

# **Sustainable Tourism Destination Management Strategies: Using the EVIDENCES Model for Evaluating TDM Tenders**

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*The aim of tourism destination management strategies is to develop a given region's or area's tourism, in a long-term, consistent, sustainable and complex way. It is not simply a promotion or innovation of tourism attractions; it also involves the development of other related fields. These processes do not only affect the actors directly involved in tourism, but also a variety of other professional and civic organizations, local governments, businesses and trustees. Collecting and analyzing the winning TDM tenders of Hungarian tourism destination management associations from 2013, it can be seen, that in many cases, opposed to the objectives and the applications of other aspects of the tenders, elements related to sustainability appear in a vague or less concrete form in them. As an analytical tool for the evaluation of these plans, the proprietary EVIDENCES analysis can be used for the assessment of the aspects of sustainability of the above strategies and also for the classification of its related elements and connections. By applying it, it's possible to evaluate and test the different environment- and sustainability-related items of these tenders, with the addition of their effects on the visitors, on the local communities, businesses, organizations, institutions, and economy.*

**Keywords:** TDM, tourism, destination, development, sustainability, EVIDENCES model

## *Preface*

In general, tourist destination management systems' aim is to develop an area's tourism in a sustainable, long term way, with an array of objectives using different instruments in their execution. In addition to the examination of the short-term effects, in the long run, it is also worth studying the possible outcomes and effects of these programs Through an examination of successful Hungarian TDM tenders, the EVIDENCES model will be presented, as a framework, in order to help the assessment of the aspects of sustainability of the above strategies, highlighting the strengths and potential weaknesses in them.

## *The definition of tourism, and tourism destination management and sustainable tourism*

Tourism can be defined as a change of people's geographical location— apart from and outside of their regular and standing working schedules and lifestyles - for active leisure, relaxing, recreation, health-purposes, and for human contact and cultural needs, during which a variety of infrastructural, economical, cultural, technical institutions, services and products may be used. Other players of tourism may be the natural and cultural environment, institutions, organizations, companies, and host communities, offering services relating to the above (Fekete, 2006).

Tourism destination or tourist destination can be defined as a geographical area, or a spatial unit, which has its own tourist attractions and is able to offer an experience by providing products and services, associated with the above features, that are attractive for tourists. It can be understood as a complex tourism product as a whole, offered by the region, which do not necessarily follow the administrative boundaries. This spatial area is a destination, to which tourists travel, and that's suitable to meet their needs, as outlined above, by providing appropriate and complex set of tourism-related products and services (Lengyel, 2008).

### *Tourism destination management*

Tourism destination management can be seen as a continuous, long-term, targeted process, with tourism products and services can be found in the area, taken account in a consistent and complex way, with partners that can be professional and non-governmental organizations, local governments, trustees and independent businesses (Aubert, 2007). The role of local authorities can be a key issue, although their resources have been very limited for this purpose in recent years. The grants and allocations, and later, the financial resources of tenders provided assistance for them (Csiszárík-Kocsir, 2007). The destination management cannot be covered solely by approaches for tourism marketing and project management (Aubert, 2011). The operators shall cooperate to ensure tourism experience for the visitors, and to optimize the various impacts of tourism, while also taking into account sustainability-related aspects. The ultimate goal of the TDMs is to develop and operate - in line with international trends - a competitive, sustainable tourism system in a given region, in way that it is based on the local and regional specifications and capabilities (Tözsér, 2010). As a result, a necessarily unique solutions and approaches should be involved in the planning and implementation processes. The planning can be supported on national and supranational levels. One example of development on supranational level can be the Danube Strategy, supported by the EU, in which the first two pillars - the linking of infrastructural and a stronger enforcement of environmental aspects - can contribute (Pintér, 2012) to the successful implementations of regional TDMs.

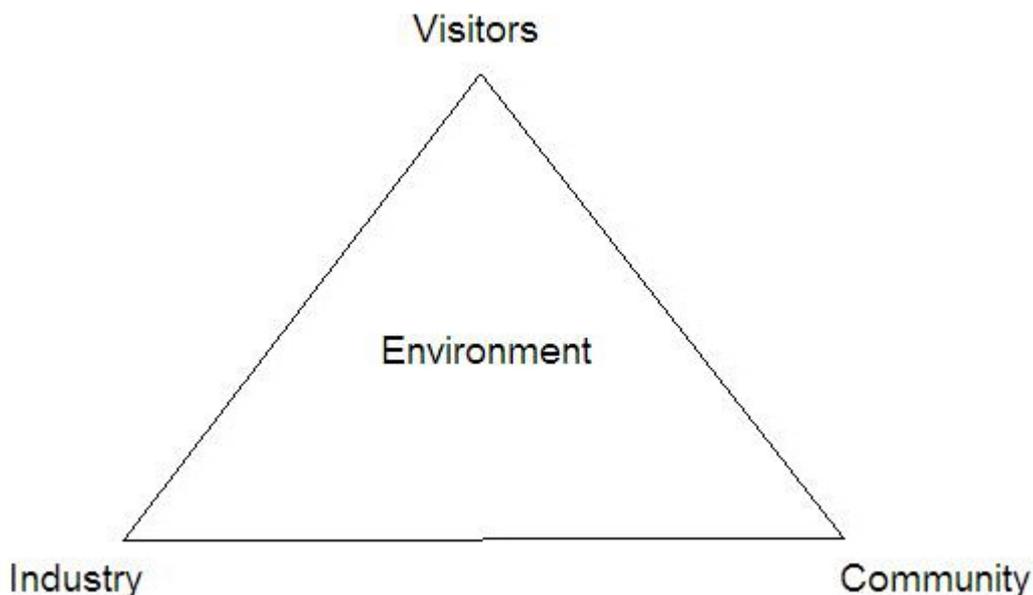
## *Sustainable tourism development*

With regard to the various strategies and implementation of plans, nowadays a basic requirement for these is to meet main criteria of sustainability. In the foreign literature (Lim & McAleer, 2005; Mckercher, 2003; Saarinen, 2006; Velikov, 2001; Hák et al., 2007) and international (Borzán et al., 2011; Szigeti et al., 2013; Tóth, 2001) we can find a variety of approaches. The sustainability of tourism management can be primarily understood as the results of developments, with which the visitor traffic they can grow, while it has a beneficial effect on the communities, not only in the short, but also in the long run. According to the WTO's definition: "*sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists, host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems. Sustainable tourism products are products which are operated in harmony with the local environment, community and cultures so that these become the beneficiaries not the victims of tourism development*" (WTO, 1998). In addition, however, significantly different approaches are used in the management and marketing approaches (McKercher, 2003). Sustainable tourism can meet a variety of other approaches in the literature, mathematical models (Collins, 1999) and in their criticism and discussion of the methodological shortcomings of both (Velikov, 2000). Different approaches can be read about the protection of the natural, cultural and architectural heritage by some authors (Collins, 1999; Lim & McAleer, 2003). We shouldn't forget about the phenomenon of the growing population, which can have a potential tourism load (Ayala, 1995; Lim & McAleer, 2003). We also shouldn't forget that localized economic activity can contribute to the sustainable development, by adding to the happiness and peaceful balance, instead of economic growth and long-term efficacy, efficiency or competitiveness (Tóth, 2009, 2013).

## *The VICE-model*

The following VICE model got its name by the visitors, the tourism industry, community and the environment, derived from the initial letters of its constituent elements. The aim is to create a kind of framework for the classification of the sustainability-related aspects of the tourism-related developments. The environment is a central element of the model, in addition to the local community and visitors of the area, as well as the tourism industry.

Figure 1. The VICE model



*Source: own editing based on Lengyel (2008:12)*

### *The examined tenders and the criteria used in the analysis*

Collecting the major objectives and elements of the winning Hungarian TDM tenders of 2013<sup>1</sup>, the EVIDENCES model, presented in the next chapter, can help in the evaluation of these tourism development plans' sustainability-related aspects, by being able to make more transparent and detailed classification system, than the VICE model above. Each element can be come under to its corresponding category of the model, either directly or indirectly<sup>2</sup>. In many cases, objectives related to the axis of sustainability, can be found in more indirect ways. We can meet several approaches of the concept, so to speak, targets are typically displayed in relation to the protection of natural values, or to

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<sup>1</sup> The following organizations' TDM winning tenders During the year 2013 were reviewed, and the aggregates of these items were classified into the categories of EVIDENCES model: Nagyatád-Rinyamente Tourism Destination Management Association, Mecsek-Hegyhát Tourism Association, Dél-Mezőföld Tourism Destination Management Association, Szekszárd and its Environs Non-Profit Association, Szigetvári "Zrínyi 1566" Tourism Association, Microregional Tourism Association of Balatonföldvár, Tourism Management Association of Balatonmárfürdő and Balatonkeresztúr, Tourism Association of Fonyód, Tourism Association of Siófok, Savaria Turizmus Non-Profit Ltd., Subregional Tourism Center Nonprofit Ltd. of Sopron, Hegyhát-Rábamente NON-PROFIT Tourism Association of Vas, Tourism Non-Profit Ltd. of Veszprém, Tata and its Environs' Tourism Association, Destination Management Association of Sümeg and its Microregion's, Tourism Association of Komárom, Tourism Marketing Non-Profit Ltd of Miskolc t, Tourism Non-Profit Ltd.of Hajdúszoboszló, Kőrös-menti Tourism and Cultural Association, Jövő Építők Tourism Destination Management, Gyomaendrőd Local Tourism Destination Management Organization.

<sup>2</sup> Such elements should be classified into the category, to which it the most closely belongs.

sustainability of these programs, and their compatibility to other objectives, as well.

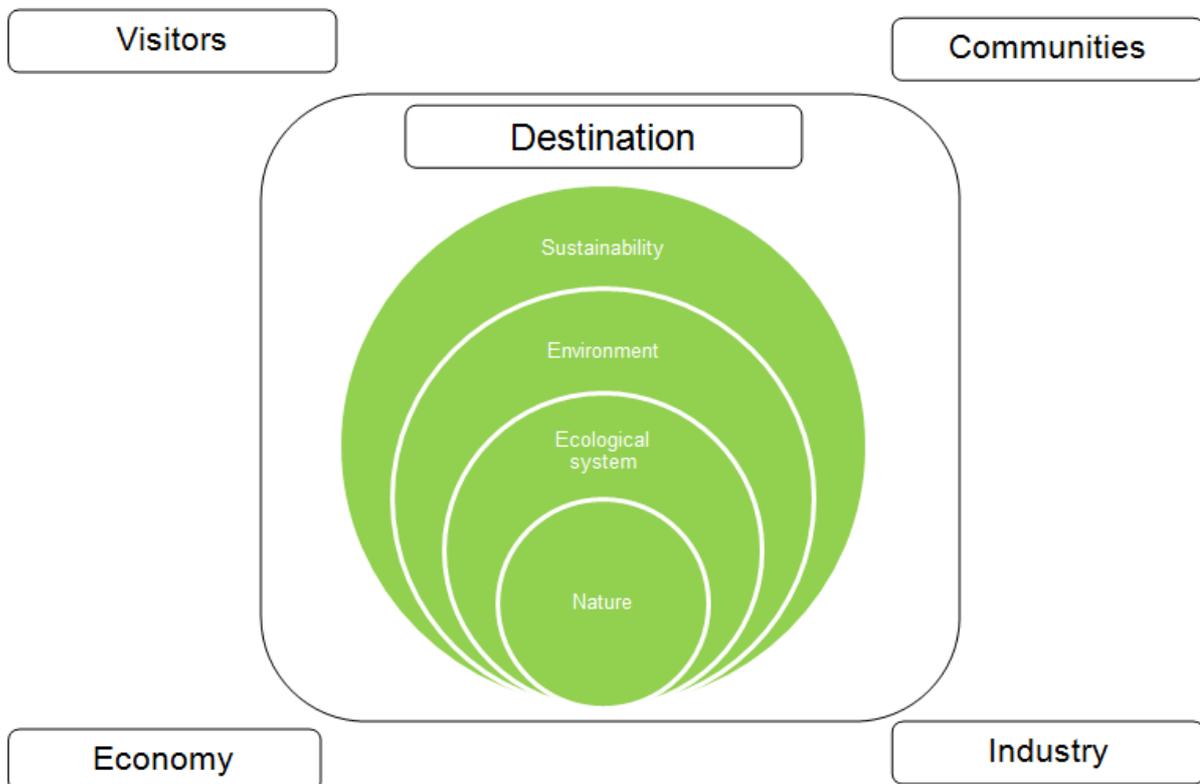
### *The E.V.I.D.E.N.C.E.S. model: a tool for the evaluation of sustainable tourism development*

The shortcomings of the VICE model is that it does not recognize the local economy as a separate, distinct element of sustainability, it rather emphasize on environmental, social, and tourism-related issues. Therefore it's important to consider the expansion or improvement VICE model. The EVIDENCES model contains the following categories: environment, visitors, tourism industry, destination, local economy, nature, community, ecology system and related sustainability issues.

The inclusion of the local economy in a separate category can also be significant, because tourism can provide jobs, generate tax revenues through value-creating processes, some of which may appear in the revenues of the region, as well. In addition, in many cases, they are able to participate in tourism-related background processes as an integral part of them, either directly or indirectly through related products and services in the production, as well as they can support a number of organizations and business, operating in the field of tourism. The importance local economy may be increased by the phenomenon, in which workers of a variety of companies coming for periodic work, generating long term demand for accommodation. The inclusion of categories for nature and the ecological system allows the model to describe the certain strategies and tenders by a more detailed, nuanced approach. The sustainability-related aspects to tourism, as a summary category can help, if the employer of the model employer would use a less detailed grouping. *The classification of the EVIDENCES model:*

- Environment: this category includes all of the built and natural factors.
- Visitors: people arriving to the destination; mainly tourists, but may also include workers working in a particular area for an extended periods of time.
- Tourism industry: all of the organizations and businesses in the tourism sector of the area in question.
- Destination: an umbrella term that includes all of the environmental, ecological and natural elements and their relations, correspondences, allowing a more general summary or grouping of the former fields, as well as actors, elements related to sustainability.
- Local economy: local economic actors, which can exert different effects on the tourism strategies.
- Nature: the elements of strategies related to the nature, as well as its protection.
- Community: all of the residents and occupants of the area over prolonged periods of time.
- Ecological system: region-specific ecological phenomena and relations.
- Sustainability (sustainability): elements and actors related to sustainability; actions and organizations.

Figure 2. The EVIDENCES model



Source: own research

### *The evaluation of the winning the TDM tenders using the EVIDENCES model*

The sustainability-related goals and means of TDM strategies using the categorization EVIDENCES model:

- Visitors: development of health tourism facilities, development of bike paths” and hiking trails’ precise indications and maps, renovation of hiking paths, creating trails special boards’ outplacement with accessibility, downloadable walking routes for mobile devices, promotion of tourist products, release of information materials emphasizing the triad of the active, eco and cultural tourism, construction of active tourism-related infrastructure, development of a culture- (Roman monuments, World Heritage candidate fortress, equestrian theater programs), health services- (spa, leisure park) and active recreation- (horseback riding, hiking, and fishing) based strategies, creating bike guide, development of cycling infrastructure in the project area (cross-border bicycle tourism development), creation of thematic walking trails, development of regional bicycle path network (connecting to the Balaton Bicycle), construction of creating hiking trails in the area consisting varying difficulty small circles, building covered rest areas and hiking trails,

development of rural tourism, promoting watery and nature (forest) active programs<sup>3</sup>.

- Local communities: achieving rising living standards<sup>4</sup>, increasing environmental awareness in local communities<sup>5</sup>; provide experience-based and active recreation, introducing discounts for locals, organizing traditional, local events, city promotion for local residents<sup>6</sup>
- Local economy: supporting the sales of locally made products, preference of local businesses with tasks related to the development of tourism, tourism-related use of local specialties, local products and other local handcrafted goods<sup>7</sup>, preparing local folk art and goods related to local values, opening of local farmers and craft market, development of local product point where locally made crafts and foods can be sold with an organic appearance in Veszprem and its area, a uniform image and marketing strategy of the city and the actors' of its tourism in the tourism market, offering wines produced in the region to guests, encourage co-operation interested between the tourism-related enterprises, service providers<sup>8</sup>
- Tourism industry: cooperation with local partner organizations, especially with the environmental and cultural organizations<sup>9</sup>, joint cooperation with the local water and environment governing board through participation dissemination activities, achieving a health tourism position among European destinations<sup>10</sup>
- Destination (environment, ecosystems, nature and organizations related to sustainability)<sup>11</sup>: preservation of the natural and environmental heritage, natural, cultural, historic preservation, the use of tourism assets operating with renewable energy, promoting the protection of areas welfare, environmental awareness raising health day event, development of environmental infrastructure and the services, the use of

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<sup>3</sup> The items are listed on the basis and in the order of the following programs of tourist organizations: Jövő Építők Tourism Destination Management, Körös-menti TDM. Duna-Gerecse Tourism Non-Profit Ltd.. Tourism Association of Fonyód, Tourism Association of Szekszárd and its Environs, Tourism Association of Komárom, TDM Asscoation of Sümeg and its Environs, Savaria Turizmus Non-Profit Ltd., Sopron Regional Tourism Center, Subregional Tourism Association of Balatonföldvár, Tourism Association of Balatonmárfürdő and Balatonkeresztúr, Dél-Mezőföld Tourism Destination Management, Nagyatád-Rinyamente Tourism Destination Management.

<sup>4</sup> It can affect the local economy, as well as visitors.

<sup>5</sup> They can affect environmental characteristics of the destination mainly on the long run.

<sup>6</sup> Based on the programs of Savaria Tourism Non-Profit Ltd. and "Zrínyi 1566" Tourism Association of Szigetvár.

<sup>7</sup> These also can be linked to the development of local communities.

<sup>8</sup> Based on the programs of Jövő Építők Tourism Destination Management, GYÜSZ-TE Recreational Tourism Association of Gyomaendrőd, Körös-menti Tourism Destination Association, Tourism Destination Management Organization of Hajdúszoboszló, Tata and its surrounding's Tourism Association, Tourism Non-Profit Ltd. of Veszprém, Microregional Tourism Association of Balatonföldvár, Tourism Destination Management Association of Nagyatád-Rinyamente.

<sup>9</sup> It can also belong to the category of the destination.

<sup>10</sup> Based on the programs of GYÜSZ-TE Recreational Tourism Association of Gyomaendrőd, Tourism Destination Management Organization of Hajdúszoboszló.

<sup>11</sup> Elements related to the sustainability appear in other categories as well.

environmentally friendly vehicles (electric sightseeing bus), the use of brochures in electronic format, cross-border and common cultural development of tourism destinations, the development of system boards using renewable energy sources<sup>12</sup>.

Having seen the categorized elements, it can be said, that the categories of visitors, local economy, and tourism industry – mainly in this order - seem to be appearing in more basic forms<sup>13</sup>. As a criterion for a sustainable TDM strategy, we can presume, that each category should be featured in an appropriate proportion in the TDM tenders and with this assumption, that in the areas, where the studied plans show shortcomings, the sustainability of their TDM strategies can be seen as doubtful<sup>1415</sup>.

## *Summary*

The elements of TDM tenders can be easily grouped by the categories of the EVIDENCES-model, making them more transparent, and structured for their evaluation. In many cases, sustainability-related elements appears in a concrete, independent form, these mostly involve – according to the above examples - the issues of natural, ecological and environmental relations and measures of the strategies. Using the general category of sustainability issues, where fewer or less specific information are available, these plans can be still classified in the model. There are cases where the categorization can be not clear, these are primarily due to the fact that a number of sustainability-related conception appear in the plans as a more general approach. It is also important, that over time, programs primarily focusing on certain aspects are able to exert different effects on other areas, and combined effects also should be taken into account.

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<sup>12</sup> Based on the programs of Mecsek-Hegyhat Tourism Association, Dél-Mezőföld Tourism Destination Management Association, Siófoki Fürdőegylet Tourism Association, Körös-menti Tourism Destination Management Association, MIDMAR Tourism Marketing Non-Profit Ltd. of Miskolc, Savaria Tourism Non-Profit Ltd., Hegyhát-Rábamente Non-Profit Tourism Association of Vas.

<sup>13</sup> Ideas, plans closely related to the sustainability often appear only marginally mentioned.

<sup>14</sup> In the case of the natural, ecological and environmental categories, this requirement can be interpreted somewhat differently, as they are used for the general classification and characteristics of the destination, which should be represented in the given strategy appropriately.

<sup>15</sup> Plans in the individual categories, of course, can be able to show medium- and long-term impact on other areas.

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