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## **Water sports on the Hungarian sports tourism market**

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Hungary has favorable opportunities in field of water sports where surface (ponds, rivers, streams) and groundwater provide. The most prominent water recreation activity is water-hiking, where you can use kayaks and canoes. Our water areas are great for trekking, excursions and recreations. Water tours are widely available in national parks. The most important rivers of Europe, "Europe's waterway", the Danube and the river Tisza, which is the most prominent river, also provide many opportunities for water sports enthusiasts. Our artificial water is also well suited for various water sports from the simplest to the most extreme. The lovers of water sports, together with their designers, have a significant role to play in nature, its pollution and therefore its preservation. In the study, I would like to present the varied world of recreational water sports and the extreme new opportunities in the water and underwater.

### *Introduction*

Hungary possesses really advantageous conditions for water sports, having appropriate geographical sites for surface (lakes, rivers and streams) as well as under-ground, natural and artificial waterways, too. The most outstanding and preferred leisure time water-activity proves to be water-outing, especially done by canoes and paddled-kayaks. Our waterways are perfect venues for organising great water hiking tours, our national parks and environmentally protected areas offer splendid opportunities for water-trips. Our outstandingly important rivers, like, the Danube, also labelled as 'the highway of Europe', or River Tisza, 'the most Hungarian river' also provide various facilities and options for the water-sport fans. Furthermore, we also have several bigger standing waters, such as Lake Balaton, Lake Velence, Lake Fertő as well as many smaller water reservoirs and artificial lakes. Our ponds and artificial lakes also offer excellent opportunities for pursuing any kind of water sports, from the simplest to the most complicated and difficult ones. Nevertheless, the

water sports' fans also significantly affect the environment in polluting as well as preserving it.

This study tends to present the versatile and diverse world of water sports, furthermore the latest, more and more extreme sport opportunities in and on the water, as well.

### *The classification of water-related activities*

Our rivers and lakes do provide suitable venues for pursuing any water sport activity, yet I consider it important to classify the various sport fields closely related to water. Referring to water activities we assume any physical movement in or under water and on the surface of water, with the appropriate gear. On the other hand, water tourism is a kind of leisure time activity carried out by tourists in, on or around the water.

### *Categories according to water surface*

The water surface tends to be a significant factor when discussing water leisure sport activity venues. Based upon this, we can differentiate among river, lake, sea, fjord or wild water. We can also split these down into natural or artificial waterways, as well as natural or man-made coastlines, beaches, too. We do not possess wild waters, yet in certain periods of the year some rivers of our country may be suitable for pursuing wild water extreme sport activities, too.

### *According to the applied equipment*

*Hand paddled boat-trip*, which includes the kind of outings performed with canoes, kayaks, rowboats, punts. Rafting, wild-water canoeing, kayaking and sea-kayaking are also part of this category.

*Tripping with engine-driven* equipment implies the rank of self-propulsion water vehicles. The jet-ski, motorboat is on this special list, and we can also differentiate various engine performance boats within this category. Their application is regulated by the appropriate laws.

*Equipment towed by motorboat or by any other vehicle* include: water-ski, parachute, or water sport activity performed on sc. 'banana'. Nowadays, there are increasing number of places available for training on these kind of equipment, moreover, there are even flying fox water terrains specially arranged around the country, which tend to pioneer in environmental protection since these devices operate with electronic engines.

*Wind-driven water sport equipment* constitute one of the special and important field of water sport activities. For instance, surfing, sail-boats and kitesurf are included in this list. The changing wind-effect is a familiar

factor among the outdoor water-sports' fans, which on the other hand is meant to be quite a nuisance for other people. The Sun heats up the Earth's surface unevenly thus creates atmosphere gauge differences. These air-pressure differences tend to be eliminated by the atmospheric whirlwinds (Bánhidi, 2006). This equalization takes place within various spatial scales, such as global scale (global atmospheric wind-rotation system), medium scale (tornadoes) and local scale (upland winds).

Wind velocity implies the speed of the air movement. We can differentiate among the following wind velocity types:

- hurricane 33- m/s 119- km/h
- very stormy 25-32 m/s 90-115 km/h
- windstorm 17-24 m/s 61-86
- gale 12-16 m/s 43-58
- spanking breeze 8-11 m/s 29-40 km/h
- mild wind 4-7 m/s 15-25 km/h
- soft wind 1-3 m/s 4-11 km/h
- lull 0 m/s 0 km/h

*Other category* includes sport activities, which do not apply any equipment listed above. It includes swimming, fishing, diving, aqua-fitness, etc.

*According to the spending willingness of the participants in the water sports: Low spending willingness sportsmen* (fishing, swimming, hiking); *Medium spending willingness* (surfing, wakeboard, water-ski); *High spending willingness* (sailing, diving, jet-ski).

### *Based on the features and psychologic aspects of water sports*

1. *Water-related hobby activities.* By hobby we mean any leisure-time activity for winding down, which may fulfil our fields of interests, provide joy and satisfaction and we do not pursue it for material benefits yet we can benefit from it in terms of obtaining new kind of know-how, experiences and set of skills. Hobby may include several activities, which may be an interesting activity related to a profession or any other activity offering chill, relaxation or accretion for the person. Water related activities linked to this category include, swimming, aqua-fitness, and fishing and stand up paddling (supping).

Stand up paddling (hereafter, just SUP-ping) is considered to be a new sport activity form. It has come from the island of Hawaii. It is a tool developed by surf-instructors. It has spread around typically in warm climate places, where the water conditions are safe. The boards are usually made of tempered fibreglass, 3-4 m long. Basically, it is a surfboard with paddles. One can paddle around standing on the surfboard in calm wind conditions. Thus, it actually consists of a board and a long paddle spoon. It is a considerably convenient form of sport activity, fostering balance skills, persistence, fitness, as well as it is nature-

friendly, and it takes place in a nice and calm water environment. SUPping can be performed on any kind of water surface only we have to choose the appropriate board. Nowadays, we can meet it not only on lakes but also in wild-water and marine environment, too.

Fishing, is one of the oldest human activities altogether with hunting, nowadays mostly regarded as a form of physical sport activity. Nowadays, it is listed among the outdoor hobby sport activities. In Hungary, the natural water surface area covers 130,000 hectares which provides for the fishermen a wide choice of water environment as well as great fish-population. These special areas are arranged by nature-engineers, managers upon the emerging consumer needs.

Fishing became really popular in the 1960's in our country, culminating in the 1970's when the natural waters and fisheries were also shifted into the property of growing fishing organisations. Its presence and importance in recreation, water tourism is outstanding, since its nature-friendliness, recreation, various water-bank activities prove to be its organic feature. The environmental education makes it paramount from among other nature-friendly water sports. Fishing is getting more and more popular among hobby sports people, however according to the numerical statistics we lag far behind Scandinavia (with 50% penetration) where much bigger margin of the population can afford the special equipment necessary for doing this recreational sport activity. Fishing tourism is quite significant, though it implies low spending willingness from its pursuers. In most cases, fishermen do not pay for lodging, they prefer sleeping under the sky. However, the local service providers can benefit from the fishermen since they have to buy the fishing fee and all the necessary accessories on the spot by the water.

The Hungarian water sport opportunities are excellent, offering great variety of recreational experiences for the sports fans. Built on our natural and thermal-water springs we have expanding number of water-edge facilities (Béki & Gál, 2013), with thermal spas and wellness-centres welcoming tourists looking for recreation and accretion. The previously also popular water-and bathing culture attracts more and more people towards active and passive water-related recreational activities.

The importance of bath-culture is significant among the sport-lovers, furthermore the special spa and wellness-services are getting more frequently visited, such as water gymnastics or water therapy swimming sessions. Aqua-fitness is spreading widely on beaches, and in water-front resorts. Usually, the sessions take place on music when an instructor presents the practice on the water-front area while the participants try to follow him/her in the water. Besides, traditional swimming sessions tend to gain more room and popularity among the tourists.

2. *Water hiking sports.* These sports are quite widely-spread because they do not really need any special pre-qualifications. Conquering the waterways can be achieved through various levels, from comfortable kayaking-canoeing water-trips to dragon boating or to shorter-longer motorboat outings.

The foundations of water-hiking in Hungary can be linked to count István Széchenyi, who established the first boat-house, the 'Csónakda' back in 1834. Within the framework of the early water associations (like Széchenyi and partners, Danube Boat Association, National Shipping Association, and Hunnia Rowing Association) the era of regular paddling and water hiking had begun. Some really popular and interesting water-trips meant to popularize this sport activity, such as the water journey made by count Ödön Széchenyi between Pest and Paris, which was repeated 110 years later in 1977 by sr. László Cseke on a motorboat. The amazing round the world sailing of Nándor Fa and József Gál, in 1985-1987 was a really outstanding Hungarian water-sport performance aboard their tiny sailboat Szent Júpát. István Kopár jr. also managed to circumnavigate the Earth many times. István Török made a stunning trip of 3,500km within only 110 days in 1989 on route of Budapest-La Manche Channel-England- Ireland. The International Danube Tour proves to be one of the oldest water-trips in Europe, which started a half century ago from Bratislava leading to Ingolstadt and Silistra for 2,080 km. The International River Tisza Tour started in 1966 departing from the Ukraine.

The popular and greater Hungarian water-trip routes are: Great Water-Circle, International Danube Tour, International Tisza Tour, Kőrös-rivers, Szigetköz, Moson-Duna branch, Danube Ráckeve-branch, Bodrog flood are, Rába river, which are outstanding water sites for leisure time passers.

The kayaking-canoeing leisure sport field assumes a pretty good position in terms of tourism, offering various opportunities for those seeking relaxation and sports on the whole territory of the country. In the new 2020 strategy of the Hungarian Kayak-canoeing Federation the development of the touristic direction is of outstanding importance. They consider it important and essential to broaden and to popularize this sport field among sport loving tourists. We can differentiate between two major water hiking types: star-trip and line-trip, which can be both performed with and without tour guides.

The star-trips leave from a base-camp to all directions and go back to the initial departure point, while the line-trips tend to follow the route to their final destination from the departure point. The third form of tour is the round-trip, which is not typical of this sport field.

Nowadays, the new progressive ways and forms of relaxing activities basically stem from this sport field; activities, such as sea-kayaking or dragon boating.

In Hungary is getting really popular the recently introduced dragon boating. Its positive feature is that many people can perform physical activity in the same time, it does not need any prerequisite skills or qualifications and it proves to be an excellent tool for team-building, too. The fact that even 20 people can row together in a 13m-long, almost 2t heavy boat has a great team-building effect. It has an open structure, its forward movement can be triggered by the united muscle-work of the crew. They sit and paddle together facing forward and using a one-spoon paddle. The rhythm is provided by the boat master leader using a drum, whistle or any other sound instrument.

Paddle boat-trip is one of the most popular outdoor water sport activities in Hungary, which can be spotted at almost all of our lakes. Business corporations provide all the necessary accessories and tools for paddling, renting is simple and generally available for everyone since it does not demand any special skills, permit or maintenance. Usually, there are 2-4-6- person paddle boats available for rent, were the paddle-spoons are given based on the number of clients.

Motor-boating, on the other hand is not generally available on all water surfaces in Hungary. Generally, waterways suitable for motorboats are some sections of our bigger rivers, naturally before leaving for an outing like this it is also advised to inquire about the local regulations in this matter. Sport activities such as water-skiing, water-banana etc. also need the use of motorboat, however these activities are not to be discussed in this chapter.

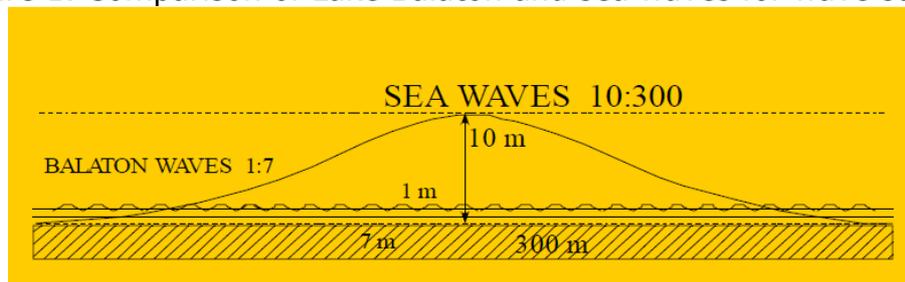
3. *Water adventure-sports.* Those sport fields belong to this category, which aim to challenge and conquer the forces of nature, and this way they also promote nature exploration. Rafting, wave-surfing, kite-surfing, windsurfing and sailing belong to this group of activities.

Rafting means wild-water paddling in 4 or more person-air raft, and it is supposed to be one of the safest form of wild-water paddling. Based on the number of passengers, we can differentiate among 4-6-8-10-person rafts, and 2-person air raft as well as solo wild-water kayak. In Hungary, paddling in a wild-water air raft is a commonly used term for rafting, though it may as well be referred to a separate sport. The sport field borrowed its name from a special military raft developed in the US. The speed of the boat is provided by the crew and also by the water current-velocity of the river. The harmonized paddling and a good steersman is a basic prerequisite for a successful rafting trip so as to avoid the unfortunate capsizing. Regarding the paddlers their roles differ depending on the type of the air raft. In the solo wild-water kayak the individual crew must rely on his/her skills only while in the case of the 2-4-person so-called trek-boat it is important to have an experienced paddler, who has already taken wild-water rafting tours and usually sits in the back of the boat guiding the other paddlers. In the air-raft pneu-boat, the professional steersman proves to be a very important and essential crewmember who sits in the middle of the boat and can steer and guide the other paddlers sitting on the two edges of the boat. Rafting is considered a quite safe water sport, one can attend it from the early age of 10 with basic swimming skills, and however its whimsicality should be definitely taken into consideration. Thus, according to these features the sport field has become pretty popular. However, it cannot be really performed in Hungary, but sometimes during great floods some river sections provide appropriate conditions for trying wild-water rafting skills, and in the neighbouring countries there are several great places for organizing wild-water rafting tours.

Strong wind generates waves. The waves hit the shores and break. The sportsman standing on board rides these waves. For wave-surfing there are numberless different types of boards, yet we can list them into two

major categories. One of them is the shortboard, the other proves to be the longboard. The first written record about wave-riding originates from 1777 in Polynesia, which is considered to be the cradle of this sport, and surfing meant to be organic part of the local culture even with a spiritual rite linked to it. The disseminating studies of wave-surfing were elaborated on Hawaii, though. The Kahanamoku-brothers and George Freeth pursued this sport in Hawaii and spread their knowledge and skills in California, from where it has conquered the whole world. By the 1970's wave-surfers spread all over the world. In Hungary you can obtain the basic skills on Lake Balaton or in some beaches with artificially generated waves you can also prepare for the ocean wave conditions.

Figure 1. Comparison of Lake Balaton and sea waves for wave surfing



Source: Bánhidi (2006)

The beginning of surfing is linked to the name of Jim Drake, who started it in 1967 in California. Drake as an airplane engineer fabricated the first applicable wave-surf board. Surfing has become really popular soon. Hawaii has become one of the central spots for surfers, where the idea of funboard emerged, as well, aiming to provide the enjoyable trend in surfing. In Hungary the first wave-board types became popular, then the funboard spread, as well that enables the rider to glide and fosters quick side-maneuvring, too. The triangle shaped sail attached to the boat also enables to harness the power of wind, and in Hungary it is really popular, on the bigger lakes you can spot them almost everywhere and you can also rent all the necessary accessories if you walk along the shores. In our country, particularly the natural lakes provide surfing opportunities, though the bigger artificial lakes also offer surfing options.

Blending the kite with wakeboard makes kitesurf. Characteristically it is based on surf, since it can change its position by wind, though paragliding is also an essential element of it, since manpower is also important when pulling it. The primary accessories of this sport branch include a parachute, a board, a trapeze and a neoprene gear. Its origin goes back to the 13th century China, where kites were utilized at festive ceremonies, then they realized that they could harness wind power, as well enabling them to push and tow canoes, boats fostering water transport. In 1826 George Pocock applied for a patent with his newly designed parachute sail developing its performance. They could use it for towing not only on water but also in the air or on ice, snow too. Great change took place in the history of the sport in 1986, when they patented the inflatable parachute launchable from water. It has been developed further along the recent

years, particularly concerning its gear, and the parachute also captured the sportsmen interest and sympathy with the cool outfit.

In our country, one of the central venues for this sport is the great water surface of Lake Balaton, since it is the most appropriate for pursuing this sport being easily accessible and large enough. We do not have to leave Hungary for witnessing really high quality and standard sailing, since several international sailing races are organized on the lake, annually. One of the most popular contest is the Blue Ribbon Race, starting from Balatonfüred aiming to circumnavigate the lake within the shortest time possible. The Hungaria Yacht Club announced their first Lake Balaton Blue Ribbon Contest in 1934. Itinerary was: Balatonfüred – Balatonkenese – Tihany – Keszthely – Balatonfüred range: 160km. From recreational point of view, sailing proves to be a really outstanding sporting activity, since it assumes physical activity yet it is not exhausting, either. Its great attraction implies the vicinity of water, wind, sunshine, the sense of freedom provided by staying aboard the boat, gliding, and sailing or just swinging, floating in the marina.

4. *Extreme water sports.* The extreme sports' pursuers tend to satisfy their adrenalin-hunger by the most dangerous, risky attempts available. According to *Pólusné-Thiry* (2013), these sports imply extreme speed, height, risk, hazard or spectacular sights and manoeuvres, tricks and the attractions in particular. These extreme sportsmen tend to test especially their own limits and borderline skills, namely they tend to push not their fellows' but their own limits forward and also to conquer their own fears manifesting their outstanding performance and uniqueness. Young people pursuing extreme sports may also encounter the 'flow' feeling (Jackson & Csíkszentmihályi, 1999), and experiencing it may offer transcendental, extraordinary sensation and experience close to the effects of drugs. During these risky dangerous kind of activities, the sportsmen tend to focus in the greatest possible way and time almost comes to a halt just like the exterior world evaporates for them. This kind of high level concentration and focus might lead to personal changes and very often correlate with the experience of spiritual harmony, which can be met quite rarely during the chaotic daily grind. The water sport versions of this kind of activities include the jet-ski, wakeboard, water-ski, flyboard and diving. The extreme sport trend is typically popular among youngsters since it requires great physical fitness and higher performance.

Historically, water-skiing became popular from 1922. Water-skiing is similar to the ski only it is performed on water with the help of a towing rope. Generally, a designated water area is available with a towing motorboat for this kind of water sport fans. In terms of equipment, one can glide on the water surface with two or one (mono ski) laces. Usually, there are 3 different pitches for water-skiers: slalom, jump and tricky skiing. It is meant to be the favourite form of water activity of extreme sports' tourists.

Wakeboard is another water sport branch inspired by surfing, having two major forms: with flying fox and with motorboat. Its equipment consists of a board, similar to snowboard or waveboard, slippers for the

feet of the sportsmen and a rope to grab for gliding on water. The wakeboard with rope or flying fox is the invention of German engineer from München, Bruno Rixen, who applied the rope of the ski-lifts from the winter ski resorts transplanting it onto water conditions. He launched his invention in 1962, by which several people could try water-skiing and wakeboarding simultaneously. First, the pitch was used for water-skiing only, because wakeboarding came into spotlight later, by a surfing boy. In 1980 Jimmy Redmon from Houston, USA tried water-skiing but something exciting was missing for him. Surf-board is not really suitable for towing, therefore he developed a towable surf-lace. The first version was not really tough and lasting, though it stirred the attention of many people so he developed the board further. Enthusiastically fond of his own idea he founded a company as well as a sport association and started organising competitions, the first ever in 1987. Later on he made other business ventures for producing wakeboard accessories. With the rising popularity of the sport branch the demand for accessories started to increase, too. In Hungary, there are many flying fox water pitches both on natural and artificial lakes.

Jet-ski is basically a water engine which has spread in Hungary ever since 1991. The device is a vehicle powered by a water-beam engine. The jet-ski complies with the strictest environmental regulations, no contaminating exhaust material is emitted into water due to its closed tank-system, and it uses unleaded gas or degradable plant-based biofuel. It is also an interesting fact that jet-ski has a beneficiary effect upon the biologic balance of water fauna, since it blows, ejects great amount of air under the water, this way increasing the oxygen distribution of lakes and rivers. Fishermen experience significant rise in catches after a jet-ski competition. Its recreational area includes lakes, river water surfaces, its major challenge being essentially the tricks and funny technical manoeuvres performed on water and not the length of the ride.

Flyboard is meant to be a water-beam-driven board. With the thrust from below the board, provided by the jet-ski linked to it, one can elevate above the water even up to 10m with the board attached to the foot and pushed up by the water-beam from underneath.

In diving we can differentiate between two branches with recreational aspects: diving with oxygen-tank (scuba-diving) and freediving without tank. Exploring the underwater world provides enormous unique experience. Breath-hold or freediving is the oldest diving technique in the world, which had been applied as food-gathering technique at the end of times, later it became a treasure-hunting tool then the military started utilized it for strategic purposes. Based on the recollected pearl relics from Mesopotamia dating back to 4,500 BC, they must have applied this technique for pearl-fishing. The ancient Greeks also used freedivers in the sea-battle between Athens-Syracuse. The Romans applied this technique as well in wars, even so the rudimentary version of snorkelling is linked to them, too. In Hungary this form of water sport activity is not typical and interesting, since our waters are not appropriate for freediving

experiences. Unlike, scuba diving, which tends to be very popular among cave-divers.

Among scuba-diving techniques we can talk about ruin-diving, cave-diving and deepwater-diving. We have resources about diving even from the ancient times 900 BC on stone reliefs figures. Aristotle wrote about this sport branch, however he referred to them as treasure-hunters. We also have written records about divers from 509, yet these were related to food-collecting and not sporting activities.

## Summary

We can categorize the water sport activities from many perspectives. The sports belonging to this group may vary and change with the technical changes and developments. As I can observe, the group of extreme less known water sports tend to imply sport activities which from the common people may demand extra great efforts and physical fitness or special coordinative skills. Notwithstanding, the new cutting-edge equipment tend to be quite costly and they are more difficult to procure. In other word, in case we would like to join a flyboard club, we have very limited chances in our country to try and pursue this very exciting sport branch. Rafting tour is controversially listed into the extreme sports category since its extremity depends on the difficulty level of the wild water concerned. Since in Hungary real wild waters are not typical, rafting can be listed rather into the adventure tourism category.

All in all, in Hungary I would emphasize the importance of fishing and water hiking, which hold outstanding positions in domestic active tourism among other water tourism activities. These activities tend to be the most popular, however both types belong to the low spending willingness sport category. Hungarian waterways provide excellent opportunities for pursuing water sports, though attracting foreign investments is still missing for the time being, nevertheless, the summer-time recreational water sports' effect and importance is outstanding in the domestic tourism portfolio.

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