. The Likert scale was chosen to obtain quantitative data regarding attitude, frequency and importance. (Joshi et al., 2015). The data was processed via IBM SPSS 25, in which unary operations (descriptive statistical analysis, situation indicators, average, mode, dispersion measures, standard deviation, variability), and binary (cross-tabulation) ones, correlation analysis were done. The reliability of the questionnaire (exemption of random errors), consistency was tested with Cronbach's alpha. The procedure measures all possible combinations of the questions the questionnaire contains, the coefficient of reliability can be a number between 0 and 1. The closer the coefficient is to 1, the more reliable the data of the survey are. If the coefficient is between 0.9 and 1, they are excellent, between 0.8 and 0.9 they are good, between 0.7 and 0.8 they are acceptable, between 0.6 and 0.7 they are acceptable, between 0.5 and 0.6 they are week, and a coefficient below 0.5 is considered unacceptable (Sajtos and Mitev, 2007).

In interpretation of the evaluation criteria of tourists have basically not changed, but the satisfaction has improved significantly; the gender, age, occupation, education level and family structure of consumers have no significant impact on whether they choose leisure agricultural travel (Shuai et al., 2021), which is not yet widespread in Hungary.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the survey participate 764 respondents, and have been validated 762. Three different age groups were defined. Based on the biological criteria, young respondents belonged to the group between 16 and 30 years (20.68 %) the second group was that of middle-aged respondents between 31 and 50 (51.58 %), and senior respondents belonged to the third group (27.74 %). The respondents were 61.52 % female and 38.48 male, from city 74.21 and from town and village 25.79 %.

H1. The frequency of the various age groups travelling to rural areas shows a significant difference. The hypothesis was tested with cross-tabulation analysis. Considering that the expected variation differences were placed on a high scale, it was considered appropriate to use the Pearson chi-square test. The Chi-Square value is above the 5% tolerance (.211) therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected (Table 1.). Of all the three categories, the middle-aged travel is the most frequent, they are followed by the seniors and the youngsters. All age groups are mostly in favour of travelling twice a year, and the second and third most common travel frequency was the one or three times per year (Figure 2).

Table 1. The significance level of various groups' frequency of traveling to rural areas (Source: authors own research)

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	20.208 ^a	16	.211
Likelihood Ratio	19.719	16	.233
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.708	1	.054
N of Valid Cases	762		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.73.

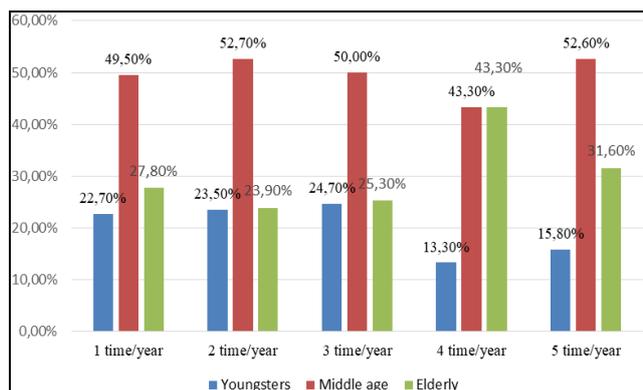


Figure 2. The frequency and the distribution of rural holidays of various age groups (Source: authors research) The case processing summary N = 764, but valid only N=762 (99,70%)

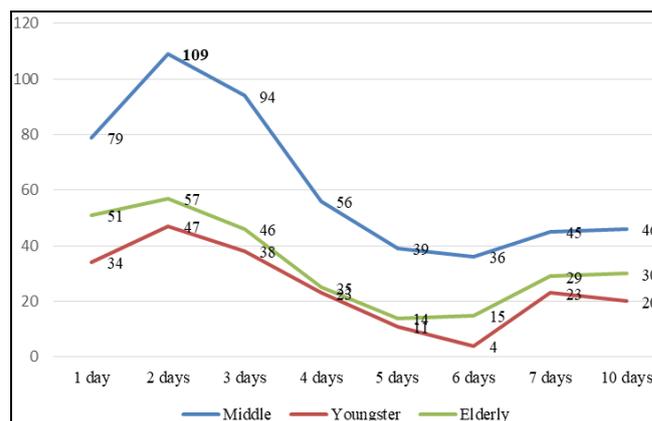


Figure 3. The level of significance of the length of time various age groups stays at rural destinations (Source: authors research)

Regarding to the above-mentioned result, it is worth examining who are most commonly travelled for rural tourism purpose. The present research question, received only 762 valid answers (167 young 21.90%, 385 middle age 50.50%, 210 elderly 27.60%). It can be observed that the frequency in rural tourism is differentiated: the middle age group occupies the first place for all frequencies, then the elderly with 4-5 time/year, and then the youngsters in similar proportion between 1-3 time/year.

H2. The length of time various age groups stay at rural destinations does not show significant difference.

The hypothesis was tested with cross-tabulation analysis; the hypothesis has been partly rejected, as there is a significant difference between age groups in terms of the length of stay, except the one-day one. In this case, the value of the Chi-Square is 0.011, therefore, there is no significance. In each category, the order of distribution is middle-aged, seniors, and youth, but it is worth mentioning, that in case of 2-day-long stay, the middle age category has in its category the highest-level N=109, after elderly N=57 and young N= 47, also the major traveler chose the 2 days period of stay in rural tourism (Figure 3).

This result support the others research results in tourism area, for example before pandemic, in Romania the correlation between the motivation and travel time in wellness tourism is very low (Molnar and Gulyas, 2022). The main motivation for this type of tourism is "well-being", which can also be experienced in the natural environment, in the rural tourism also.

Considering the table below, the present research can show a clear picture of how many days (length of stay) tourists prefer and are willing to spend on a trip. Among the younger generation, 10, 7, 6 and one-day trips have the highest values, while the least popular option for them is the period of three days for travelling. Examining the same issue, the majority of the middle-aged respondents prefers 10, then 7 and then one-day trips. Three-day trips are also the least common ones in this age group. In contrast with the mentioned, the older generation prefers 10, 7, 1, and 6-day trips, while the 3-day trips are also the least popular among them. Summarizing the results obtained most commonly the travelers are willing to spend 7 to ten days in a rural tourism destination while the most unfavorable choice was the three day long stay (Table 2).

Regarding to the present research sample, it is worth mentioning that 21.90% of the 762 respondents is considered as youth, 50.50% is considered as middle aged, and last but not least 27,6% is considered as elder persons. Regarding to this information, youngsters from the percentage of total sum are highly interested in 10 and 7 days long stay, the middle-aged generation is interested in 10 days and 4-day long period of stay and the elderly generation from the percentage of total sum is the most interested in five and four day long stay.

H3. Willingness to spend money on accommodation in rural areas by the various age groups does not show a significant difference.

To test the hypothesis cross-tabulation analysis has been used. Since the Chi-square value is above the limit value of 5% (.781), the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is to be accepted, according to which there is a difference between how much the various age groups spend. Thus, the hypothesis has been rejected (Table 3).

The youth (highest N = 57) are willing to spend €10,50, the middle-aged group would spend €13,15 (highest N=129), while the seniors prefer to spend also €13,15 (highest N=71) on accommodation per day. In the survey, Forint, the Hungarian national currency was used, however, in the present study, this was converted to Euro (1 Eur. = 380 Huf.).

Table 2. The preferences of age groups in terms of the length of rural stay (Source: authors research)

Age groups		1 day	2 days	3 days	4 days	5 days	6 days	7 days	10 days
Young	Mean	4.60	3.87	3.28	3.34	4.24	4.90	5.44	6.32
	N	167	167	167	167	167	167	167	167
	Std. Deviation	2.724	2.171	1.919	1.724	1.565	1.510	2.130	2.546
	% of Total N	21.9%	21.9%	21.9%	21.9%	21.9%	21.9%	21.9%	21.9%
	% of TotalSum	21.2%	20.4%	20.9%	19.8%	22.3%	22.8%	23.3%	23.3%
Middle age	Mean	4.89	4.27	3.48	3.81	4.09	4.59	4.98	5.89
	N	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385
	Std. Deviation	2.816	2.250	2.073	1.764	1.696	1.669	2.259	2.618
	% of Total N	50.5%	50.5%	50.5%	50.5%	50.5%	50.5%	50.5%	50.5%
	% of TotalSum	51.9%	51.9%	51.1%	52.0%	49.5%	49.1%	49.2%	50.2%
Elderly	Mean	4.64	4.16	3.50	3.78	4.29	4.81	5.11	5.71
	N	210	210	210	210	210	210	210	210
	Std. Deviation	2.945	2.216	2.017	1.766	1.626	1.689	2.199	2.726
	% of Total N	27.6%	27.6%	27.6%	27.6%	27.6%	27.6%	27.6%	27.6%
	% of TotalSum	26.9%	27.6%	28.0%	28.2%	28.3%	28.1%	27.5%	26.5%
Total	Mean	4.76	4.15	3.44	3.70	4.18	4.72	5.12	5.94
	N	762	762	762	762	762	762	762	762
	Std. Deviation	2.832	2.226	2.024	1.764	1.649	1.644	2.219	2.638
	% of Total N	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total Sum	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 3. The significance level of the willingness to spend of age groups in terms of rural accommodation (Source: authors research)

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.217 ^a	6	.781
Likelihood Ratio	3.181	6	.786
Linear-by-Linear Association	.757	1	.384
N of Valid Cases	762		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 22.57.

Table 4. The significance level of age groups' willingness to spend in terms of rural gastronomic and recreational programs (Source: authors research)

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.304 ^a	10	.334
Likelihood Ratio	11.585	10	.314
Linear-by-Linear Association	.050	1	.823
N of Valid Cases	762		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.92.

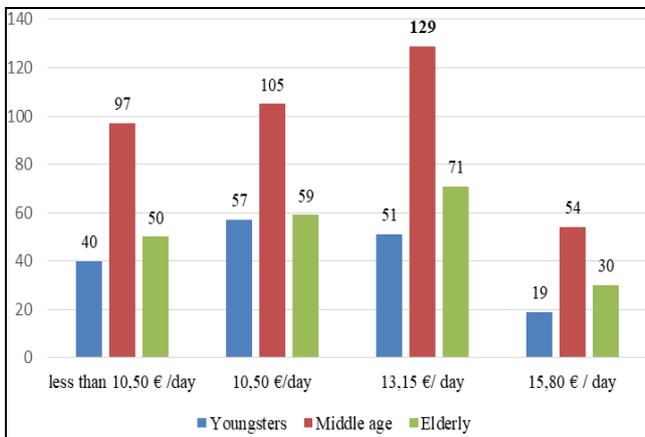


Figure 4. The frequency and distribution of the age groups' willingness to spend (Source: authors research)

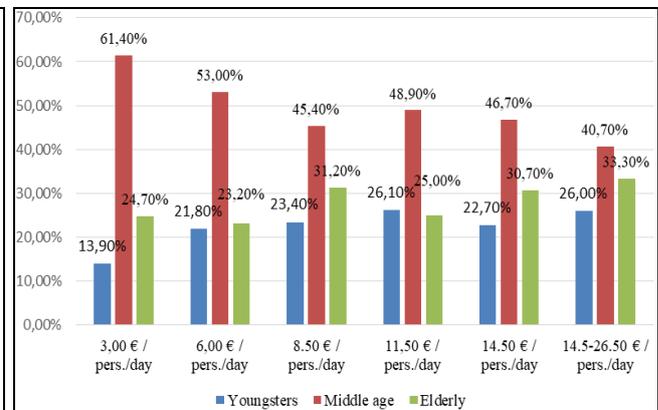


Figure 5. The frequency and distribution of age groups' willingness to spend in terms of rural gastronomic and recreational programs (Source: authors research)

H4. Willingness to spend money on optional programs in the country by the various age groups does not show a significant difference.

To test the hypothesis, cross-tabulation analysis has been used. Since the significance value of the Chi-square is 0.334, which is above the 0.005 limit, what can't be accepted, but there is still the alternative hypothesis according to which various groups are willing to pay different amounts of money for free-time activities. Having this in mind, this hypothesis has been rejected (Table 4). Middle-age reckon with additional costs between 3.00€ and 6.00€, seniors calculate on 8.50€, and youngsters take into account an over-expenditure of 11.50€, it is pensioners who would spend 14.50€, while middle-aged respondents would spend over 14.51€ on free-time activities calculated per person/day. The survey results regarding age groups show that in the case of all three age groups, respondents are willing to spend more than 6.00€ a day for one person, to complement the expenses of participation at the offers of gastronomic and leisure-time activities, all presented in Figure 5.

CONCLUSION

The research shows that following the period of pandemic - considering the self-regenerating effect of the industry - rural tourism staff, owners of guesthouses and new enterprises have high-priority tasks. The statement above is supported by the idea that 92.8% of the respondents would participate in a genuine rural program irrespective of age, educational

background, or residence. It was also proven that there is a significant difference between the travelling frequency of the various groups, according to which, the middle-aged respondents travel most frequently to the countryside, followed by the seniors and the youth. All three age groups prefer mostly two rural holidays a year in terms of holiday habits.

In terms of the length of stay during rural holidays, it is also the group of the middle-aged respondents that is the most active one. In terms of the length of stay, the hypothesis has been rejected (partly accepted) because the length of time the respondents would participate in rural programs differs significantly, for 1 day, all ages would go to the countryside equally. In the case of 2-10 days stay, the group of the middle-aged dominates, their average and most common length of stay for rural tourism focused holiday is 6 days, while in the other groups, the most popular period is the three-day stay.

It is a relevant aspect to consider that the urban nature of the place of origin carries significantly more possibilities than rural areas as far as participation in rural tourism is concerned. The willingness to spend shows a significant difference. The middle-aged group would spend the most on guesthouse accommodation 13.15 €/day, followed by the seniors with the same amount 13.15€/day and the youth with 10.50€/day. Considering the middle-aged respondents' purchases, it is in their case that the prices of the room can be high, followed by the expenditure on accommodation of seniors and young respondents. All age groups would increase their expenses on gastronomic and recreational programs most of all age group with 6.00€/day. Middle-aged people are willing to have additional costs of 8.50€/day, the youngsters take into account 11.50€/day over-expenditure, pensioners would spend an additional amount of 14.50€/day, while mostly the middle-aged respondents would spend over 14.50€/day on free-time activities. When designing program packages, business owners can rely on the general support of the demand side. In the elements of marketing communication mix, it is worth focusing on respondents who are middle-aged (with family), and the senior group because they travel the most frequently.

The study has limitation. The date collected is limited and need to be observe others elements with high importance on decision making for rural tourism, special regarding a sustainability concept. This analysis will be subject to futures studies.

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