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# The importance of Equestrian Tourism Enterprises in Tourism Destination Management in Hungary

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**Abstract:** Hungary is the pioneer of the European Equestrian Tourism. Several thousands foreign tourists visited specific equestrian programmes already in the 1960's and 1970's. At the same times some hundred thousands of holiday tourists visited equestrian shows and programs organised in different areas of our country.

From the beginning of the 1990's equestrian enterprises (pensions, stables, specialized equestrian services) have been established.

The equestrian tourism enterprises are well represented all over the country. They are well organised, the Hungarian Equestrian Tourism Association integrates 80% of equestrian tourism enterprises. Uniquely in Europe, the voluntary professional qualification, called "the horseshoe qualification system" started in 1998. The most common quality categories are for entrepreneurs are 3 or 2 or 1 horseshoe.

The system of Tourism Destination Management organizations could provide the background for the development of equestrian tourism enterprises as well. At local level these needs would be product development, the quality control and quality management, at regional level the most important aims could be the development of regional equestrian image and increasing the attractiveness of this image, finally hardening the positions of equestrian tourism destination.

**Key words:** Development, Equestrian, Enterprises, Tourism, Tourism Destination Management

## 1. Introduction

Hungary has been interlocked with horse and traditions of equestrians for some centuries, our equestrian traditions based on historical century's background. We are proud of our Hungarian horse breeding, we have created well-known horse-species all around in Europe which have been successful in sport and tourism area as well.

Equestrian tourism was born by enthusiasm of horses; strong traditions are in connection with horses, cultural background and historical events.

The equestrian tourism is one of the parts of active tourism, it is mostly leisure time tourism in which nearness of nature, culture and traditional features of countryside, folk culture, handicraft, local gastronomy have already appeared (Györffi-Villám 2001). On the one hand our wranglers are amusing with unique astonishing shows our visitors in equestrian shows; their knowledge and ability are special. On the other hand equestrian sports aren't included only traditional features; next to equestrian competition nowadays therapeutic horse riding has improved giving chance for recruiting health condition or assuring living lifestyle.

According to agricultural registrations the number of horses in Hungary presently are 58000 heads, unfortunately, this number is much lower than that in the earlier decades. Our horse stock reached 712000 heads in 1950's, since then it has been decreasing continuously.

## 2. Equestrian activities in leisure time

The riding on a horseback is less preferable as leisure time activity between Hungarian populations, excepting hiking such leisure time activities like golf, fishing, hunting, air sports aren't so popular. According to research details nearly 60% of interviewed from 1300 person has never ridden a horse, those numbers who can ride on a horseback occasionally are under 10%).

However among Hungarian population the judgement of equestrian attitude are significantly positive, the facilities of Hungary are suitable as well. In contrast the personally attitudes are decreasingly favourable, the average positive judgement has not appeared in travelling motivations.

According to survey of M.Á.S.T. the equestrian tourism is the most preferable between populations who are active in economically, young, has got high school graduation, lived in community. The equestrian tourism is the most popular between people of Middle-Transdanubia, the Northern Great Plain and the Southern Great Plain (Table 1).

### 3. The features of equestrian services

The special feature of tourism goods is that has to be cooperated several independent enterprises and actor to be able to create complex tourism offerings. The consumers are incapable of understanding the role and responsibility of different suppliers (Horkai, 2003).

The commonest tourism products are in equestrian tourism: trail riding and touring, knightly equestrian tournaments, coach driving, nightly equestrian tours. The

**Table 1.:** Index of compliance statements in connection with equestrian activities

Index of compliance statements in connection with equestrian activities (average value in five classifieds scale 1-the worst, 5- the best)	
<i>Statement</i>	<i>Index of compliance</i>
Hungary is famous for its equestrian sports	4,28
Riding a horse is healthy	4,12
Riding a horse needs too much financial background	4,12
There are a lot of opportunities for riding a horse in Hungary	4,09
The Hungarian riding opportunities are affordable only for foreign tourists	3,17
Index of compliance statements in connection with equestrian activities in personnel judgement (average value in five classifieds scale 1-the worst, 5- the best)	
<i>Statement</i>	<i>Index of compliance</i>
Riding a horse is a good entertainment	3,67
I would like to visit an equestrian show	3,58
I would like to take part in a coach driving tour	3,19
I am interested in horse riding	2,45
I would like to learn riding on a horseback	2,36
I would like to take part in a trail riding and touring	2,33
I would travel certainly because of riding a horse	1,6

Source: Magyar Turizmus Zrt. / M. Á. S. T. (Halassy 2007)

equestrian accommodation has got several services. The most frequent are riding on a horse back, trail riding and touring, teaching or training riders or visitors, and coach driving. On the one hand in lower levels visiting stud is one of the commonest events, in higher levels people are able to acquire some kind of equestrian sports. The organizations and achieving of equestrian events (sport or others) are important parts of equestrian tourism too. These events are strong connection with locations and timing; they included such programmes which are based on historical background, traditions, anniversaries or other traditions. These could be individual events or a significant part of a major programme at the same time. These events take up only a half or one day, but they could keep on several days. Among internationally evolved prices and profitability, next to interest of macroeconomic the ideal structure of costs would be 40–50% of equestrian services and 50–60% of other services (accommodation, offering meal opportunities). Unfortunately in Hungary this relation is 10–90% in point of basic services and other services.

In Hungary from the beginning of the 1990's equestrian enterprises (pensions, stables, specialized equestrian services) have been established. By now Hungary has got more than 400 equestrian enterprises, accounting total capital value of 20 billion HUF.

There are regional marginally in spite of colourful and varied equestrian programmes and events.

We can find the most services in the Region of Budapest and The Hungarian Great Plain, but there are less in Region of Transdanubia, but the lasts are the Region of Lake Balaton and Eger in a point of services and there are fewer equestrian accommodations there too (Table 2).

**Table 2.:** The regional location of equestrian entrepreneurs in Hungary (items)

	Budapest and its neighbourhoods	The mountain area of Eger and Tokaj	The Hungarian Great Plain and Lake Tisza	Trans-Danubia	Lake Balaton
Riding on a horseback	29	15	53	43	15
Coach riding	17	9	45	29	12
Equestrian shows	14	0	20	9	7
Trail riding and touring	22	12	44	37	15
Hunting riding	5	3	10	12	7
Dressage	12	4	11	6	4
Show-jumping	16	4	25	22	3
Military	2	1	6	5	0
Vaulting	2	1	10	5	1
Long-distance riding	3	2	7	6	1
Coach driving	7	6	25	7	6
Equestrian competitions	12	5	28	23	4
Teaching, training	26	13	44	40	12
Therapeutic riding	5	2	3	2	0
Camp for children	18	12	31	29	10
Stud visit	3	5	23	9	3
Accommodations	20	13	42	38	13
Opportunities for meals, board	21	8	42	31	10

Source: Based on: On a horseback in Hungary and own researching

The equestrian tourism enterprises are well represented all over the country. They are well organised, the Hungarian Equestrian Tourism Association integrates 80% of equestrian tourism enterprises. Uniquely in Europe, the voluntary professional qualification, called “the horseshoe qualification system” started in 1998.

The major qualification guidelines are: environmental factors, horse keeping, aptitude factors, equestrian service factors, human factors, other programmes and opportunities.

The most common quality categories are for entrepreneurs are 3 or 2 or 1 horseshoe in national level. These three categories contain the 75% of total numbers of the equestrian entrepreneurs. Unfortunately the numbers of higher categories establishments (“4 and 5 horseshoe”) are lower.

The spatial distributions of measured equestrian establishments are unequal. According to results of classification system 61,14% of equestrian establishments reach acceptable level.

#### 4. The state of equestrian tourism

The equestrian establishment and services are found all in Hungary. Unfortunately we have to speak about some obstructive effects: there is lack of suitable professional and special knowledge for leading the equestrian enterprises, there aren't enough riding trainers and teachers for suitable services, furthermore lack of foreign languages knowledge,

there aren't suitable horse stock, and assigned riding routes. The organisation of affected entrepreneurs in equestrian tourism is voluntary; there are nearly 400 members of this organisation of lobbyists and partner service club, which hasn't been covered all this sector (The Hungarian Tourism Development Strategy 2005).

## 5. The developing principles

The equestrian sports are based on the extant capabilities and institution system of the region. The main direction of developing is improving of efficiency of this institution system and developing of the following areas: material (infrastructural investments in integrated approximation), organizational (developing of organizational system and human resources), services conditions in tourism, recreation, sport side at the same time (events, camps).

The development of equestrian tourism has to be realized – in part of rural development – like as individually Hungarian Equestrian Sectorial Developing Programme, which is based on preserving traditions and utilizing in tourism aspects. The aim of developing equestrian tourism is to be in accordance with living ideas in foreign visitors that Hungary is an equestrian nation. To summarize there is an existing image, so the main target is to convert it for a suitable form (The Hungarian Tourism Development Strategy 2005).

## 6. The Tourism Destination Management

The professional tasks of the Tourism Destination Management: brand establishment at destination level, marketing and quality establishment at destination level, providing tourism information, providing professional tourism services (The TDM functional reference book 2008).

Between international competition of destination those organizations and tourism target areas are successful, which use in complex way developing of innovative tourism products and suitable positioning and differentiating strategy (Horkai, 2003).

Expectedly equestrian entrepreneurs will become the members of the local Tourism Destination Organization and there will be national and regional Equestrian Associations which became members by their professional representations and local agencies.

The system of Tourism Destination Management organizations could provide the background for the development of equestrian tourism enterprises as well. At local level these needs would be product development, the quality control and quality management, at regional level the most important aims could be the development of regional equestrian image and increasing the attractiveness of this image, finally hardening the positions of equestrian tourism destination.

Accordingly our study and equestrian experiences we have worked out the following proposal for systematic

functions sectioning in Tourism Destination Management (Table 3).

**Table 3.:** The cooperation mix of equestrian sector in TDM system

<i>Equestrian entrepreneurs</i>	<i>National/Regional Equestrian Associations</i>
<i>Product and brand policy</i>	
Specialization of offerings (based on unique attractions)	Researching for demanding guidelines and trends
Development of attraction	Generation of projects
Development of services	Brand management
Providing of consumer's orientation	Developing and supporting of special demanding profile
Communication of unique offering elements	Fortification of "Hungary is an equestrian nation" image
Developing of innovation potential	transfer of innovation and supporting of adaptation
Founding and developing the features of equestrian entrepreneurs and	
<i>Quality management</i>	
Determining of the aims of benchmarking at equestrian entrepreneurs	Marketing researching of specifically features of quality in equestrian services
Providing personal and technical conditions for reaching suitable level of quality	Determining of philosophy in the equestrian quality
Motivation of the assistants, suppliers, partners in accordance with the targets of quality level	Utilizing of professional advisory system
Adequacy for requiring of "horseshoe" qualification system	Controlling of "horseshoe" qualification system
Suitable in and out communication about quality results	Communication for inside (equestrian enterprises) and for outside (government and decision makers)
Measuring and utilizing of visitor's satisfaction for tourism product development	

Source: Based on own research

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