CAN WE BUILD A “BALATON BRAND”? 

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The marketing of Balaton is not appropriate, as it fails to be presented as a unified brand, product on the touristic market. (Buday-Sántha, 2007).

Keywords: tourism destination, Balaton-brand, communication, image

Abstract
The authors of this study examined the destination image of Lake Balaton which region is one of the top tourist destinations in Hungary. The empirical research was designed to obtain answers to two questions: whether the image of the region well recognizable and the much-discussed “Balaton-brand” could be formed? Research results indicate the different views about the region’s image of the various stakeholders, the lack of effective communication between tourism operators, that professionals are not sufficiently aware of tourists’ views.

The touristic region of Balaton has had an important role in the tourism of Hungary. During the past 12 years 20-27% of the room nights recorded in commercial accommodations have been sent in the region. The touristic supply of the region has undergone a huge transformation in the past period, as significant infrastructure improvements and service expansion have been implemented. In spite of these positive changes the main characteristic of the Balaton is still the shortness of its high season that can be based on the possibility to bathe in the lake. To enhance competitiveness, apart from broadening complex services it is necessary to introduce a clear Balaton brand and image on both internal and international markets.

In the questionnaires we asked eight questions in three target groups: tourists, employees of TDM organization and its members. The questions concerned the recognizable of settlements, micro-regional and regional image (identity) of Lake Balaton. We made an attempted to identify the experiences mediated by the ”Balaton brand” and also compared the opinions of the scope-groups. We examined what was the role of this image in the decision-making of traveling to the lake and how well known the expressions used in the socialist era for the Lake Region nowadays.

The evaluation of the results has become possible to determine that the tourists can identify the settlements primarily (75%), more than half of the employees of TDM organization (56%) thinks of the settlements as parts of their micro-region. The members are the least able to identify their settlements (47%) and their micro-region (12%), as this can partially mean that the marketing communication is not effective enough in the settlements.

The two-thirds of the interviewed said to like the message of the “Balaton brand”. It is cautionary that nearly a quarter of the tourists do not like this message and a quarter of the members do not know this “Balaton brand”. This can be partly due to the inefficient communication, on the other hand, the “Balaton” is not identical with the picture that is present in the media.
The identification of the content of the “Balaton brand” the “water and sunshine” and the “summer holiday” classified among the first places. The scope groups are somewhat different when it comes to determining the importance of the other characteristics. Members say that the culture is stronger, while according to employees touring in nature is more important. The tourists also consider culture a more important characteristic than touring. Relaxation is mentioned by members and tourists at top of the list, employees towards the end.

The question, how motivated the message of the “Balaton” brand was in the decision-making, two-third of the answers was influenced by this identity. One third of those interviewed said that it was not really important. Since the identity plays an important part in the motivation of travelling to the Balaton region, it is desirable to increase the significance of the image.

Our results support the Balaton researches conducted in 2012 which evaluate the conclusion that there is no unequivocal “Balaton brand” and identity introduced inland and abroad, which is a serious deficiency in further developing the destination’s tourism.

Among the expressions used in the socialist era “Hungarian sea” is still found expressive by all three groups. In our opinion this expression is free of any politic content, it emphasizes the natural characteristics and significance of the lake, that we can be proud of.

As the final conclusion of the study we can sum that until touristic organizations and their members cannot convey the Balaton image authentically besides the identity of the settlement, the identification and the recognition of these will also be problematic for tourists as well.

INTRODUCTION

The statement above was made six years ago, still it could be made as of today. This can be said despite the efforts of the regions experts and touristic organizations to present the Balaton-destination in its rightful position on the Hungarian and international touristic markets. And it is this contradiction that makes us think about the reasons behind this phenomenon, or rather; why do we experience stagnation?

Our present study is part of a larger research. It is related to one specific part of the work carried out with questionnaires: it evaluates the marketing activity of the touristic destination management organizations (abbreviated from the Hungarian version as TDMSz) that operate in the area of the Balaton touristic region, as this is the most important activity carried out by the management.

The touristic region of Balaton has had an important role in the tourism of Hungary. According to the data of the Hungarian Office of Statistics, during the past 12 years 20-27% of the room nights recorded in commercial accommodations have been sent in the region, this can be further characterized by constant growth starting from 2005 after the
slight declination that could be seen from 2000. The data, from 2012, shown in figure 1. below support this. (Magyar Turizmus Zrt., 2013).

**Figure 1. Number of room nights spent in commercial accommodation locations according to touristic regions in Hungary, in 2012 (share in 2012, change 2012/2011)**

The touristic supply of the region has undergone a huge transformation in the past period, as significant health related touristic developments have been implemented with support from the state, the system of bicycle routes was broadened, the modern highway M7 was built which now connects the area with the border of Slovenia and Croatia, the international airport in Sármellék was opened and further developed, yacht ports were built, guest rooms and services were developed. In spite of these positive changes the main characteristic of the Balaton is still the shortness of its high season, which is limited to those 4-8 weeks that can be based on the possibility to bathe in the lake.

One of the positive aspects worth to be mentioned here is that the smaller settlements of the background area are joining touristic activities. Internal tourism is most often associated with Balaton among those polled in the 18-49 age group according to a large survey (Magyar Turizmus Zrt., 2013). The tourism ‘profession’ has the opinion that Balaton is the ambassador of Hungary, because foreign tourists associate Balaton with Hungary. Besides widening the number of Hungarian guests (e.g. wellness, cultural festivals), new sending markets have appeared, mainly among neighboring and nearby
countries: Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, Russia and Poland. A survey of their satisfaction shows that their satisfaction was 89.8 in a scale of 100 in average.

According to experts’ opinion, a positive change has begun in the past few years in the market position of the destination, and the region has a generally good perception. According to their opinion, Balaton has no competitors on the internal market. Due to the collaboration that could be experienced in the past few years, advertising campaigns and improvements in quality its position is strengthening can be seen.

Balaton has important competitors on the international market: the sea sides of Croatia and Bulgaria, the Austrian part of the lake of Neusiedl, the lake of Garda and the lake of Wörth. It is clear that these competitors have more intensive and complex marketing activities, and besides this they concentrate more on improving services instead of holding their level (Magyar Turizmus Zrt., 2013).

The Balaton based on its capabilities is a touristic destination with large potential which only needs to be exploited. In order to be able to do this, the already existing collaborations need to be strengthened, a strategic way of thinking needs to be promoted and communication needs to be made even more effective in which activity TMDSZs might have a significant role. To enhance competitiveness, apart from broadening complex services it is necessary to introduce a clear Balaton brand and identity on both internal and international markets as summarized in the above mentioned survey (Magyar Turizmus Zrt., 2013).

LITERATURE ANALYSIS: A PERSPECTIVE - NATURALLY BALATON

Many studies have yielded results during the recent period in international literature related to the field, which has been carried out to deepen our understanding about the functioning of the nature of destination branding. Even though large steps have been made towards describing the characteristics of destination branding, like brand-personality, image and the elements constituting image, we still don’t have an unequivocal definition among researchers and experts, and there is no clean standpoint about how these elements cooperate to create a destination brand together (Hudson, Ritchie, 2009). However, the process and the steps of creating a destination brand are commonly accepted among experts. Four steps are identical in multi-stage models when describing the process of development for creating a brand (Morgan, Pritchard, Piggott, 2003; Knapp, Sherwin, 2005).
Step 1: An evaluation of the current status of the destination brand.

Step 2: Creating the brand identity and the brand promise.

Step 3: Communicating the brand promise.

Step 4: Measuring the effectiveness of brand building.

In Step 1, we define the most important values of the destination and the destination brand, during which an objective point of view is created taking into consideration the opinions of tourists, members of TDM organizations and tour operators (etc.). In step 2, two elements of content of the brand’s personality have to be constructed: first by organizing the main characteristics in a logical order and second the emotional associations and expected advantages. Communication can be built around this element of brand promise, supported by emotional and physical characteristics - these promises that can be experienced by the visitors as advantages and experiences during their stay in the destination. During the organization of the promotion many communication campaigns, advertisements and messages are articulated (included logo, story, plan, name, etc.) As attention is focused more and more on the possible experiences, because experiences will influence travel-related decisions in the future, marketing-messages have to focus on these experiences (Williams, 2006). Step 4 evaluates the performance of the brand created on the given markets, which is a difficult task. It mainly consists of constant monitoring and evaluation of effectiveness of the communication. One of the methods most commonly used is measuring the traffic of tourists, mainly linked to promotion campaigns. Another method, which is in turn a bit more complicated to carry out is to examine the attitude of visitors to the destination brand, during this we measure how much do visitors prefer a given brand as opposed to other destination brands.

One of the main characteristics of a successful destination brand is that it successfully conveys the unforgettable experience that cannot be separated from the destination they are closely linked (Blain et al., 2005). Experiencing the brand this way can help the strengthening of a specific emotional relationship that can be formed between visitors and the destination. This among other advantages can lead to reduction the sense of risk related to travelling, reinforcing the promise of specialty and uniqueness and can yield more spending of money by the part of the tourists. Nothing guarantees that the four-step model mentioned above is the secret to success, but there are destinations like Las Vegas, New Zealand, India or Australia which have followed a similar strategies to develop an unforgettable experience related to the destination (Hudson, Ritchie, 2009).
A study published in 2013 (Ekinci et al, 2013) examined the relationship between the brand’s symbolic significance and the brand-fidelity linked to them. The study identified as main dimension the self-congruence (which expresses the compliance of the individual and the destination) and brand-identification (the compliance of the lifestyle and the destination) both of which influence the brand-fidelity related to the destination. The study has presented the fact that fidelity related to brand is not based on functional characteristics (such as the quality of services, accommodation, location of the destination, seaside, sunshine, etc.) but rather on the fact whether the destination succeeds in fulfilling the expectations related to self-image, social identity and improving lifestyle. In other words, these factors play an important part in developing brand-fidelity. Chances are higher that an individual will visit a destination again if the image formed in the individual and the image conveyed by the destination brand are close to each other. Brand identification can also have a positive influence. Visitors can use their favorite touristic destination also to communicate their social affiliation, which also increases the chances of visiting the destination again. We can talk about the same situation in the case of lifestyle. Chances are higher to visit a destination again when the individual’s desired lifestyle and the lifestyle conveyed by the brand are suitable for each other.

In Hungarian specialized literature, several studies have been published about the Balaton brand in the past few years. The Balaton brand is defined as follows in the development strategy of the region published for the period between 2007-2013: “... in Central Europe, the Balaton region is the model region for naturalness and high quality of life...a region of therapeutic qualities...the image of the healing Balaton is formed where the lake, thermal water, micro-climate, the locally produced healing and healthy products, and services that aid active leisure time await visitors all year long” (Vital Pro Kft., 2005)

As long term goals in the development plan of Balaton’s tourism we have formulated sustainable and competitive tourism (LT Consorg Kft, 2005). The main elements of this are competitiveness, the unique brand identity related to it and the creation of the Balaton brand, and the creation of a well-functioning touristic sector with quality services. The program strategy for the years 2007-2013 has set as its goal the starting of a new phase in the development of the Balaton’s tourism. As one of the strategic subgoals the creation of “touristic destination management’s (TDM) system in the region” was set, in order to enable the basic conditions for sustainable development and the creation of the Balaton brand (LT Consorg Kft, 2005).
The brand is one of the definitive elements of supply in tourism, it is also one of the final goals of marketing activity related to the destination, and a key indicator of success in a market. The supply, touristic product or destination stands a chance only to be considered during travel related decisions if it is clearly defined, recognizable for the visitor and it promises an advantage (it is attractive and offers an experience). Brand creation and brand management are considered by international marketing experts the high art of marketing. “Brand creation is an art and the cornerstone of marketing” (Kotler, 1998).

Branding is very popular in the touristic profession, thus it is not a surprise that touristic destinations also consider it more and more important in order to make themselves stand out, to identify themselves. Destination brand is such a name, symbol, logo, commercial trademark or other graphic image that on one hand identifies, on the other differentiates the destination, also conveying the promise of the experience of travel which can be uniquely associated with the destination. The brand also stands for reinforcing the memories acquired during the travel in the destination (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003).

Branding experiences is one of the most effective marketing activities. Consumers do not only consider as decisive the quality of the given product or service, but also the general satisfaction formed in relation to the utility of the product. As travel experience encapsulates the chain of numerous services and behavioral manifestation (Otto, Ritchie 1995) the attention of marketing needs to be turned to the advantages of the experience offered by the destination (and the brand that represents it) as a whole. It is not easy to decide which aspect of the experiences offered by the destination to use when branding. We need to differentiate between primary elements of experience, secondary elements and the peripheral elements of experiences.

Strengthening the destination as a brand is in everyone’s interest as the synergic effect often mentioned can be easily captured here. However as the interest of the servicers of touristic destinations is low towards the branding, image and positioning of the destination, it would be important to inform and enforce cooperation in order to raise awareness about these elements and make the servicers introduce these steps in their marketing activities (Holczer, 2011).

In order to make a touristic destination enter a market, positioning is a task of outstanding importance that needs to be planned by the destination management. By carrying out positioning, the identifying and differentiating characteristics of the destination are also created. As positioning always needs to be fitted to the expectations of the selected market segment, the destination needs to be positioned on every scope market.
The aim of the positioning activity is to form a precise image in the visitor about the product or the brand. As such it is not decisive which information have we transferred or what product characteristics have we developed, but the way in which the consumer perceives the product. The success of positioning thus cannot be measured in profit or the share in market, but the change in the attitude of behavior orientation of the consumer.

Magyar Turizmus Zrt. has carried out researches related to the image of Balaton in the past as well. In the autumn of 2005 the M.A.S.T. Market and Public Opinion Research Company has conducted a representative survey with seven focus groups. The results lead to the conclusion we, Hungarians have a basically positive and multicolour picture about the Balaton and we consider it to be our national treasure. The most common associations are related to water and relaxation: the Hungarian sea, the water, holiday, vacation, travelling and bathing were mentioned in first place. The main values of the region were the landscape and the natural resources, and local cultural heritage. It was established that the image that we have is a good starting point for marketing activities and the creation of a successful brand (M.A.S.T., 2006).

The research was repeated in 2009. The positive image of Balaton was even more improved and became clearer. The conclusion was made based on associations that could be captured in the personalization of the lake, montages, general and personal attitudes. This is further supported by the fact that while in 2005 Hungarian population was of the opinion that the role of Balaton is decreasing in the country’s tourism, by 2009 they had the opinion that the lake and its surroundings are having a more important role again. The developments in the touristic supply of Balaton were positively evaluated by responders (water quality, beach developments, hotel developments, and orderliness, development of bicycle routes and expansion of programs): thanks to the expansion of wellness-services and events more visitors arrive even outside of the summer period (Sulyok, 2010).

In the summer of 2012, Magyar Turizmus Zrt. conducted a survey among the tourists residing in the region, the result of which showed that the previously formed image has undergone a positive change after the stay on the Balaton side in one-third of the cases, the majority of them has experienced what was expected. The positive change was even higher in the case of foreign tourists. Local experts polled during the research say that the opinion related to the region is positive inland, it has no competitors. Among foreign tourists we may observe a declining tendency in the popularity of the destination, the main reasons for this is maybe that the developments in the area could not adjust to the changing needs and that the marketing activity abroad related to Balaton was not intense enough. The SWOT
analysis prepared based on this survey has underlined the sense of ‘ownerless’ of the region and the lack of a Balaton brand and identity introduced inland and abroad (Magyar Turizmus Zrt., 2013).

**MATERIAL AND THE METHODOLOGY OF EVALUATING THE QUESTIONNAIRES**

Within the framework of the research we carried out surveys with three separate questionnaires in the Balaton region among the members of TDM organizations, employees and tourists. From the planned 400 questionnaires 236 were returned which yielded 199 ones that could be evaluated: 158 from tourists, 32 from members and 9 from employees. The questions were about the effectiveness of the work of the tourism management organizations formed in the region. The questionnaires for employees were sent for the 19 TDM organizations operating in the region, out of which 9 questionnaires were returned and could be evaluated. The main goal of the present study is to evaluate the questions related to the marketing activity of the touristic organizations operating in the region, examining the differences between the recognizability of identity of settlements, destinations and regions. The questionnaire contained open and closed ended questions alike. The survey provided anonymity, it was not controlled, so the answers of the diverse scope-groups returned from the destination in a not predictable way. Due to this fact we can only draw general conclusions as far as the whole of the region is concerned, which can serve as the basis for a more comprehensive future analysis to support the competitiveness and sustainability of regional tourism-tourism in the Balaton region in our case.

During the evaluation of the results of the questionnaire we have used distribution ratio known from descriptive statistics, and also cluster and factor analysis known from inductive statistics. The examination was made with spreadsheets and SPSS 20. statistic program package.

During the examination we have applied homogeneous data ratios, which have as a common characteristic the fact that the compared data, as it can be seen from the name of the group is homogeneous, they belong to the same unit, and they are only different with respect to temporal, spatial or other characteristics. One of these is the distribution ratio that we used, which shows what the dimension is, the percentage represented by the share, what the relation between the parts and the whole is (Szücs, ed., 2002).
Cluster analysis is a method which permits classifying chosen objects into diverse groups (classes), and it is also the generic name of the algorithms linked to this process. Its scope is to decompose the objects of an n member aggregation according to multiple aspects (indicator, attribute: sorter variable) to form such sub-aggregations that is they do not have a common element, but when unifying them we receive the complete aggregation, so every object becomes classified in one of the groups (Szűcs, ed., 2002).

The examination of the correlation of multiple variables belongs to the field of multiple variable analysis. In order to ensure effective analysis multiple variable statistics uses advanced mathematic methods. Two of these are factor analysis and component analysis. During factor analysis the goal is to find a common factor or factors that influence the majority of the examined variables. The common factor(s) -the so called hypothetic variables- are present, we can draw this conclusion from the connection between the examined variables. Usually more examined variables can be joint in a common factor, these are those variables that jointly influence some variable (Szűcs, ed., 2002).

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

The analysis of the marketing activity of touristic destination management organizations operating in the Balaton region has firstly concentrated on the effectiveness of conveying the settlement’s identity. The first line of figure 2. presents unified opinion of employees, members and tourists. Tourists had the most positive opinion, 75% percent could identify a settlement image in the destination, as the satisfaction of employees and the members of organizations was far lower, 56% and 47%.

Those who gave ‘yes’ as an answer could determine precisely what does the identity perceived or communicated by them, which in the latter case signals a higher level of consciousness of identity building. The significant difference in the level of perception of scope groups maybe can be explained by the high difference in the number of the questionnaires that could be evaluated, but it can also show that higher ratio perceived by tourists is supported by an unconscious identity building. The latter opinion is enforced by the difference of the opinions of employees and members. As the ratio of identity identified by members is lower than that of employees, we can suppose the communication of image building/forming activity of organizations is lower than it would be necessary, which can be linked to intensity of the relationship of touristic organization members and
of the organizations themselves (the justification of this idea is carried out in other parts of the research).

For the question “Can you identify a micro-regional identity?” (bottom line of figure 2.) also, we received very different results with respect to the different scope-groups. In this case, those who held the most positive opinion were the employees of the organization (56%), then tourists with 39%. The opinion of the members is worse than the other two groups, it is only 12%.

One of the key tasks of the organization’s work is making the settlements enter the touristic market as a part of their own micro-region, which becomes possible as a result of cooperation with other settlements in their close destination. Employees had a better opinion about identity both with respect to the settlement and micro-region, as compared to the other two groups (figure 2.). This leads to the conclusion that the work of experts carrying out image building is becoming more conscious. As the opinion about identity building was the same by the part of employees with respect to settlements and micro-region, we can suppose that this consciousness is present in the fact that settlements are considered to be parts of their own destinations, which is clearly manifested in their promotional activity.

A far lower number of members could identify a micro-region identity, only 12%. One of the reasons might be the lack of communication between the organization and its members, as they have a better opinion about the recognizability of the identity of their own settlement (47%). The fact that members cannot form an idea about the characteristics and identity about their micro-region can indicate that the organization does not communicate, does not raise awareness their marketing activity carried out in cooperation with neighboring settlements. The high number of ‘no’ answers of employees (44%) leads to the conclusion that during the marketing activity carried out in the region we can say that identity building is not conscious in all parts of the micro-region. This is supported by tourists’ answers as well, as the identity of the micro region was recognized by 39% as opposed to 75% who could identify an identity related to the settlement.
Figure 2. Comparison between the recognizability of the identities of settlements and destination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EMPLOYEES</th>
<th>MEMBERS</th>
<th>TOURISTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was the identity of the settlement successfully conveyed or identified?</td>
<td>no 44% yes 56%</td>
<td>no 53% yes 47%</td>
<td>no 25% yes 75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Was the identity of the destination successfully formed together with other organizations or could it be identified? | no 44% yes 56% | yes 12% no 88% | no 39% yes 61% |

Source: own research

The study also examined the perceptibility of the regional identity of Balaton. We have drawn up more questions about this topic. The first question was “Do you like the message, image, experience conveyed by the Balaton brand?” (figure 3.) and the answers given for it show significant differences in the three scope groups. The largest critics were tourists: only 67% liked, 23% did not like it at all, and 10% does not know the “Balaton brand”. The “Does not know the Balaton brand” option is further backed up by almost a quarter of the members (23%) and 11% of the employees (this latter result can be a bit misleading as out of 9 answers it stands for only one “no”). The values measured among members and employees can make us conclude that there is insecurity in the communication between local touristic organizations and the regional marketing organization. It can give way to further thinking that 23% of the tourists and 11% of the employees does not like the message conveyed by the “Balaton brand” (figure 3.).

We will return to the reasons of this phenomenon in a latter part of the study.
Figure 3. Do you like the message conveyed by the Balaton brand?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you like the message conveyed by the Balaton brand?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EMPLOYEES</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do not know 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MEMBERS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do not know 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOURISTS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do not know 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no 23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes 67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own study

The association examination carried out based on the question yielded 0.17 as a result that shows only a loose connection between the three examined groups and the fact whether they like the message, image and experience conveyed by the “Balaton” brand. The same can be said in the case of groups of the supply group (0.196). These values enforce the opinion the flow of information is insecure or not effective enough between the groups forming the supply and the groups of supply and demand.

Those who know the “Balaton” brand have also identified its nature (figure 4.). More answers could be given to the answer. Most answerers have chosen “water and sunshine”: 89% of the employees, 63% of the members and 65% of the tourists. This was followed by “summer holiday” with 78%, 53%, 57%. The various scope groups had different opinions about the other characteristics.

*Tourists* consider the region of Balaton to be the destination of relaxation (39%), sports (26%), culture (22%) and sailing (21%). This is followed by nightlife (19%), touring in nature (18%) and fishing (15%). Health is at the end of the list with 13%.

According to the opinion of the *members* of organizations, Balaton can be defined by sailing (50%), and the experiences of sports, culture and relaxation, all of them with 47%. Touring in nature and health by 19% and fishing follows with 16%. In their opinion nightlife is the least characteristic of the destination (3%).

*Employees* of organizations Balaton can be also defined by sports (67%), touring in nature (56%) and sailing (44%). Fishing, culture and relaxation all have 22%, health has 11%. No one mentioned nightlife.
Among other features tourists have mentioned wine and winetasting, members – besides wine – also associated to gastronomy.

What is most striking in the comparison is that the first two characteristics – water and sunshine and summer holiday (that we can consider to be defining or main characteristics, the profile of the destination) – succeeds in making a common unified association, the importance of other characteristics is diversely classified. There is a difference between the opinion of the groups on the supply side (members and employees) and between supply and demand (tourists). Among the members of the supply side, the largest difference is between the opinions about the role of culture and touring. Members have the opinion that in the destination the role of culture is stronger while employees think that touring in nature is more important. The demand side holds culture to be a stronger characteristic (22%) than touring in nature (18%). Relaxation is mentioned by members and tourists at top of the list (39% and 47%), and towards the end of the list by employees (22%). The last three characteristics are the same among the three groups, but there is a difference in their order (fishing, health and nightlife). The order of importance is health (19%), fishing (16%) and nightlife (3%) according to members, fishing (22%), health (11%) and nightlife (0%) according to employees, and nightlife (19%), fishing (15%) and health (13%) according to tourists.

The results of the association examination show a very loose connection here as well (0.149) between the examined groups and what they associate the messages, images, experiences conveyed with the Balaton brand. When evaluating the opinions I have also carried out an examination of association with value 0.219 which is a bit stronger yet it still suggests a very loose relationship.

Inefficient communication can again be the reason of the differences of the image conveyed and it’s the main characteristics. This can be lead back to the lack of knowledge of the opinion of both the demand side and the local population’s opinion, and ineffective forming of opinions. In short consciousness, conception and joint thinking are missing.
We asked tourists how has the message conveyed by the “Balaton” brand influenced them, motivated them when they travelled to the Balaton destination. According to our results (figure 5.) more than half of those interviewed this was decisive during their travel decisions, 29% said it was very important, 35% said it had a minor role. Some had the

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**Figure 4.** What can the experience conveyed by the Balaton brand identified with?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does the Balaton brand express the following in Your opinion?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water &amp; Sunshine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle &amp; Sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer holiday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nightlife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sailing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** own research
opinion that it did not matter at all (13%), it was not really important (7%) or it was neutral (16%). We used a Likert-scale to evaluate the results, and we took their average. 1 stood for “did not motivate me at all” while 5 meant “it was decisive”. The result was a medium average: 3.61.

**Figure 5. How has the image formed about Balaton motivated your journey?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How has the image formed about Balaton motivated your journey?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOURISTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it was crucial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not really</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indifferent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a little</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Resource: own research*

The next questions were asked to find out how known and how appropriate are the denominations that became known as the touristic slogans of the socialist era in Hungary as related to the Balaton region, describing the country and the Balaton destination alike. The question “*Have you heard about one of the identity images related to the Balaton?* (figure 6.) has the following results: the “*Hungarian sea*” expression was known in all three groups, 91% of members, 89% of employees and 90% of tourists said yes. Another familiar phrase was “*the meeting point of east and west*” which was known by 56% of members and employees and 39% of tourists. “*Happiest barrack*” and “*Goulash tourism*” were the least known among those interviewed.

**Figure 6. Have you ever heard the following expressions related to the identity of Balaton?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you ever heard the following expressions related to the identity of Balaton?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EMPLOYEES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The next question was “How appropriate are they today?” (figure 7.). We have prepared a 5-scale Likert scale where 1 was “not appropriate at all” and 5 stood for “very appropriate”. We wanted to set up a list of the four expressions. The first was “Hungarian sea” with very high scores, as members gave 4, employees 4.56 and tourists 4.39 points on average. The other 3 expressions received far lower scores than three, so they are so low that they cannot stand as the basis for the influence for the present identity of the destination.
Figure 7. Opinions about the recognizability of the Balaton brand- a comparison

How appropriate are these expressions today?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMPLOYEES</th>
<th>MEMBERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hungarian Sea</td>
<td>4,56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiest Barrack</td>
<td>1,33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting point of East and West</td>
<td>1,44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goulash Tourism</td>
<td>1,67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Resource: own research

CONCLUSIONS

We can make the following statements based on the results of the questionnaire study conducted in the Balaton touristic region in the summer of 2011 among the members and employees of TDM Organizations and the tourists residing in the destination:
1. During the evaluation of the recognizability of destination’s image it became possible to state that the tourists can primarily identify settlements (75%). The profession increasingly thinks of the settlements as parts of their micro-region, which is a positive change in attitude. Since the members were the ones who could least identify settlements and micro-regions (only 47% and 12%), it can be possible that TDM Organizations have an inefficient communication with its members, and do not convey its steps of marketing related activities.

2. Though the two-thirds of the interviewed like the message of the “Balaton brand” (employees 78%, members 72%, tourists 67%), nearly the quarter of the tourists do not like this, and the 25% of the members do not know the “Balaton brand”. This also can be due to the inefficient communication.

3. The identification of the content of the “Balaton brand” the “water and sunshine” and the “summer holiday” classified among the first places. Members say that the culture is stronger, while based on employees’ opinion touring in nature is more important. The tourists consider also culture a more important characteristic (22%) than touring (18%). Relaxation is mentioned by members and tourists at top of the list (39% and 47%), employees towards the end (22%). Behind the differing opinions it may be that the “Balaton” is not identical with the picture that is present in the media.

4. Two-third of tourists was motivated by the message of the “Balaton” brand to travel to the Balaton region. In terms of the successful regional tourism it is desirable to increase the role of destination image and identity.

As the final conclusion of the study we can sum that until touristic organizations and their members cannot convey the Balaton image authentically besides the identity of the settlement, the identification and the recognition of these will also be problematic for tourists as well.

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