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COMMUNITY BASED ECOTOURISM IN HUNGARY: CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS THE ROMA COMMUNITY

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Abstract: This study sort to establish the perceptions of the Hungarian citizens on the involvement of the Roma community in ecotourism. The study targeted domestic tourists through an online survey. A descriptive survey research design was adopted and sampled 247 domestic tourists who had visited tourist destinations in Somogy County and Baranya County in Hungary. Analysis of the quantitative data collected revealed that Hungarian citizens perceive the Roma people's culture and their natural environment as have the potential to facilitate ecotourism development in rural destinations in Hungary. Approaches to full integration of the Roma community in ecotourism development in rural parts of Hungary are recommended.

Key words: Community Based Tourism, Ecotourism, Economic Development, Hungary, Involvement of Roma

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism has existed for many decades but it is only recently that community-based tourism (CBT) as a form of tourism was identified as a niche market (Loverseed, 2007). CBT development is characterized as a form of locally situated development, using tourism to generate economic, social, and cultural benefits within a community (Johnson, 2002). Nepal (2004) refers to it as indigenous tourism, with any tourism product or service that is owned or operated by native peoples. A community in this case is understood to be 'a human group sharing a territory and involved in different but related aspects of livelihoods – such as managing natural resources, producing knowledge and culture, and developing technologies and practices,' Borrini (1992, cited in Borrini-Feyerabend et al., 2004).

CBT approach to tourism development has been touted as an important instrument for the realization of potential among marginal and deprived communities (Parwez, 2017). This is especially true for people isolated from the mainstream economy who gain social upliftment from such a development. Tolkach and King (2015) regard CBT "as a counterweight to neo-colonialism, neo-liberalism and conventional mass tourism", and many other authors hold almost the same view. Arguably, CBT emerged to counter the negative effects of mass tourism (Gadi Djou et al., 2017; López Guzmán et al., 2011). Johnson (2002) consider CBT as one component of a broad-based plan to improve rural economies in a way more compatible with the rural context.

Common among the existing literature on CBT emphasize on the need to involve members of local communities in all aspects of tourism development (Nagarjuna, 2015). As pointed out by Giampiccoli and Saayman (2016), alternative tourism, which includes CBT, could produce better results particularly for disadvantaged communities. For this reason, CBT has been pushed as one of the strategies for poverty alleviation enhanced sustainability in marginalized regions and communities (Juma and Khademi-Vidra, 2019). However, it is not a 'panacea' for development (Giampiccoli and Saayman, 2016. The adoption of ecotourism entrepreneurship in the CBT model has given rise to what is commonly referred to as community-based ecotourism (CBE). It is a special form of CBT where the principles of ecotourism are put in practice in implementing tourism development owned and operated by local community members.

In Europe rural tourism has been around, in one form or another, for at least a century (Kulcsár, 2009) and it is one of the main priorities of tourism development in many European countries (Swarbrooke; 1996). A number of studied of Slovak Roma communities have established that the Roma community of Central Europe is marginalized (Klimovský et al., 2016; Brunn et al., 2018). Various international organisations and institutions have recently noted widespread discrimination against the Roma people in the area of employment, education, health services, housing and loan practices. Evidently, many of their settlements lack formal infrastructure, poverty among the Roma is very high, and the state has been failing in the implementation of its official anti-poverty policies, to the extent that other stakeholders, especially local governments and NGOs, have become much more important in promoting their welfare (Klimovský et al., 2016).

In recognizing the potential of tourism in promoting livelihoods, CBT, particularly through ecotourism ventures, could be a promising approach to development of this marginalized communities. However, the inclusion of the Roma community in tourism matters appears to be limited. In Hungary, rural tourism could be particularly important, because the country lacks spectacular natural attractions, sea sides, high mountains or rainforest (Kantar and Svržnjak, 2018). The term "village tourism" is commonly used in Hungary referring to community-based tourism where food, lodging and services, present life in the countryside with active participation of visitors" (HNTO, 2005). In Somogy County

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of Hungary, within the Gypsys, the Boyash have a long tradition which is demonstrates the life of Gypsys: their clothing and equipment, old and modern habits, traditions and attitudes. Potentially, ecotourism could bring the Roma people closer to the mainstream society and make them better understood. At the same time, the rural tourism destinations within which they reside will be marketed (Matlovicova et al., 2016). To achieve this, the perception of community members on the tourism enterprise established in their locality is critical to the success of the ventures. Negative perceptions among local residents may hinder their support for tourism development, while positive perceptions will secure their support for CBEs (Lee et al., 2013; Nicholas et al., 2009). Thus, this study examines Hungarians' perceptions regarding the inclusion of Roma Community in ecotourism development based on the resource endowment and the benefits gained from CBE development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Rationale for CBT Development

The involvement of members of local communities in all aspects of tourism development is widely acknowledged (Nagarjuna, 2015; Gutierrez, 2019; Zielinski et al., 2020). Since CBT mostly targets marginalized and disadvantaged groups in the society (Tasci et al., 2013; Juma and Khademi-Vidra, 2019), this model of development, when applied in tourism addresses issues such as empowerment, self-reliance, social justice and sustainability (Giampiccoli, 2020). It is based on local community control, empowerment and benefits (Kaur et al., 2016). Ullan de La Rosa et al. (2017) recommend that CBT should be built upon the idea of collective ownership and management, redistribution of profits as well as ecological, social, and cultural preservation. From its promotion of all-inclusive participation and equity in planning, decision-making, management, ownership, and distribution of benefits and costs, it is a promising step towards achieving sustainable socio-economic and ecological development (Tasci et al., 2013).

Residents' Positive Perceptions on CBE

Ecotourism itself may bring immediate or gradual and important direct as well as indirect economic, social-cultural and environmental benefits to communities, especially to ecotourism staff. Snyman (2014) established that community members perceived ecotourism as reducing poverty by increasing real household incomes and opportunities in the long term and that ecotourism employment was perceived to reduce absolute poverty in rural areas, through steady, secure cash income provision in areas where there were few alternative income-earning opportunities. Similar perceived benefits enabled Vincent and Thompson (2002) to establish a strong support for the World Birding Centre ecotourism project in the US, with 79% of the local residents being on the affirmation.

Most studies reveal that local communities within tourism destinations are of the opinion that tourism helps them to diversify the livelihood sources of their families and enhance their wellbeing. Tourism is therefore regarded as a complementary activity, contributing to economic diversification (Iorio and Corsale, 2014; Coria and Calfucura, 2012). Local communities attest to being in a position to better pay their bills, more easily buy what they need, afford health care expenses and educate their children. In the Okavango region of Botswana, according to Mbaiwa and Stronza (2010) ecotourism has become the main livelihood activity of the members of these communities, replacing many traditional livelihood activities that damaged the environment. In some instances, however, only a very low effect on the generation of direct employment income has been confirmed (Vincent and Thompson, 2002; Kummitha, 2020).

Indirectly, communities benefit from ecotourism through the improvement of collective infrastructures and provision of local public goods (Juma and Khademi-Vidra, 2019). For example, income from ecotourism has been used to enhance water supply and provide housing to community households, as well as support for local sports activities and assistance for orphans and disabled people (Mbaiwa and Stronza, 2010). In terms of publicity, improvement in the infrastructure and opening to the outside world for ecotourism destinations such as Viscri, have made them relatively well-known villages, being cited in most tourist guidebooks (Iorio and Corsale, 2014; Kummitha, 2020). Researches have confirmed positive impacts of ecotourism on the revalorisation of local traditions and farming among the locals as well as a growing hope for a better future through provision of new inputs, options and aspirations, as well as optimism towards the future (Zapata et al,. 2011).

Ecotourism forges networks which directly tackle problems such as lack of education and business experience, insufficient financial assistance and low level of democratic participation (Iorio and Andrea Corsal, 2014). Such conditions generally prevent communities, especially marginal ones, from taking tourism initiatives. Furthermore, the networks provide the community with bridging and bonding relations within the community that facilitated the development process. Networking is further evident when local guesthouse owners informally exchange guests among the different accommodation according to availability. Tourism also forges positive linkages with agriculture whereby villages even sell their products to the guesthouses. Through ecotourism, education for children and training for adults are facilitated to enable achieving and enhancing essential skills (Juma and Khademi-Vidra, 2019). Training courses in tourism and in other fields are organised for community members, to the point of obtaining certification to start independent enterprises. One of the key factors in eliminating poverty is through education and training of tourism professionals (Pénzes et al., 2014). The professional training programmes' structure promote professional profile and has specific value for potential employers (Matlovič and Matlovičová, 2016). For CBTs the focus usually is more and more on the poorest members of the community (Szente et al., 2018). Further, CBT projects have impacted on the integration of women to new roles in the labour market with up to 45% of employees in CBT projects within Nicaragua being women. As a result, many women feel more empowered with more decision-making capacity. Communities view ecotourism as having a positive effect on land value; the value of ecotourism-controlled land is higher than that of land used for other activities like logging, ranching, or agriculture (Mbaiwa and Stronza, 2010). Financial and physical capital obtained from ecotourism also serves as a safety net in case of unfortunate events and unforeseen expenses (Lepper and Schroenn, 2010). Apart from serving as a financial revenue generation tool leading to gross revenue increase, for some communities, the CBT projects have succeeded to reduce some economic uncertainty by diversifying local livelihoods, through tourism as a complementary activity, and the diminution of the risks of economic dependence. CBTs allow for re-investment back to the community an example being 10% for UCA San Ramo´n and UCA Tierra y Agua in Nicaragua (Zapata et al., 2011).

Regarding the environment, ecotourism involves environmental education in protected areas and facilitates the process of raising awareness on nature conservation (Zapata et al., 2011; Ilieș et al., 2017). Other benefits relate to improvements in water and waste management and the production of alternative energies (Osiako and Kummitha, 2020). Awareness of the economic importance of the preservation of cultural and natural heritage are reported to have arisen in some ecotourism destinations as well (Iorio and Corsale, 2014).

Residents' Negative perceptions on CBE

Local communities in ecotourism destinations have commonly associated the projects with seasonal employment (Iorio and Corsale, 2014). Economic leakages have also been reported in the community based tourism chain, with a perception that a proportion of tourism products that are consumed are purchased outside the community (Zapata et al., 2011). Concerning the opinion amongst respondents whether the larger community benefits from tourism or not, there is an indigenous perception that their relationship with tourism operators is

exploitive (Borman, 2008; Fay, 2007). For instance, it has been argued by Lapeyre (2010) that tour operators, both inbound and outbound, control most tourist flows within Namibia. Consequently, the revenue accrued by the communities largely depends on the extent to which they build commercial links with tour operators and travel agents. According to Coria and Calfucura (2012), ecotourism has added to the problem of resource conflicts as tourism operators and indigenous populations compete for resource access in the destinations. Another shortcoming of ecotourism for communities is that in early formative stages of projects, local leader and the external stakeholders heavily control local people (Iorio and Corsale, 2014). Local people opine that they are denied the chance to identify the priorities in the development process. Another perception is that ecotourism benefits are usually confined to elites in the community who earn the rights to run shops or develop tourism activities in the most profitable locations (Lapeyre, 2010). Hence, a very small proportion of population ends up benefiting. This uneven distribution of economic benefits can partly be attributed to significant inequality between indigenous communities and stakeholders outside the ecotourism areas (Coria and Calfucura, 2012).There is also an emergence of incipient conflicts between the tourism project and the larger community as a result of acculturation processes and noises from undesired visitors (Zapata et al., 2011). This comes with the perception that the tourism projects alter the family order which generate conflicts (Zapata et al., 2011). This include women doing double the amount of work due to the lack of male participation in home work, and gender violence, and parents generally spending less time with family and children.

Roma Community Tourism Initiatives in Europe

In almost all social and public activities, and life conditions, the Roma people are to a large extent described as marginalized and that the population has worse than average life conditions of the majority of European population (Kantar and Svržnjak, 2018). This situation has been attributed to poor education, exclusion from formal forms of work, specific life style and other community-specific characteristics. Some efforts have been made to develop economic activities that could create new ways of including the Roma population into community by affirmation of their culture and identity through rural tourism and ecotourism. Across Europe, a few tourism programmes have been initiated in the Roma regions, for example the region of Orfű near Pécs, which has an excellent European destination title because of its gastronomy offers to tourists (Kantar and Svržnjak, 2018). Another notable place is the Ladybird Farm established in 2002 and has since been welcoming guests, but with no significant inclusion of Roma community. More successful models of inclusion of this community to economic life through gastronomy are found in Hungary, Slovenia and Croatia. An example of Roma-based programme is Project ECOTOP 2 *"Life-long learning programmes for increased growth capacity in ecotourism*". The implementation of this initiative is within INTERREG V-A cross-border cooperation programme Hungary - Croatia 2014-2020 with Križevci College of Agriculture working alongside other project partners. Previous evaluation results of this programme indicated that ecotourism is a special form of tourism in this cross-border area. However, there was evidence that it is not sufficiently developed and could not to a full extent satisfy the needs of ecotourists. Accommodation and other basic services which would correlate with worldwide accepted criteria imposed by ecotourism were to a large extent missing (Szente et al., 2018).

In Croatia there are currently two notable examples of inclusion of Roma people in the rural tourism. First is the Roma ethno house in the village Maglenča in Bjelovar-Bilogora County, and the second is the manifestations of Gypsy Ball and Market of bar musicians in the village Karanac in Osijek-Baranja County. The Roma ethno house of the autochthonous Croatian Roma group Lovar is located in the village of Maglenča. It is a tourism-culture object which simultaneously offers attractive and authentic service of presenting the unknown Roma history, tradition, language and customs as an integral part of the rich Croatian heritage, along with numerous products that Roma group Lovar used to be famous for. Being the first Roma house in Croatia, and also in Europe, visitors have the opportunity to see the permanent exhibition about the history of the autochthonous Croatian Roma groups Lovar and lavender products produced by the members of Roma association. Then we have the Gypsy Ball which takes place in Darda in Baranja. The event has a slightly over 15 years long tradition, attracting mainly the Roma people from other regions and countries, as well as numerous other guests that want to experience special Gypsy nights. The Market of Bar Musicians, a huge music-gastronomy event where one can listen to the best Roma and *tamburitza* bands from Croatia, Hungary and Serbia also exists (Kantar and Svržnjak, 2018). The possibility of including the Roma population in ecotourism or some other economic activity is generally very limited (Szente et al., 2018) because of some underlying operationalisation problems of their inclusion. One of these has been cited as the government's weak support towards their inclusion. In Slovakia for example, one of the most sensitive issues linked to the Roma problem is poverty in the Roma settlements, and searching for sufficient solutions that could lead to the improvement of the current state (Klimovský et al., 2016). In Hungary, this was evident when the Touristic Destination Management in Somogy County seemed not to have "any information at all about what this social group could offer or could be capable of contributing to tourism" (Kantar and Svržnjak, 2018). In view of aforementioned perceived benefits associated with ecotourism, it is thus prudent to have a study carried about to establish the perceptions of Hungarians on inclusion of Roma people in ecotourism initiatives in Hungary.

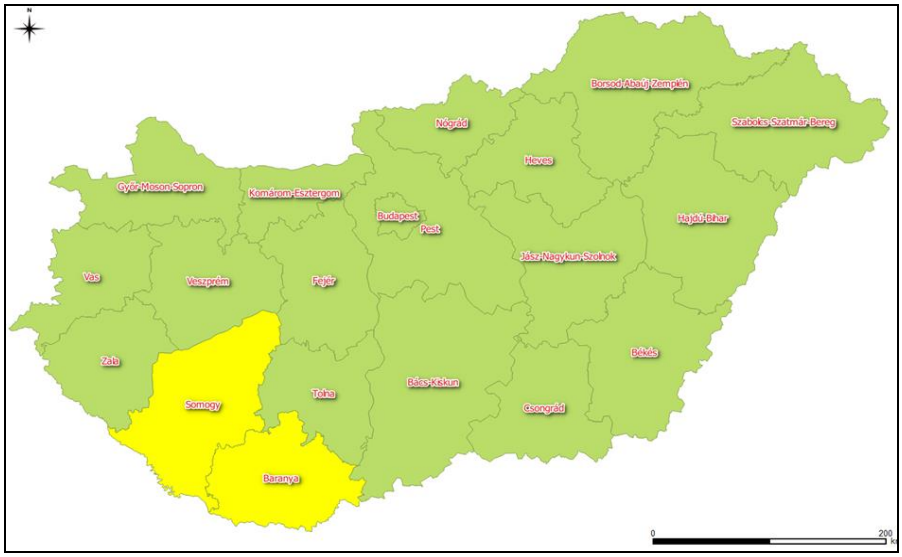

Figure 1. The map of Hungary showing the study areas, highlighted with yellow (Source: Barna, 2020)

METHODOLOGY

Study Area

Data for this research was collected through a questionnaire distributed online among tourists visiting Somogy and Baranya Counties in Hungary (Figure 1). These destinations were chosen for particular reason. Firstly, Somogy County and Baranya County host the highest density of Roma population (Somogy hosting 28,900 Romas which represent 5.1% of the country's Roma population, and Baranya Country with 29,600 Romas which is 5.2 % of the country's Roma population (Csapó, 2019). Secondly these two counties have rich zoological natural points, national parks, national protected areas, native flora and fauna and highest natural landscapes in the country (Molnár and Horváth, 2008; Kerekes and Kiss, 2000). Lastly these two targeted counties have got eco-oriented

destinations, and tourists who visit these destinations are expected to be aware of ecotourism service and products. Additionally, Gyűrűfű Eco-village in Baranya County is known as the First Eco-village in Hungary and was found more than 20 years ago while Krishna Valley in Somogy County, is widely known as a cultural centre and eco-farm in Hungary. It is also a member of the Global Eco-village Network in Europe. For these reasons we selected these two cross-border counties, which provided appropriate study areas for data collection in understanding the Hungarian citizenry's perception about the involvement of the Roma population in ecotourism.

Study design, sampling and data collection

This research sought to answer the following research question: What are the Hungarian citizenry's perceptions and awareness about ecotourism products or services offered by the Roma community for the wider population in the country? To answer this question, this study used a quantitative research design by survey method to collect primary data from the two purposefully chosen eco-oriented destinations (counties) in Hungary. The survey questionnaire was designed into 3 sections: the first section dealt with demographic characteristics of the respondents. The second section dealt with Hungarian citizenry's perceptions on Roma culture and traditions. The scale was developed based on the finding of (Gosling et al., 2017; Snyman, 2017). The final section dealt with Hungarian citizenry's perception on activities or services that the Roma community have the potential to offer to eco-tourists. This scale was developed based on the finding of Syraji et al. (2017) and Fan et al. (2015). Data were collected online between the months of May and June 2018. A total of 306 domestic tourists filled the semi-structured questionnaire, consisting of open and closed ended questions. Out of these 247 questionnaires were complete and mistake free. The reply was voluntary and anonymous. Closed ended questions had 5 point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = "not at all agree", to 5 = strongly agree.

RESULTS

To fulfil the objectives and answer the research questions for this study, data was collected, edited and coded, and then analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25 for descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Mean, standard deviation and ranking revealed the relationship between Roma community's involvement in ecotourism and the Hungarian citizenry's perceptions.

Demographic Characteristics

Responses indicated that there were more males (54.3%) than females (45.7%). It follows that since time of the survey was summer period, more male visitors visited these two destinations along with their family members. The youngest respondent who filled the questionnaire was 18 years old and the oldest was 75 years old. Overall 82% of the respondents where age of group between 18-50 years and the remaining 18% of the respondents were above 50 years. As pertains to literacy levels, 16.5% had primary and secondary school education, 12.3% were certificate courses graduates from secondary school, 52.6% had university Bachelor's degree, and the rest, 18.6%, had attained Masters and higher education. Furthermore 44.9% of the respondents were Somogy County residents, 40.1% were from Baranya County, and the rest, and 15.0% came from other part of Hungary. When asked about their occupation, 65.1 % of the respondents said they were entrepreneurs/ employed, 32.38% were students/pensioner/young mothers, and the remaining 2.42% respondents were unemployed/job seekers.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the Respondents (N=247) (Data source: Researchers' data analysis)

Items		Frequency	Percentage
Gender of the respondents	Male	134	54.3.
	Female	113	45.7
Age of the respondents	18-25	71	28.7
	26-35	71	28.7
	36-50	61	24.6
	50 and above	44	18.0
Highest Educational Level	Basic School or Normal High school education	41	16.5
	Certificate courses from secondary schools	30	12.3
	College or university Degree	130	52.6
	Master and above	46	18.6
Respondents' county of origin	Somogy county	111	44.9
	Baranya county	99	40.1
	Other county	37	15.0
Occupation of the respondents	Entrepreneur/ Employee	161	65.1
	Students, Pensioner	80	32.38
	Jobseeker, Unemployed	6	2.42

Visitor's Preferred ecotourism products offered by Roma destinations

Findings in Table 2 show that village and forest walks offered by Roma community were ranked highest with 81.0% of respondents interested to experience this service from Roma community. Buying locally manufactured products ranked second with 71.4% of respondents interested to buy local products from these community. Experiencing the Roma tradition and cultural events ranked third with 46.4% of respondents interested in attending Roma traditional and cultural events. Experiencing of home stays at the destination ranked fourth with 45.2% of respondents interested in experiencing home stay programs, and lastly hand-made souvenirs had the least interest with 42.9%. All these are tourism products and service with economic potential that could benefit the region (Hornoiu et al., 2019; Stone and Wall, 2004; Stronza and Gordillo, 2008; Stem et al., 2003).

Table 2. Visitors' preferred ecotourism products or service experiences in Roma community (N=84) (Data source: Researchers' data analysis)

Statements	Frequency	%
Experienced home stay programs at the destination	38	45.2
Experienced Roma tradition and cultural events	39	46.4
Bought locally manufactured farm products -honey, jam, cheese, cooking oil	60	71.4
Participated in village and forest walks offered by Roma the community	68	81.0
Hand-made souvenirs	36	42.9

Visitors' Knowledge about Tour Operators and Roma Community Events

Concerning citizens' familiarity with tour operators who offer tour packages to the Roma destinations or organize tours to Roma events, only 21 (8.0%) of the respondents were aware of such tour operators in Hungary. To clearly understand their awareness, the respondents were asked to name some of the organizations. In response, Színes Gyöngyök Association in Pécs, the Romano Restaurant and Pizzeria in Zalaegerszeg and the Kíra organization in Gyula, were mentionedThey also mentioned some music bands, such as Dobogó, Khetanipe Ladybird Farm, and various NGOs organizations as common attractions/destinations. On the questionnaire items was the question on whether the respondents had knowledge of, and had participated in events or tours organized by Roma communities. Few of the respondents were aware of Roma wedding (34.6%) and the Roma Cultural Day (38.6%). It was also interesting that most of the respondents were aware of the World Roma Day (89.8%), although only 37.8% of them were familiar with the Roma Ball Days (Figure 2).

Ecotourism Opportunities for Roma Community Economic Development

This study went further to establish the Hungarian citizenry's perception on Roma cultural and traditional aspects as an ecotourism

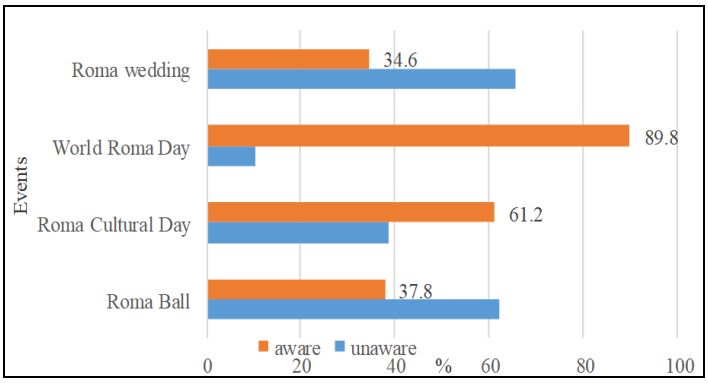

Figure 2. Knowledge of and participation on events or tours organized by Roma communities (N=247) (Source: Researchers' data analysis)

investment. A five point Likert scale (1= Strongly disagree 2= disagree 3= Neutral 4= Agree 5= strongly agree) was used to evaluate this among a total of 247 respondents by descriptive statistics (Mean, standard deviation and Rank). The responses were as follows: Interest in Roma community traditional dancing and music events $\bar{x}$ =4.32; SD=.972, interest in traditional products and cuisines $\bar{x}$ =3.75; SD=1.236, recommendation of Roma community as a potential resources for ecotourism development $\bar{x}$ =3.52; SD=1.330, Roma community cultural value being rich enough to attract tourists to their locations $\bar{x}$ =3.52; SD=1.163, and the need to encourage the Roma community to invest their talent and cultural products in tourism $\bar{x}$ =2.92; SD=1.258. Concerning the interest in buying Roma community traditional products $\bar{x}$ =2.77; SD=1.280, interest in Roma Community lifestyle and costumes $\bar{x}$=2.66; SD=1.302, being happy to attend events organized by the Roma or to buy services provided by Roma $\bar{x}$ =2.64; SD=1.269, having knowledge of Roma cultures and traditions being unique and close to natural environment $\bar{x}$ =2.62; SD=1.168, and lastly, opinion that the EU, Local Government and NGOs support for Roma community's inclusion into ecotourism projects is viable $\bar{x}$ = 2.46; SD=1.159. These results indicate that respondents had varied opinions on these aspects.

Table 3. Hungarian Citizens' perception on Roma culture and traditions (Data source: Researchers' data analysis)

Statements	Mean	SD	Rank
I know Roma cultures and traditions are unique and close to environment	2.62	1.168	9
Roma have traditional products and cuisines which attract tourists	3.75	1.236	2
I encourage Roma community to invest their talent and products in tourism	2.92	1.258	5
I am interested in Roma community dancing and music events	4.32	.972	1
I am interested in Roma community lifestyle and costumes	2.66	1.302	7
I am interested to buy Roma community traditional products	2.77	1.280	6
Roma community has potential resources for ecotourism development	3.52	1.330	3
I see viability in EU, Local Governments and NGOs support for Roma ecotourism projects	2.46	1.159	10
Roma community cultural value is rich enough to attract tourists to their locations	3.52	1.163	4
I would be happy to attend events organized by the Roma or to pay for services provided by Roma people	2.64	1.269	8

Respondents' Recommendations on Roma Community Ecotourism Product Development

Apart from cultural and traditional aspects presented above, the research further established Hungarian citizenry's recommendation on Roma community product development from ecotourism resources. Using a five point Likert scale, the respondents indicated their views about activities or services that the Roma community could develop to offer to ecotourists. The study results in Table 4 shows respondents' opinions ranked in the order of priority as follows: The highest ranking was the statement, recommending priority for Roma Community ecotourism products or services which are helpful for better economic conditions $\bar{x}$ =3.67; SD=1.165. This was followed by a recommendation for Roma traditional Foods and beverages $\bar{x}$ =3.63; SD=1.290, the recommendation for Roma traditional and Music performance events $\bar{x}$ =3.60; SD=1.320, and recommendation to display Roma traditional costumes $\bar{x}$ = 3.51; SD= 1.254. Below this was a recommendation to organize forest, national parks trips to see wildlife flora and fauna $\bar{x}$ = 3.38; SD=1.215, to organize forest walks and pick wild products $\bar{x}$ =3.16; SD=1.318, for Roma community to build eco-oriented guest houses for tourists $\bar{x}$ =3.11; SD=1.186, and a recommendation for products that give proper environmental awareness programs to the Roma community $\bar{x}$ =2.98; SD=1.239. Lastly, a recommendation to develop Roma community traditional souvenirs $\bar{x}$ =2.77; SD=1.273. Once again respondents had different opinions on recommending Roma community resource exploitation for ecotourism.

Table 4. Recommendations on activities or services to be offered by the Roma community to eco-tourists (N=247) (Data source: Researchers' data analysis)

Statements	Mean	SD	Rank
I would recommend traditional Events, Music performers events (e.g. Gypsy Ball, Lugosi Orchestra, *Romano Drom*, and Caramel)	3.60	1.320	3
I would recommend Roma Traditional Roma Foods and beverages	3.63	1.290	2
I would recommend to display of Roma traditional costumes	3.51	1.254	4
I recommend Roma Community ecotourism resources which are helpful for better economic conditions	3.67	1.165	1
Organizing forest walks and pick products such as (walnuts, wild garlic elderberries)	3.16	1.318	6
I would recommend to organize forest, National parks trips to see wildlife flora and fauna	3.38	1.215	5
I would recommend to Roma community build ecofriendly Guest houses for tourists	3.11	1.186	7
I would recommend given proper environmental awareness programs to Roma community	2.98	1.239	8
Roma community traditional souvenirs (wicker basket, other carvings)	2.77	1.273	9

DISCUSSION

More male tourists visiting the destinations than female tourists (Table 1) could indicate that male respondents are more inclined to visit ecotourism destinations in Hungarian Roma destinations than females. This is consistent with the findings of much of previous research which suggest that male are likely to be more eco-oriented than females (Funnell, 2008). As pertains age, an overwhelming majority of the visitors, (total 57%) were of the age bracket 18-25 years. This points to the probability of majority of potential ecotourists to this destinations being youth, and not middle-aged or senior citizens. The findings also support the existing theory that ecotourists are likely to be "well educated" people in the society (Funnell, 2008). This is from the fact that we had a total of 52.6% having attained college and university education. A further 18% held a master degree or higher qualifications. Comparatively, 29% had secondary education as the highest academic qualifications. With respect to the visitors' County of origin, majority (45%) hailed from Somogy County and 40% from the neighbouring Baranya County, with a paltry 15% having travelled from the rest of the 17 Counties in Hungary. This shows that ecotourism activities in these destinations are highly popular only locally. It points to a need to aggressively market these destinations beyond the

neighbourhood. Concerted effort and promotional strategies should be aimed at publicizing these destinations to Counties with higher and more affluent populations including Pest County where the Capital city Budapest is, among other Counties in Hungary. Apparently, these destinations attracted more people (65%) with stable sources of income (entrepreneur/employee). This is consistent with typical ecotourists who are typified as having a stable, higher than average income (Dolnicar et al., 2013). Pensioners/students (32%) and job seekers/unemployed (2.5%) accounted for the remaining proportion of visitors. The popularity of ecotourism products in these destinations appeared to vary greatly (Table 2). However, there was no product whose popularity was too low to be regarded. "Hand-made souvenir" was the least popular product with 36% while the most popular product was "village and forest walks" with 81% popularity followed by "locally manufactured farm products" with 60%. Therefore to sustain the diversity, marketability and competitiveness of these destinations, the managers could do well to maintain all these products on their menus while enhancing the popularity of the less popular ones. Concerning the most preferred cultural and traditional experiences, dancing, music, and cuisine appeared to have the highest potential, according to the survey results (Table 3). It therefore suggests that if these destinations are to consider increasing the range of their ecotourism products, it would be worth prioritizing the exploitation of music and cuisine. This is further consistent with the respondents' recommendations (Table 4) where they recommended "ecotourism resources which are helpful for better economic conditions". Once more in this analysis, Roma traditional foods and beverages, and traditional music performance events are recommended by majority of respondents for inclusion into the designed products. Another interesting observation was the fact that only 37.8% of respondents were familiar with the Roma Ball Days, a few still, were aware of Roma wedding (34.6%) and the Roma Cultural Day (38.6%), while most of them were aware of the World Roma Day at 89.8% (Figure 2). These further emphasizes the need for making the other Roma Days as popular as the World Roma Day through aggressive promotion and awareness creation across Hungary. These destinations could perform exceedingly better if all these historic Days are widely recognized, acknowledged and celebrated to the point of attracting tourists to Roma community destinations.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aimed at assessing the perception of the Hungarian citizenry towards the involvement of the Roma community living in Hungary, in ecotourism as an economic development strategy. Based on the results of this survey, the primary target groups of consumers and tourists could be the following: predominantly people of male gender, those with higher education, those with stable occupation with average incomes, and more likely adventurous travelers. The Roma people's culture, traditional foods and lifestyle could offer a good opportunity to improve their life through ecotourism. Overly, there was favorable perception towards the Roma culture and traditional values, attracting more tourists to Roma destinations. This study revealed that local government authorities and tour operators take little or no responsibility for organizing events or offering tour packages to the Roma destinations. They need to give awareness programs to citizenry, adequate knowledge about the Roma people's life style, their traditional and cultural products that could be integrated into ecotourism.

Cognizant of the fact that one of the key factors in eliminating poverty is through education (Pásztor et al., 2012; Pénzes et al., 2014), education and training of Roma people to serve as tourism professionals could go a long way in enhancing the sustainability of CBT enterprises established (Ilies et al., 2017). Some of the respondents identified the importance of involving the target group, essentially the Roma youth in ecotourism. To this end, initiatives such as the 'Színes Gyöngyök' Association or the work of the folk artist József Kakas can be good examples for the youth, which are worth supporting. To this end, there is need for both the Hungarian Government, tourism stakeholders and the Roma community members to prioritize these issues, as has earlier been proposed by Kulcsár (Szente et al., 2018).

From the analysis, it emerges that there should be more ecotourism development among the Roma communities in Hungarian rural regions for enhanced economic benefits. Since ecotourism has the potential of delivering development (Kummitha and Osiako, 2020), it should be developed within rural Roma community regions by and for local community members who could invest in the development of diverse and unique facilities, activities, and events. This is achievable through inclusivity in engagements and support using appropriate strategies and approaches. These developments are envisaged create jobs for improving livelihoods, to improve local transportation infrastructure and ecotourism attractions, having a management system that is orderly and in harmony with standard ecotourism and hospitality experiences. By involving the Roma community in village and homestay tourism, cultural tourism events, natural site visits, and agri-tourism can widely deliver sustainable development in rural and marginalized regions of Hungary. Probably it is for these reasons that the Hungarian citizenry strongly perceived ecotourism as a potential tool for economic development of the Roma community living in Hungary.

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