

A CORRELATION ANALYSIS BETWEEN COMPETITIVE SPAS AND THEIR SETTLEMENTS IN HUNGARY

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Abstract

Hungary has huge potential in the field of Spa Tourism. The reason is simple: below some 80 percent of the land's surface lies accessible thermal water, much with distinctive medicinal qualities. For a country otherwise weak in natural resources (beyond arable land) this is remarkable - as is also the distribution of the water nationally: there is no 'centre and periphery' conflict.

Roman culture established spas, but Socialist era developments contributed hugely. Opportunities for investment and exploitation naturally increased post-1990 and Hungary's EU membership has supported progress to an enormous extent in respect of both finance and market potential.

Spa Tourism is traditionally an international phenomenon, and Hungary, located on the eastern periphery of economically wealthy Europe, must compete in terms of quality and value if visitors are to be attracted. This paper, therefore, looks at the two westernmost Regions closest to both international competition and to the more prosperous markets – South and West Transdanubia.

Data from the last 10 years are examined from the most significant spas (an instructive pre- and post-crisis period). This includes the availability of accommodation and numbers of visitors and visitor nights (domestic and international). Against a backdrop of clusterization and attempts to characterize spas, we also analyse infrastructural and general economic wellbeing in these locations. Statistical tools are used fairly extensively to develop thoughts and conclusions. Cross-border concerns finally led us undertake specific comparisons with our neighbour, Burgenland, whose own activities in the field have great future significance.

Our conclusions indicate basic problems within the Hungarian Regions and that cross-border pressures are especially threatening.

Keywords Spa Tourism, innovation, infrastructural development, networking

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