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Animation in tourism – its role and situation in the Hungarian tertiary education and service market

Theses of Doctoral (PhD) dissertation

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Budapest

2018
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1. **INTRODUCTION**

1.1. Relevance of the research

The author has been dealing with animation (entertainment) in hotels and other tourism-related spots since 2002. At first, he was employed as an animateur in Hungary and abroad (at Club Magic Life); than later as a trainer, supervisor and teacher, using his market experiences. The national development history of recreation in tertiary education, including also tourism animation, has been shortly researched yet (Kovács, 2002, 2004; Fritz, 2011; Gáldi, 2011; Lacza, 2014; Kovács, 2015). These overviews do not discuss the recreation education after the change in 2006 to the Bologna system. Employing recreators in tourism and business sphere is obvious, by the surveys of Gyöngyvér Lacza (Lacza és Keszei, 2008; Lacza és Nagy, 2011). Additional researches were conducted by the author of this dissertation and his colleagues. The education of recreation and animation also appeared in the secondary level at the end of the previous millennium at the Sport coach specialized in recreation (Gáldi, 1997), then between 2006 and 2013 in the Hungarian National Qualification Register the Recreational Physical Activity Programme Leader was entered with one of its specialization called Animator (NSZFH, 2008). However, in this study the focus is on the level of tertiary education.

1.2. Antecedents of the research

As a precursor of this doctoral study a survey on the Hungarian education market of animation should be mentioned (Magyar, 2004), in which I presented and analyzed the animation training system in general, such as forms of the non-formal education (trainings by the animation companies) and the characteristics of the secondary and higher / tertiary education at the beginning of the 21st century. For my master degree I mapped and analyzed the Hungarian animation service market in my BSc (Magyar, 2002) and in my MSc dissertation (Magyar, 2007), and I have made publications on animation ever since.

1.3. Structure of the dissertation

My dissertation consists of two larger parts. The first one is a literature review, in which I clear the definition, historical development and characteristics of the program types and forms. A separate subchapter deals with the interdisciplinary nature of tourism animation, by samples connecting to different sciences. The survey results can also be divided into two main points. One of them presents the history and content analysis of tourism animation subject in the sport
(recreation) such as the business and economics (tourism) field; the other one is the survey of the demand and supply side of the service market (hotels), completed with a graduate career tracking assessment among the ELTE recreation BSc students.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE SURVEY

The overall aim of this study is to uncover the areas of the Hungarian hotel animation that give experience to the guests, and to make connections to the educational programs nowadays. As a historical pedagogy and methodology base research the education history of animation subject was processed, placing it in the development history of recreation and tourism.

The market research about the hotel animation was fulfilled in the dimensions. The demand was observed by the tourists’ needs and experience between 2010 and 2011, then between 2011 and 2014. At first, the everyday experience and the tourism experience (also by hotel animation); then the tourism experience and the improvement of quality of life through animation was examined. The third quest was about the animation service structure and human resources of the hotels, beside the elements of experience that give satisfaction to their guests. Another survey was also conducted by an own compiled questionnaire by the ELTE investigational ethical permission on Nr. 2016/203. for Budapest (shortened to Bp) and Nr. 2017/260. for Szombathely (shortened to Szh). This survey is still running, and it deals with the graduate career tracking assessment among the ELTE recreation BSc students.

2.1. Aims

**Concrete aims of the doctoral dissertation:**

C1 Presenting the complex system of tourism animation in the modern era of nowadays.

C2 Reviewing the historical development of the Hungarian tourism and recreation tertiary education, particularly with reference to the animation subject(s).

C3 Illustrating the place and characteristics of the animation subject(s) in the Hungarian tourism and recreation tertiary education programmes.

C4 Identifying the market determinants that can be benefit by animation education, and drawing recommendations for developing education.
2.2. Methods

As a qualitative research method, document analysis was used at the situation of tourism animation subject in the tertiary education programs, which supports to gain relevant information for the research topic from unstructured texts (László, Mayer, Pénzes & Rátz, 2011). So, the development history of tourism and recreation education in Hungary, such as the place and characteristics of animation subject was excavated by this method. Among the sources there can be found the decisions and assessments of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee, education laws, tertiary admission handouts, curriculums and syllabuses, training programmes and the data archives of Institute of Health Promotion and Sport Sciences.

As Nádasi (2011) declared that document analysis is suitable for analysis of activities, number of contact hours, assessment methods of the [teacher] trainings by the syllabuses and curricula, so it is a competent method also for the pedagogical analysis of animation subject.

For surveying the hotel service market, failing any central register, my former (from the years of 2002, 2004 and 2007) own databases were used, constantly updating them. By several reasons, finally, the number of the population in 2014 was 134 hotels, however, only 95 hotels (70,90% of the whole sample) took part in the survey. The survey period was between 25th August 2014 and 1st January 2015.

There is not either a central register of the guests, acting as the demand side of hotel animation market, so they (N=1000, n=416) were reached in the first round (between 1st August 2010 and 31st March 2011) mainly by email, using a snowball method (N1=952, 95,20%), and a small ratio of them (N2=48, 4,80%) were asked by pollsters. In the second round between 1st July 2011 and 20th December 2014 (N=945) the answers were received by pollsters (N1=491, 51,96%), and emails of snowball method (N2=454, 48,04%).

For these market analyses own conducted questionnaires were used.

For the graduate career tracking assessment also a questionnaire was compiled by me and my colleagues. The ELTE Investigational Ethical Committee has permitted it for the Budapest and Szombathely campuses of ELTE. The population is those students, who have been graduated at the Recreational Management and Health Promotion BSc course, which was started in 2006, and the first class took a final exam first in 2009. This questionnaire was spread online among the students graduated in ELTE recreation BSc course (email, social sites, specific professional Facebook sites).
The Budapest graduate career tracking assessment questionnaire was fulfilled by 69 former
students until 12th October 2017 (Patakiné Bősze, Nagy, Magyar & Némethné Tóth, 2017), and
by 71 respondents until 24th January 2018. This questionnaire in Szombathely was answered
by 33 former students until 31st October 2017 (Nagy, Magyar, Patakiné Bősze & Némethné
Tóth, 2017; Némethné Tóth, Magyar, Nagy & Patakiné Bősze, 2017a; Némethné Tóth, Magyar,
Nagy & Patakiné Bősze, 2017b), and by an additional two respondents until 7th November 2017.
The statistics were published.
As a rough estimate, calculating with an approx. 60 students enrolled yearly, the total number
of students between 2006 and 2013 is approx. 480. Figuring on a cca. 15% ratio of dropout, the
size of the population could be 408 in Budapest (Nagy, Magyar és Patakiné Bősze, 2017b).

2.3. Statistical methods

In the data of the return questionnaire univariate data process was used in MS Excel. Beside
that SPSS Statistics Version 17.0 and 20.0 aimed also the analysis and assessment.
For data analysis I built groups (categories) by analyzing of the syllabuses of this professional
subject, such as the expectations and experience of guests participated in hotel animation.
As statistical methods, I carried out simple, descriptive statistics: mainly frequencies,
percentages and mean, in some cases I used modus and standard deviation.
Multivariate techniques (e.g. correlation or regression) were not needed, in my opinion.
For data reduction and demonstration I used figures, tables and diagrams by own redactions.

3. SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

3.1. History and situation of the Animation subject in the Hungarian tertiary education

While among the sport education programs already in the beginning of 1980s recreation as a
subject appeared in a 1-semester, 26-hour pilot program (Kaszás, 1989), the first recreation
college-level course (paired with physical education) started only in the 1990/1991 academic
year at the ELTE (then) Faculty of Teachers Training (Kiss, 2001).
Although tourism (nowadays called Tourism and Catering BA) education since 1913 was
present in Hungary in training form (Markos, 1966), for its independent college-level course
status almost eight decades passed. After the regime change in Hungary, the first independent
tourism-hotel course started at the College of Commerce, Catering and Tourism in Budapest in
1991 (Csizmadia, 2008), however, without animation subject. It was in that year, when at ELTE
already the second class read the recreation programme with (sociocultural) animation.
Between 1992 and 2005 in sport science education there were only two additional institutions where the animation was taught: in Szeged (Horváth, 2007) and since 2002 at the Semmelweis University with its independent recreation college-level course (MAB, 2001).

As college-level tourism tertiary education more institutions entered the animation subject. Among them the first was Kodolányi János College (KJF) with is original Animation specialization (Jancsik, 1995) between the 1994/1995 and 2001/2002 academic years. However, animation is taught only as a part of „Event management in hospitality” nowadays.

After that, Veszprém University in its tourism program started in the 1996/1997 academic year (MAB, 1997) entered animation subjects in the Hospitality specialization; but also in this school the educational ratio of this subject became reduced and nowadays it is only a part of the hotel management subject (Zsófia Papp, email, 21. 01. 2016.).

The third best practice of animation education could be seen in Heller Farkas College (now: METU HFTGK) in its tourism program started in 2001. This college entered the so-called recreation - animation (later: Leisure time - recreation - animation) specialization (Turizmus Bulletin, 2001), that run last in the 2015/2016 academic year (MAB, 2016).

Beside this college-level program also in the frames of the so-called Tourism Assistant Manager higher-level vocational training programmes animation was taught (in Veszprém, at Budapest Business School Faculty of Commerce, Catering and Tourism in Budapest and its ‘franchise partners’ in the countryside, and in the secondary school partner of Harsányi János College in Budapest).

The education of animation in this college-level tourism course appeared in other institutions too, but numerous expansions were seen by starting the new era („Bologna-system”) Tourism and Catering BA programme. Until 2016 an additional 12 tertiary school offered this course, and the education of animation was entered in other 7 institutions. In the 2016/2017 academic year, animation was taught as an independent subject in 4 units, and as a part of another subject animation is available for the students in other 4 schools (one of them with two campuses).

In this new era there has been a growth in the number of universities, starting their Recreation Management and Health Promotion BSc course, as well. In this period 7 universities teach animation in this programme, declared by the Hungarian law (the so-called Training and Outcome Requirements).

In these two educational periods, the curriculum value of the animation subject in tourism and recreation programmes (by number of credits and contact hours) can be seen in Figure 1., which shows a continually decreasing ratio to the total number of credits or contact hours.
The education characteristics of the animation subjects in the academic year of 2016/2017 in the institutions deal with Tourism and Catering BA programme are presented in Figure 2., demonstrating mean and standard deviation, too.

From Figure 3., it can be seen that in the academic year of 2016/2017 in the institutions dealing with Recreation Management and Health Promotion BSc programme, bigger number of contact hours are available for the students, compared to the tourism programmes. They are represented mainly in the frames of practical animation courses.
3.2. Market determinants for the development of animation education

It can be concluded from the investigation in the hotel service market, that animation is a more and more widespread area in Hungary ($N_{2002}=20$, $N_{2004}=35$, $N_{2007}=77$, $N_{2014}=134$).

The most well spread area, by the number of supply elements, is the children animation, which is followed by the sport- (and wellness) and the evening entertainment programmes.

Those guests, who already obtained experience in this service area, build a significant proportion ($N_{2010-2011}=1000$, $n_{2010-2011}=416$, $N_{2011-2014}=945$, $n_{(a)2011-2014}=410$, and by their family-members $n_{(b)2011-2014}=339$), too. They are satisfied with the animation service in Hungary, more or less (3,08 on average in the first survey, by a 5-grade, ascending Likert-scale). They have positive judgement mainly about the evening entertainment and sport (and wellness) animation in both research periods. However, by their family-members (in the second survey) the children animation is popular in Hungary, beside the sport animation programme area.

An own adapted SERVQUAL-questionnaire was used to measure the factors, which form the animation experience. These values are between 1,77–3,97 ($n_{2010-2011}=416$) and 2,11–4,23 ($n_{(a)2011-2014}=410$) by the Hungarian hotels guests’ judgement, although all of these experience items are important, but in another degree. The most important role is the animateur’s personality ($M_{2011-2014}=4,23$, $M_{2010-2011}=3,97$), the friends as co-players ($M_{2011-2014}=4,02$, $M_{2010-2011}=3,84$), the game ($M_{2010-2011}=3,80$), the connecting music ($M_{2010-2011}=3,64$) and the water-related spot as a place of game ($M_{2011-2014}=4,23$). Developing the animateur’s personality, the musical programs and the methodology of water games in the trainings are important.

Although more and more tourists have the opportunity to take part in animation also in Hungary, its personal conditions are not by the abroad examples: the number of animateur group is less...
(N_{2007}=3.04, N_{2014}=2.95), employed mainly by the (national and religious) holidays (60.00%), in the summer main season (51.58%), in the period of several school breaks (40%) and, contrary to the abroad customs, by the long-weekends (38.95%) as well (Magyar, 2016). But then, relating to the education development, there is a positive tendency in employing trainees, even in small proportion (12.04%), because also beyond the main season the students can work.

It seems from our graduate career tracking assessment survey, that animation practice is in the first place not only in Budapest (N_{71} =26, 41.27%), but also in Szombathely (N_{35} =11, 52.38%) afore the other recreational positions (e.g. assistant coach, event organizer, life guard). But fewer respondents (N_{71} Bp=15, 22.06% and N_{35} Szh=12, 32.43%) work as an animateur after the graduating. Beside these figures it can also be declared by the answers, that after the body skillfulness, motor skills (M_{Bp71}=3,90; SD_{Bp71}=1,11; M_{Szh35}=4,21; SD_{Szh35}=0,95) the second or third most competency, developed during the education, was the skill for animating groups (M_{Bp71}=3,83; SD_{Bp71}=1,09; M_{Szh35}=3,74; SD_{Szh35}=1,04). Because the mean value is under 4, it could be developed more during the education.

4. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

I believe it has been managed to reach my first goal, namely to describe the complex system of the tourism animation by literature review and market analysis. The children and sport (and wellness) animation emerge from the program areas, of which by theoretical and practical training is needed to be taught in the formal education, too.

The development history of tourism and recreation tertiary education in Hungary was also summarized, emphasized the appearance and spread of the animation subjects also in diagrams. The animation education shows less proportion in the Hungarian tertiary tourism institutions, contrary to those schools that deal with recreation programmes. One of the reasons could be the Training and Outcome Requirements that contains the teaching of animation and play(master) subjects in recreation BSc courses, but not in the tourism courses. Therefore, enriching the recreation courses by animation details could be reasoned in the future.

Situation of the animation subject(s) in the tertiary education was illustrated in the Hungarian tourism and recreation courses by contact hours, credit-value, assessment methods (with mean and standard deviation), and the range of taught topics by document analysis, too.

The market determinants, useful for education of animation, were revealed, I wrote recommendations for animation educating methodology and improving quality, as well as a new curriculum was conducted for a more enriched animateur training.
5. REFERENCES

5.1. References in the theses


5.2. Own and co-author publications in the theses


