

# INVESTIGATION INTO RESPONSIBLE TOURISM TOURS IN BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

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## ABSTRACT

The travel and tourism industry is highly competitive and tour operators are under increasing pressure to differentiate their products. One such product, responsible tourism, is considered as a niche market opportunity for competitive advantage. It became obvious that responsible tourism helps tour operators to reduce the negative impact of mass tourism and increases the positive impacts on economic, social and environment. This research aims to understand the theory of sustainable and responsible tourism. We based our work on qualitative and quantitative methodologies. These include the analysis of primary documents and in-depth interviews with the visitors towards the tourists' perceptions of responsible tourism packages and their demand. The survey was designed and developed according to the aims of the research. Responsible tourism should be promoted whether more tourists than ever before are interested in the responsible tourism package or not. It is important to investigate sustainable tourism practices by the travel industry in Budapest, Hungary. In fact, the key problem identified by the research was that there was a lack of responsible tourism tours in Budapest. This finding leads us to give the advice to tour operators to improve the quality of responsible tourism. Therefore, tour operators and travel agencies should create different responsible tourism tours for different tourist segments. Tourism programmes should help visitors take action and get a meaningful experience.

*Keywords: sustainable tourism, responsible tourism, responsible tourism tours, corporate social responsibility, Budapest, Hungary.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The international community has become aware of the negative effects produced by mass tourism since the 1980s. These impacts fall mainly under three headings (economic, socio-cultural and environmental). Therefore, the concept of sustainable development in tourism has started to introduce and have been considered alternative to mass tourism. Sustainable tourism development emphasizes the need to preserve the traditions and the socio-cultural identity of the local community [1], to protect the environment, to generate revenue and labour for host destinations [2], [3], and finally to involve the local community in decision-making process of the tourism industry [2].

Moreover, the concept of responsible tourism started to emerge at the same time of the promotion of sustainable tourism. "Responsible tourism has to do with an everyday lifestyle that promotes cultural and biological diversity, and promotes environmental and natural resources conservation, at home and while traveling" [4]. According to Harold Goodwin, director of the International Centre for Responsible Tourism at the Leeds Metropolitan University, "Responsible tourism is about making better places for people to live and better place for people to visit" [5].

Hungary tourism, lacks responsible tourism practices. Therefore, we did this research to investigate "Responsible tourism tour" in Budapest. This research implemented a survey to assess the tourist's awareness of responsible tourism and their demand. As a result, we suggested solutions for tour operators and travel agency to improve the quality of tour packages. The case study itself not only is interesting for the practice of responsible tourism but also presents an opportunity to critically evaluate the conceptual and practical contribution that the concept of 'responsible tourism' might make in tourism studies.



## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Sustainable tourism

According to the UNWTO (United Nation's World Tourism Organisation) [6], sustainable tourism development can be defined as the tourism that "meets the needs of the present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing the opportunity for the future. Besides that, it was the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development which defining sustainable development as "Development that meets the need of present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" [5]. Sustainable tourism may be regarded most basically as the application of the sustainable development idea to the tourism sector. Sustainable tourism involves the minimization of negative impacts and the maximization of positive impacts. In order to promote sustainable tourism, there were lots of organizations have been established since 1992. The United Nations was the primary example of the formal recognition of sustainable tourism within global multilateral organizations. The seventh session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development in 1999 was largely focused on the issue of sustainable tourism. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is a major international organization focused on fostering free markets and democratic governance. Through its Tourism Committee, The OECD aims to adjust their policies and actions to support sustainable growth in tourism. At a regional level, European multilateral institutions have been especially proactive informally promoting sustainable tourism since the Rio Earth Summit. The European Commission has identified sustainable tourism as one of five priority areas in the Fifth Community Programme for Environment and Sustainable Development [7].

### 2.2 Responsible tourism

The concept of responsible tourism started to emerge at the same time of the promotion of sustainable tourism development. It is not an easy task to understanding the meaning of responsible tourism. According to the Responsible Travel Handbook [4], "responsible tourism goes beyond fancy packaging and eco-certification. It also goes far beyond simplistic internal hotel policies of washing sheets and towels, or accommodations simply being located in a natural jungle or forest areas. Responsible tourism has to do with an everyday lifestyle that promotes cultural and biological diversity and promotes environmental and natural conservation, at home and while traveling" [4]. It means that tourist should take a responsible behaviour not only during the trip but also when they buy and consume everyday products or services.

According to Clifton and Benson [8], responsible tourism concept has changed from being defined as a form of tourism characterising developing countries or destinations at the early stage of the life cycle. It has a new way to conceive holidays, a sort of new lifestyle [9] pushing a growing number of people [10] to make their travel choices according to values like consciousness, sobriety [11], responsible consumption and respect for the cultural, social, environmental and economic context of the local community.

European Charter for Sustainable and Responsible Tourism [12] had a new contribution to responsible tourism definition which was a document developed by the European Union. The document aimed at presenting a common reference point for all stakeholders in tourism and defining nine supplements (basic) principles that encourage the development and implementation of responsible policies and behaviour. It is not only responsible for decisions, actions and policies but also involved in the planning, management, delivery and



consumption of tourism. The charter specifies that responsible tourism makes possible a sustainable development of tourism.

### 2.3 Forms of tourism related to responsible tourism

The proliferation of many correlated concepts in the public domain-sustainable tourism, ecotourism, fair-trade tourism, rural tourism, community-based tourism, pro-poor tourism, etc. – which are often defined as similar to responsible tourism [4].

According to the International Ecotourism Society (TIES) [13], ecotourism identifies “responsible travels to natural areas that conserve the environment and improve the well-being of local people”. TIES’ definition seems to consider ecotourism as a form of responsible tourism.

The definition of ecotourism which argues that it should meet three criteria:

- it provides for environmental conservation;
- it includes meaningful community participation;
- it is profitable and can sustain itself.

The three contributions represent the best-known definitions of ecotourism. It shares the same principles which are focused on the environment; cultural preservation and on the profitability of the local community.

Fair-trade is another form of tourism that is related to responsible tourism. It aimed at helping producers to make better trading conditions and promote sustainability. Fair-trade tourism brings fair trade values into travel. “This means working with the travel industry to make things fairer for people living in what are traditionally known as “destinations”. Fair-trade tourism is guiding the way toward sharing benefits more equitably between travelers, the tourism industry, governments of the countries visited, and most importantly, the host-country nationals” [4].

Education tourism overlaps with urban alternative tourism to the extent that most of the post-secondary institutions that host international and domestic student tourists are located in urban centers. However, it is distinct from another form of alternative tourism in that few students who meet the WTO [14] definition of an “educational tourist” identify themselves as tourists. Similarly, the business and organizations that have been spawned by international education are only tangentially associated with the larger tourism industry. Patterns of motivation (education, learning), travel arrangements (FIT), interactions with local residents, spatial distribution and consumption of locally produced goods and services, nevertheless, all serve to suitable education tourism within alternative tourism.

Wearing [15] reports “Volunteer tourism encompasses a diverse array of experience and settings that involve tourists who receive no financial compensation while undertaking various forms of, usually, organized social and/or environmental work in the destination”. It is explicitly associated with enhancement sustainability, notable not just from the destination perspective, but also in terms of the personal development of the participating tourist. Another distinctive characteristic is the extent to which volunteer tourism is associated with environmental, religious and social non-profit NGOs (non-governmental organizations) based in major origin regions.

### 2.4 Comparing definitions (sustainable tourism vs. responsible tourism)

Differentiating the concept of sustainable tourism from responsible tourism is not an easy task. There were a high number of definitions were given with similar and ambiguous



meanings. Sustainable has a broader meaning because it refers to the planning of development policy and management strategy for destination respecting and interests of all stakeholders.

Responsible tourism would mean the adoption by tourists of a travel behaviour that push them to respect the places they visit and the people they meet during the holiday and to promote the well-being of the host community. In other words, responsible tourism is a broad concept that includes different conscious and respectful ways of traveling, which bring people to take responsibility for their actions. Sustainable tourism represents the natural reply that tourist operators give in order to fulfill the needs and wishes of responsible tourists.

### 3 METHOD

According to the literature on mixed methods research, for the purpose of our study, a double-stage methodology in which qualitative research acts as preparation for a quantitative study was adopted. The qualitative and quantitative research was carried out. Based on the findings from the qualitative phase and an extensive literature review a questionnaire was designed to be used in the quantitative phase of the study [10], [16], [17]. This study is based on a survey of individuals who visited Budapest (Hungary). Especially, the qualitative study, the message explained the purpose of the research and asked individuals to provide a detailed description of their best experiences as responsible tourists. After this introductory grand tour question, we asked them to write about their motivations and how are they satisfied with the package tour in Budapest. In total, 200 descriptions were collected in three weeks. We choose random sampling method to collect our questionnaire because they are convenient.

### 4 RESULTS

The survey on assessment of responsible tourism tour in Budapest involves a necessity of defining particular actions within the responsible behaviour of tourist and the travel company. In this survey, we have focused on the awareness of visitors of responsible tourism, their behaviour and their demand. Moreover, we can assess the quality of the tour package from the visitor's point of view.

The simple random selection method was used in the survey. There was exactly the same probability of selecting each visitor participated in the Responsible Tourism Tour. The sample has been divided according to the following criteria: nationality, age, gender, career, and education. 200 correctly completed questionnaires were received. There were 200 questionnaires collected in 2017.

Most of the visitors come from European countries. Characteristics of respondents by gender indicates the dominant participation of women in the survey (53%). In contrast, men constituted a slightly smaller group (47%). People aged 31–50 years old were the largest group among the surveyed sample (38%), followed by 18–30 years old (26%), 51–65 years (19%), under 18 years (9%) and more than 65 years (8%). 58% of the visitors have a bachelor's degree, 19% of tourists have graduated from high school, 12% respondents have higher education.

The fact that 35% of visitors haven't heard about responsible tourism while there was 45% of them met up with this concept but do not know what exactly it is. It was only 20% of visitors understood the concept of responsible tourism. These results indicate a low awareness of visitors about the concept of responsible tourism.

Table 1 shows that percentages of visitor participate in responsible activities. It is clear that the largest proportion of visitor agrees to take part in responsible tourism activities. When they choose the responsible tourism tour, they will visit the Hungarian Market and explore the local culture from their gastronomy. Moreover, tourists visited some famous place to



Table 1: Activities related to responsible tourism undertaken by tourists (%). (Source: Calculations on the basis of the survey, 2017.)

Criteria	Scale				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Visitor respects the local culture	1	4	25	47	23
Visitor participates in protecting environment	12	18	33	20	17
Visitor purchases local goods or services	6	22	35	23	14
Responsible tourism should be promoted	0	3	15	59	23
The awareness of responsible tourism of visitors after participating in the tour	4	14	28	33	21

know more about Hungarian history. The tour guide will help them to understand the local culture. There was 47% of visitors agree and 23% of them strong agree to respects the local culture. They did not only visit landscape but they also purchased local goods or services in order to help the local community maintains the local handcraft.

The environment is a pillar of the triple bottom line of Corporate social responsibility (CSR). It is a reason why responsible tourism tour was designed with environmental protection activities. However, there was 37% of visitors were participations while 30% of others didn't take part in protecting the environment. They didn't participate in the activity because some of the responsible tourism packages only focus on culture instead of environment.

As we mentioned above, it was a low awareness of visitors about the concept of responsible tourism before participating on Responsible tourism tour. The fact that 35% of visitors haven't heard about responsible tourism while there was 45% of them met up with this concept but do not know what exactly it is. It was only 20% of visitors understood the concept of responsible tourism. However, responsible tourism tour raised tourist's awareness from 20% to 53%. It is a good opportunity for tour operator and travel agency to develop responsible tourism tour in Budapest.

According to the definition of a tour guide, we know that duty and responsibility of a tour guide include all activities related to the tourist activities started from tourist arrival to a country, tour activities until departure activities. Responsible tourism tour requires tour guide have to raise tourist's awareness of responsible tourism. In another hand, tour guide should help visitors take their responsibility as a responsible tourist.

Table 2 gives data about the tour guide responsibility from the visitor points of view. Overall, the tourist was satisfied with the tour guide. The tour guide didn't discriminate against visitors. Tourist recognized that tour guide helped them to enhance their knowledge about responsible tourism (65%). The tour guide provides a wide range of knowledge about the local culture which was 57% of visitors satisfied. In addition, Tour guide also let visitors know how to protect environment (38%). However, 32% of visitors didn't agree that tour guide shows them how to protect environments because some of them weren't good at this activity. Therefore, tour operator and travel agency must train the employee better.

Table 2: Responsible tourism practices undertaken by tour guide (%). (Source: Calculations on the basis of the survey, 2017.)

Criteria	Scale				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Tour guides help visitors to raise awareness about responsible tourism	7	10	28	36	19
Tour guides let visitors know how to protect environment	10	21	31	27	11
Tour guides help visitors understand the local culture and respect their culture	5	15	23	30	27
Tour guides do not discriminate against tourists	3	6	27	36	28

Responsible tourism wasn't focused only on visitor's behaviour but also the travel company's behaviour. It is important to know how the travel company presents their responsibility to their visitor, the local community, and stakeholders. Table 3 gives information about the assessment of CSR of travel companies.

It is clear that tourist was satisfied with what the company has represented in responsible tourism tour. Visitors were informed proper information (81%). Most of the visitors experienced the same services as the committee of the tour package (45%). It means that the travel company implemented and controlled their committee with the consumers very well.

Table 3: Cooperate social responsibility of travel company from the tourist's point of view (%). (Source: Calculations on the basis of the survey, 2017.)

Criteria	Scale				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Visitors are informed proper information about the tour package	2	7	10	53	28
Visitors experience the same services as the committee of the tour package	13	17	25	35	10
The quality of the tour package is commensurate with the price that visitors have spent	10	16	23	33	18
TO/TA invests in environmental protection activities	15	20	30	22	13
TO/TA invests in community cultural development activities	4	16	25	34	21
TO/TA shares the benefits with local communities	3	14	28	39	16

In other hands, 51% of them receive value from the tour was commensurate with the price that they have spent.

It can be seen that tour operator/travel agency invested in improving the environment and reserved value of culture. Responsible tourism which concentrates on maximizing the positive impact is different with the other types of tourism. In addition, responsible tourism tour shares the benefits with local communities. Hence, it is necessary to maintain these investments in improving the environment and preserving culture.

In the sphere of tourism program, there are some special criteria to assess responsible tourism. The results of a survey presented in Table 4. 60% was the highest percentage of visitors satisfied with the tourism program which organized protection environment activities. Therefore, tour operator should develop these activities on responsible tourism package. 33% of visitor agreed that the local people take part in some activities of tourism program while there was 27% of them didn't agree. We can explain this problem that some of responsible tourism hasn't had the participation of local people. Hence, tour operator should give a chance for local people to join in tourism packages. It helps the visitors to have a truly experiences with local culture and shares benefits with the community. Responsible tourism tour should cooperate with green label hotel and restaurant to raise tourist's awareness. However, responsible tourism tour in Budapest hasn't kept an eye on this issue. That's why there was 40% of visitor didn't recognize that accommodation and restaurant facilities use environmentally-friendly materials. In general, 42% of tourists were satisfied with tourism package while there were 13% of them very satisfied. It is a good opportunity for tour operator and travel agency to improve the quality of tourism program and promote responsible tourism.

As we mentioned before that responsible tourism tour raised visitor's awareness about their responsibility. Moreover, they are satisfied with the package because of the meaningful from their activities in the destination. It is a reason why 71% of visitors would like to enjoy other responsible tourism tour. It is clear that the increase of visitor's demand brings a big opportunity for tour operator/travel agency to promote responsible tourism packages.

It is important to know that visitors are satisfied with the responsible tourism tour and they would like to introduce the tourism package to others. There was 76% of visitors will recommend the package to their friends and family. There was 13% tourists do not want to suggest to others while 11% people hard to make their decision.

Table 4: The assessment of responsible tourism program (%). (Source: Calculations on the basis of the survey, 2017.)

Criteria	Scale				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Tourism programs encourage tourists to protect the natural environment	8	12	20	35	25
Some activities of tourism program are organized by local people	10	17	39	21	13
Accommodation and restaurant facilities use environmentally-friendly materials	16	24	31	19	10
Tourist satisfaction with responsible tourism tour	9	16	29	42	13



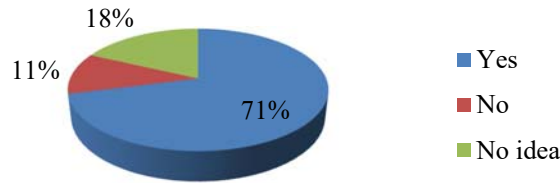


Figure 1: Visitor's demand of responsible tourism tour.

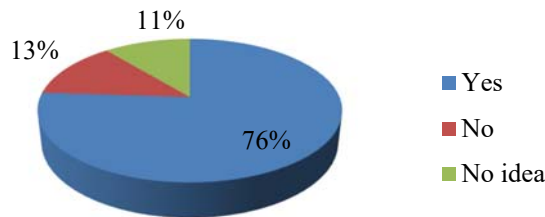


Figure 2: Visitor will recommend the responsible tourism tour to others.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the study was to contribute to a deep understanding of the responsible tourism phenomenon using a demand-side approach. Adopting a mixed-methods approach, whereby a qualitative study acts as an entry for a quantitative study, the findings revealed that tourist's awareness about responsible tourism was improved. As we mentioned above, it was a low awareness of visitors about the concept of responsible tourism before participating on Responsible tourism tour. The fact that 35% of visitors haven't heard about responsible tourism while there was 45% of them met up with this concept but do not know what exactly it is. It was only 20% of visitors understood the concept of responsible tourism. However, responsible tourism tour raised tourist's awareness from 20% to 53%.

The most of tourists are keen to be involved in the environmental improvement. Further, the research found that tourists respect the local culture, which is a positive behaviour. However, the proportion of visitor purchases good and services was not that much (only 37%). Therefore, we have to encourage tourist to purchase local goods or services to share the benefit with the community.

Tourists were satisfied with the tour guide. They recognized that tour guide helped them to enhance their knowledge about responsible tourism (65%). The tour guide provides a wide range of knowledge about the local culture and guides them on how to respects the local culture and protect the environment. However, some of the tour guides weren't good at guiding tourist on how to protect the environment. Therefore, tour operator and travel agency must train the employee better.

It is clear that tourists were satisfied with what the company had represented in responsible tourism tour. The travel company implemented and controlled their committee with the consumers very well. In addition, it is necessary to maintain these investments in improving



the environment and preserving culture. However, there was 40% of visitors didn't recognize that accommodation and restaurant facilities use environmentally-friendly materials. It will be better? if the hotel and restaurant facilities use environmentally-friendly materials in the tour.

It is important to know that there was 71% of visitors would like to enjoy other Responsible Tourism Tour while 76% of them would recommend the package to others. It is clear that the increase of visitor's demand brings a big opportunity for Tour operator/ Travel agency to promote Responsible tourism packages.

These conclusions are significant for both tourists and travel company to take their responsibility for sustainable tourism. On one hand, this study provides further insights into the scientific debate on responsible tourism. Meanwhile, we suggest solutions to improve the quality of responsible tourism in Budapest.

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