

The Attractiveness of Built Environment

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There is an applied field of marketing concerning cities and other destinations called place marketing, which has “small, but rapidly growing literature” [Dinnie 2004:106]. One significant topic of the field is exploring the attractiveness, uniqueness of a given place [Kavaratzis 2004] within the chosen target group. It requires different research methodology according to the problem and the target group, which is obvious when inspiring local investments where infrastructural relations become priorities and when supporting tourism where sights and other spectacles, attractions are also important.

The paper introduces a special viewpoint, the results of a survey measuring attractiveness of several Hungarian cities and highlights the situation of Pécs. Exploring attractiveness of built environment based on a database of a complex research we focus on the potential effects of the built heritage in shaping the image of a city.

1. ON DEFINING PLACE MARKETING

In theory, place marketing is a new phenomenon, which covers all those marketing activities supporting the development of one city's image. Therefore, as a definition with complex content, several other terms must be clarified.

Kavaratzis [2004:58] argue that “object of city marketing is the city's image, which in turn is the starting point for developing the city's brand”. In this definition there are at least two connected terms, namely the ‘image’ and the ‘brand’.

Image is “the consumer perception of a product, institution, brand, business, or person that may or may not correspond with ‘reality’ or ‘actuality’, according to the American Marketing Association [marketingpower.com/1]. As a ‘subjective reality’ image must be managed in case of a place, a city as well that can be challenging starting from defining ‘the consumer’. What target groups the city management should distinguish, what motivations must differentiate, etc. are those relevant questions emerging when shaping one place's image.

Relation of ‘image’ and ‘brand’ seems obvious in business practices, but not in connection with place marketing [Parkerson and Saunders 2005, Kerr 2006]. Referring again to the widely accepted definition of the American Marketing Association [marketingpower.com/2], brand is “a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers. ... A brand may identify one item, a family of items, or all items of that seller”. The emphasis is on the word ‘distinction’, thus a ‘brand’ will just exist if a ‘seller’ create and manage it, while ‘image’ evolves without any marketing efforts as a picture in consumers' minds. Therefore, in case of effective marketing activities, image and brand are almost the same. The differences must be analyzed with proper marketing research to identify the strategy that helps to achieve management's objectives.

Another approach is shown in the paper of Kavaratzis and Ashworth [2006] where the authors differentiate three more terms from ‘brand identity’ through ‘brand positioning’ until ‘brand image’. While the meaning of ‘brand identity’ is similar to our ‘brand’ definition and ‘brand image’ is equivalent to ‘image’ as we defined, ‘brand positioning’ stands between and refers to those

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marketing activities (especially those messages in market communication) that emphasize competitive advantage for the selected target groups.

When evaluating the differences between image and the brand (managed by the city) the following elements and levels must be analyzed [Laaksonen et al. 2006]:

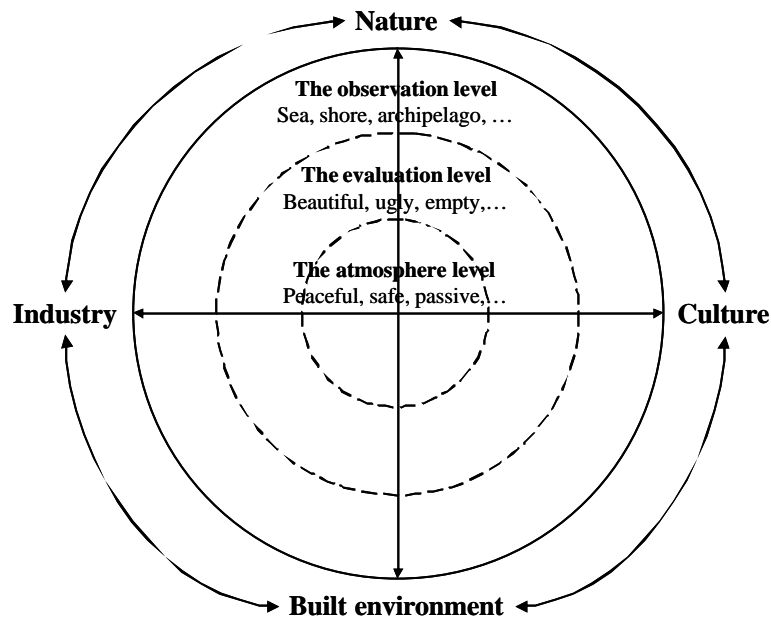


Fig. 1. The construction of interconnected perception levels in the context of city image [Laaksonen et al. 2006: 215]

That seems obvious, when managing a brand that the focus is on the product and the other marketing mix elements (price, place, promotion) support its effectiveness in the market. While, in case of a city, at least four main themes give the image that are the followings [Laaksonen et al. 2006]:

- *nature*: all those sights and environmental possibilities that surrounds the city and can offer surplus both for tourists and inhabitants,
- *industry*: it has direct and indirect effects as well, influences the well-being of resident population (workplaces, pollution, etc.) and infrastructure (
- *culture*: arts and popular performances, events, all those programmes organized to visitors (from and outside of the city),
- *built environment*: buildings, monuments, gardens and artificial places created to people.

In the model of Laaksonen et al. [2006:215] observation level refers to the image as we defined earlier, that is the picture in consumers' (visitors', inhabitants') minds that is shaped independently, without any marketing activity. Evaluation level is more objective as the image evolved is compared to another city's performance and results in an individual, yet more rational perception. And finally, the third level, called the atmosphere level "indicates the subjective impression of the city", those parameters that can be easily affected by marketing. This is the level the research can reach and where the researchers can gain relevant experiences from.

Taking this model as a basis to our exploration, we focus on the attractiveness of built environment and its effects to a city's image. Besides that, we suggest to integrate in the model all those trends affecting consumer behaviour to get a complex picture of the image and to be able to highlight strengths and weakness in the strategy shaping the brand.

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2. TRENDS IN TOURISM

The real moving spirit of the tourism market is the human desire to escape the pressure of duties and find the “uncommon”. Consequently, the market of desires is theoretically infinite, only the disposable time and the allocation in the budget set the limits. This market is full of chances and dangers as a successful journey depends on natural circumstances (weather, natural disaster, etc.) as well as the combination of participants and their mood - a single deficiency can ruin even the best offer.

The customers on the market are more and more difficult to gain and motivate as the dumping of offers makes it hard to open up new opportunities. One of the biggest problems in the case of our homeland is the lack of “holiday culture” that definitely separates the working time, the weekdays and the holiday.

Most people have difficulties in indulging in the holiday: they cannot relax but carry on their stress and extend it over the holiday; they want everything immediately and push themselves into the spotlight.

Another new phenomenon is the presence of “holiday” instead of “vacation” meaning that those who are capable of travelling are characterized by several smaller journeys instead of longer holidays usually spent leisurely at a single place. This intensifies the stress from which the participants are anxious to escape.

There are some customer expectations and trend phenomena that are worth taking into consideration, if we are planning to develop the attractive force of a destination and would like to define a marketing strategy.

COMFORT

Comfort is more and more expected: a great amount of tourists think that after whitewater rafting and sliding on drifts of ice they need the regular domestic ease even in the wildest locations. Comfort occurs both in the ordering of journeys and the inquiry about them, accompanying the whole voyage.

INDIVIDUALITY

Beside organized tours, the demand on smaller groups or private journeys appears to be more and more serious. Though individuality may mean exchangeable elements in an offer, its general impression is that with block theory a travel can be economically organised and can appear to be particular at the same time.

FUNCTIONAL HOLIDAYS

People thinking of tourism are looking for something unusual, a new hobby and voyages that support self-fulfilment. The essence of these journeys is not the given area (country or region) itself but to gain a skill, a mentality and some new knowledge by travelling there. It can also refer to curative tourism with programmes like fitness training, music, fine arts and cooking.

EXCHANGEABLE DESTINATIONS

The competition between the different destinations is extremely great: receiving all inclusive service on a seaside holiday does not really make any difference between the countries if the temperature, the duration of flight, the service and the price are nearly identical.

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SEEKING CONTRAST

Since the essence of tourism is to leave our everyday conditions behind and to obtain new experiences, the bigger the contrast between the daily routine and the time and circumstances of the journey, the more willingly we undertake the new experiences.

GREEN TOURISM

The rise of environmental consciousness increases the rate of people who plan their voyages in consideration of how burdensome their activity is for nature. Thus, the power intensity of long flights gives food for thought and revalues railway, cycling tour and hiking. When choosing the destination of a voyage, the undisturbed nature and the acquaintance with activities directly connected to nature both are important aspects.

Eventually, it can be laid down that though the offers spread on a remarkably large scale, it is harder and harder to succeed without considering the trends. The role of internet, media and ads is of higher and higher value: they can either overpraise a topic, a destination, a country, a region or, just the opposite, put an end to their attractive force.

If we consider the above from the viewpoint of the attraction of built environment, we can state that mood-management is absolutely required: planning a mood or even a myth in order to make a charismatic building successful. In this way, the visitors could not only gaze at the beauty of the given building but speak about it and easily recall afterwards what they have seen and heard. Another issue to raise here is that many buildings are not able to attract visitors themselves; however, if an age, an impersonation and a story accompany that building, it can become attractive.

Beside the professional management of supplies, total comfort has to be provided for tourists from the viewpoint of both physical service and information. Today it is already an elemental requirement, though its executability is uncertain. In the case of Pécs, the example under survey, the problem of approachability is, considering comfort, an obstacle of going on short cultural trips; should the potential visitors plan them either by plane, train or car.

3. BUILT ENVIRONMENT AS TOURIST DESTINATION

The main aim of our research was to distinctly see the group of Hungarian adult population which is interested in built environment and the built environment. The face-to-face survey was carried out in 2006 with a sample of 1.000 representing the Hungarian adult population. The main conclusions are summarised as follows.

THE POPULARITY OF TOURIST DESTINATIONS

When organising a tour of some length for themselves or their families, people can have various motivations that are obviously influenced by the realisation of the goals that please the decision-maker. According to our research, most people cherish striking sympathy toward nature as a tourist destination. On a five-point scale the mean of the popularity of nature is 4,32. Afterwards, cultural programmes (3,48) and the built environment (3,40) can be interpreted as separate groups.

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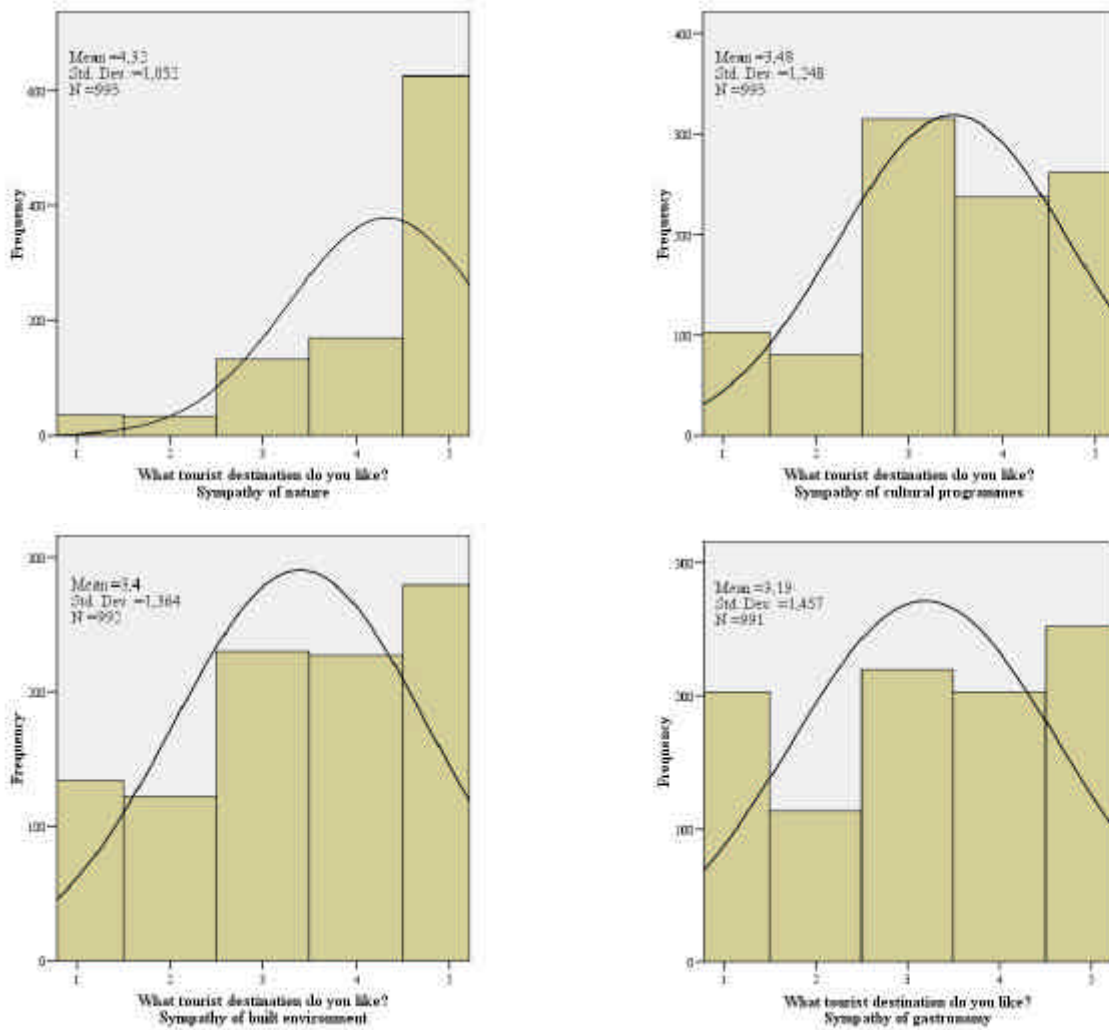


Fig. 2. Popularity of different tourist attractions (n=1000)

The popularity value of gastronomy is also above the average (3,19) but the other destinations provably divided the respondents; consequently, the proportion of people who are not at all fond of destinations like wellness, medical treatment, sports programmes, pop music programmes, thematic programmes, wine tours and religious locations is reasonably large.

THE CHARACTERISATION OF THE FANCIERS OF THE MOST POPULAR TOURIST DESTINATIONS

Significant differences can be demonstrated between the fanciers of different destinations. Since the popularity of nature, cultural programmes and the built environment are remarkable, the main significant demographics of these three categories are dealt with.

The values of nature are mostly preferred by people with higher educational level and the residents of the capital and the bigger country towns. The outcome of the research reveals that nature is attractive chiefly for the inhabitants of crowded cities, regardless of their sexual status.

The interest in cultural programmes is significantly high among the inhabitants of the capital. The wide ranging offers presumably influence the inquiries of the people living there. Primarily the highly qualified inhabitants of the capital who live in comfortable financial circumstances are interested in these programmes.

In the case of the fanciers of the built environment, sexual status appears to be a significant characteristic. Mainly women are attracted by these spectacles and not surprisingly they are above

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the average regarding their educational level. An interesting result shows that the inhabitants of the biggest and smallest settlements are significantly fond of this tourist destination.

THE FREQUENCY OF TOURIST VISITS

The percentage of respondents visiting the different tourist destinations was also examined. The most frequent visits are connected to the popularity index so nature stands in the first place again: 72% of the respondents goes on trips and plans journeys to nature. They are mostly between 30 and 39 years old and have higher educational level.

Cultural programmes are visited by 53% of the respondents consisting, in larger proportion, of women between 30 and 39, with higher educational level. The inhabitants of county towns and settlements having less than 2000 residents are characterised by visiting these events more often than the average.

47% of the respondents visit the built environment; they are chiefly women with higher educational level.

THE VISITORS OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The popularity of tourist destinations and their actual visits were analysed above; however, it is necessary to summarise the characteristics of the target group that is attracted to the spectacular elements of city design. In this case it is not equal to actually visiting the locations in favour, though their affection can be activated.

So the people who can be counted on are chiefly women, middle-agers (between 30 and 59), either having active intellectual occupation or studying, and receiving an income that is above the average. These so-called intensive tourists travel to domestic destinations more often than the average. It seems that enjoying the built environment requires knowledge and education. An important result of the research tells us that 468 of 1000 respondents are the actual visitors of the built environment.

THE ESTIMATION OF THE DOMESTIC CITIES

Among the 468 fanciers of the built environment, Pécs is the most popular according to the spontaneous associations to domestic cities (Budapest is not included due to its special status). When the respondents were asked to name a provincial city in relation to culture, Pécs was the most popular again with Szeged slightly falling behind. The members of the target group indicated Pécs as their favourite domestic city, having a remarkable advantage over the other cities of the survey.

The respondents were asked to make spontaneous associations when hearing the names of the cities of the research and their answers were analysed. First of all, even the number of associations is typical as it shows the existence or non-existence of city image elements that can easily be called out of the respondents' minds. Eger received the biggest number of associations (372) among the fanciers of the built environment. Szeged (342) and Debrecen (301) followed it, then came Miskolc (278) and Pécs (261) shoulder to shoulder, while Veszprém (239) fell behind them and Győr was at the bottom of the list.

When analysing only the associations mentioned by at least ten respondents, we can see the concepts particularly connected to different cities. In several cases, it is hard to decide whether the building or the function reminded the responder of a theater, college or university that is why these "mixed categories" are not examined. This way, merely the built environment became observable. Pécs received the biggest number of the mentioning of buildings such as the TV tower, the

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Cathedral, the Mosque and the Minaret. Zsolnay Porcelain Factory and the University both belong to the mixed category, so they are not parts of the list.

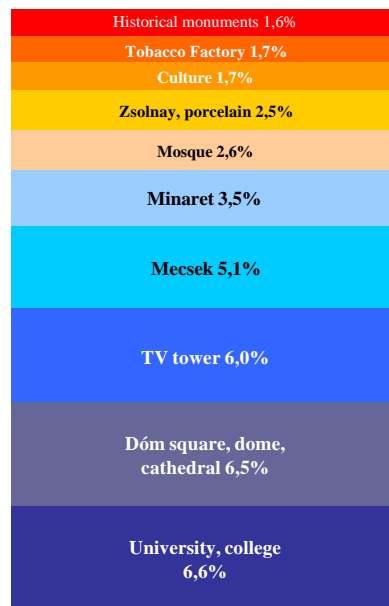


Fig. 3. Distribution of significant spontaneous mentions regarding the attractiveness of Pécs (n=1000)

In the case of Veszprém, the Castle and the Viaduct are the clear-cut associations to city design. The Castle of Eger, the Great Church and Hotel Aranybika of Debrecen, the Cathedral of Szeged are the remarkable associations. In the case of Miskolc and Győr, the associations were of the “mixed category”, so they are not included in the research.

4. SUMMARY

The aim of our research was to map the popularity of the built environment among the adult inhabitants of Hungary and to learn how these sights motivate them to plan a journey. It was discovered that the attractive force of nature is the most important for people; however, among the actual and active tourists the cultural programmes and the built environment are the most popular destinations. The same order was shown in the attendance of these destinations. 47% of the inhabitants are interested in the built environment without any extreme views breaking up the unity.

Women and the educated middle-agers set up the main target group: they can afford visiting cities due to their literacy as well as their income. Regarding culture, Pécs is the most popular among the cities of the survey. Pécs is significant in another aspect as well: when hearing the name of the city, the respondents could recall the most built environment.

By analysing the trends affecting tourism and summarising the knowledge about local marketing, it is proved that competitive tourist sights need serious marketing in order to distinguish themselves from the “exchangeable” destinations and have an independent and individual style.

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