Whose responsibility is it? – Evaluation of sustainable tourism development at Lake Balaton

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Abstract: Organisations play an important role in creating well-being of society and the environment. The main objective of the study is to map perspectives on sustainability among selected stakeholder groups including tourists/temporary visitors, local communities, and public and private decision-making professionals (public, non-profit, and for-profit) in the Lake Balaton region. The study is based on a combined methodology. First, insights from tourists and local residents were collected in a quantitative survey. Insights about sustainable tourism development from public, non-profit and for-profit tourism industry professionals were collected using semi-structured interviews. Results show that from an environmental perspective sustainable tourism represents nature-based tourism development. As regards a profit/economic perspective, buying local products and choosing locally owned restaurants, local markets play a significant role in the region. Differences in consumption patterns among locals and visitors are reflected in the lower need for off-season tourism offer. Interviewed stakeholders recognized the need for knowledge sharing and attitude forming.

Keywords: tourism, sustainability, stakeholder, development, nature-based destination
JEL classification: Z32

Čija je odgovornost? – Evaluacija održivog razvoja turizma na Balatonu

Sažetak: Organizacije igraju važnu ulogu u stvaranju blagostanja za društvo i životnu sredinu. Glavni cilj studije je mapiranje perspektiva o održivosti između odabranih grupa zainteresovanih strana, uključujući turiste/privremene posetioce, predstavnike lokalne zajednice i javnih i privatnih organizacija koji donose odluke (javne, neprofitne i profitne) u regionu jezera Balaton. Studija je zasnovana na kombinovanoj metodologiji. Prvi uvidi turista i lokalnog stanovništva prikupljeni su u kvantitativnom istraživanju, a uvidi o održivom razvoju turizma dobijeni od strane javnih, neprofitnih i profitnih profesionalaca iz turističke delatnosti prikupljeni su korišćenjem polustrukturiranih intervjua. Rezultati pokazuju da u ekološkoj perspektivi održivi turizam u suštini predstavlja turizam zasnovan

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na prirodi. Što se tiče profitne/ekonomske perspektive važnu ulogu imaju kupovina lokalnih proizvoda i poseta restoranima u lokalnom vlasništvu, odnosno lokalna tržišta imaju značajnu ulogu u regionu. Razlike u obrascima potrošnje između lokalnog stanovništva i posetilaca ogledaju se u manjoj potrebi za turističkom ponudom van sezone. Intervjuisani akteri prepoznali su potrebu za razmenom znanja i formiranjem stavova.

Keywords: turizam, održivost, zainteresovane strane, razvoj, destinacija zasnovana na prirodi

1. Introduction

In the new global economy, sustainability has become a central issue for all economic sectors. Tourism, being a global and significant industry, has a key role in both supporting sustainability and being responsible for unsustainable practices. Various stakeholders of the tourism value chain (ETC – UNWTO, 2011) have their own responsibilities and tools to contribute to a more sustainable world. However, this depends on resources, attitudes, power etc. Recent tourism developments have given an increased focus to sustainability in the wider sense, namely including environmental, social, and economic pillars. Destinations with a highly valued natural environment (like the Lake Balaton area discussed in the current study) face sustainability challenges. The main concern is the preservation of natural values. However, in the case of rural areas, the empowerment of local communities is also a big concern. Besides the environmental issues, the spatiotemporal imbalance of visitor flows also has an impact on the economic sustainability of involved businesses. From the societal point of view, the increasing interest of non-conventional segments (e.g. second home owners, sharing economy) results in a heterogeneous society of these places where every group has a different consumption pattern, and so a different land use. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected nature-based destinations as well. The growing need for nature puts increasing pressure on these places (especially in summer 2020 and summer 2021), so sustainability has become even more important. Although the pandemic has caused changes towards a more conscious behaviour of consumers, in the case of tourism, this is not evident. As some surveys (e.g. Tourban, 2022) project relevant results) point out, there is a significant share of travellers who are not focusing on sustainability once they can travel again.

The main objective of the current study is to map perspectives on sustainability among selected stakeholder groups including tourists/temporary visitors, local communities, and public and private decision-making professionals (local government, destination management organisations, and tourism service providers). As a result, the research can identify common interests, needs for development, and also can find gaps within the stakeholder groups. From a non-business marketing point of view, the findings can reflect the complexity of interest and marketing environment at the different stakeholders. Gaining a deeper understanding of the subject enables us to support future tourism development, and dedicate responsibilities and tools to relevant actors.

2. Background

2.1. Concept of sustainability and sustainable tourism

Tourism is one of the most dynamic economic sectors in the 21st century. The industry affects a large ration of society as travellers and as a workforce. Tourism researchers and industry stakeholders intend to gain complex information, knowledge, and data about this

complex system. Within academic tourism research, the survey of *sustainable tourism* and *its perspectives* among stakeholder groups plays a highlighted role.

A sustainability approach is becoming increasingly important in our daily lives. In addition to a growing number of national and international scientific publications, economic organisations, stakeholders and local authorities have also adopted a circular, sustainable approach and tried to conduct their activities accordingly. Individuals (people, consumers, travellers) have their own responsibilities to cater for their well-being. Furthermore, organizations, companies play an important role for creating well-being for society through their production and operation. A growing number of stakeholders have therefore started to implement sustainability efforts in their operations and within their business model (Fobbe & Hilletofth, 2021; Holliday et al., 2002; Schaltegger et al., 2020).

Sustainability usually refers to an approach that focuses on meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. There is no universally agreed definition, although there are consistent themes (see Brundtland report, UN, n.d.). The term sustainability has been defined in numerous ways; approximately more than three hundred alternative definitions exist (Borowy, 2013; Hult, 2011; Santillo, 2007). The authors believe in the straightforward connection between sustainability, tourism and quality of life (Liburd et al., 2012), suggesting the following definition: "Sustainability is a dynamic process which enables all people to realise their potential and to improve their quality of life in ways that simultaneously protect and enhance the Earth's life support system." (Forum for the Future, 2022).

Sustainability does not just mean caring for the environment. Sustainability experts often refer to the *three pillars of sustainability* including economic, social, and environmental pillars.

Figure 1: The nested spheres model

Source: Sandhu et al., 2014, p. 5

These principles are also often categorized as *People, Profit, and Planet* (or the 3Ps) in the private sector and referred to as the Triple Bottom Line (TBL). According to Correia (2019), "most commonly accepted model to describe sustainability and the TBL is the nested spheres model, also called the Venn diagram explanation. Sustainability can be illustrated as the place where the three dimensions overlap. However, one of the limitations of this approach is that it does not show levels of hierarchy between the three dimensions" (p. 30).

- "The *economic dimension* of TBL – Profit – focuses on the value created by the organisation and goes beyond its financial performance and financial concepts as sales growth, cash-flow, shareholder value, etc. to include the economic and operational business impact on the society" (Correia, 2019, p. 31);

- "The *social dimension* – People – encompasses the impact of an organisation on the people's welfare, including both employees and community, and addressing issues like education assistance, community interaction, charitable causes, and fair fare practices" (Correia, 2019, p. 31);

- "The *environmental dimension* – Planet – relates to the organisation´s attempts to minimise environmental impact as well as their use of energy and waste production to reduce their ecological footprint. Some evidence that the greening of the marketplace is becoming mainstream is the proliferation of green products, eco-labelling" (Correia, 2019, p. 32).

Figure 2: Triple Bottom Line (3Ps)
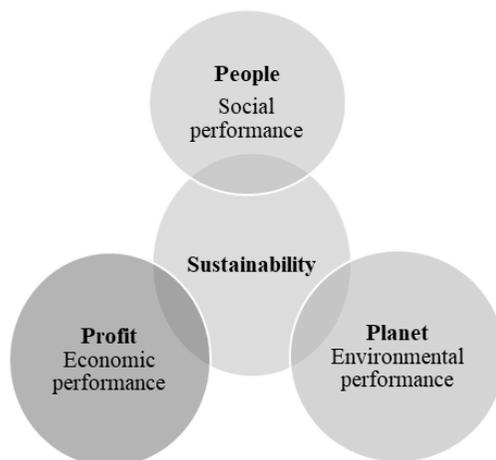
Source: Correia, 2019, p. 31

Despite the extensive literature on sustainable and responsible tourism, the contribution of theories to practical implementation is very limited. One of the reasons for this is to be found in the meaning of 'sustainable tourism' (Waligo et al., 2013), as the term is somewhat controversial and, according to some researchers (Wheller, 2012), even paradoxical. In tourism, the idea of sustainability can be seen as an approach that (Hegedűs et al., 2022) – while easily adaptable for organisations involved in destination management - is difficult for profit-oriented service providers or stakeholders to grasp.

2.2. Literature review

The tourism sector consists of a large number of actors (e.g. local residents, local organisations, volunteers, non-profit and civil society organisations, local or regional government, tourism destination organisations, tourism providers, and visitors), who are *stakeholders* in the sector (directly or indirectly benefiting financially from tourism), or affected by it (feeling its effects, impacts). There is a consensus in the literature that all stakeholders in the sector have a role to play in making tourism more sustainable. However, while some studies emphasise the responsibility of the supply side (Abbas et al., 2021), others emphasise the responsibility of the consumers (Budeanu, 2007; Hassan, 2000). Previous studies about sustainable tourism (Byrd, 2007; Chia et al., 2018; Dimitrovski et al., 2021; Ng et al., 2017) pointed out the different roles of stakeholders.

Research on the potential role of sustainability in the global tourism system (Bhaskara & Filimonau, 2021; Gössling et al., 2021) has also been carried out clearly showing that rebuilding the sector on a more sustainable basis can only be achieved through effective cooperation between stakeholders. It is essential to examine the responsibilities of the main stakeholders, consumers, service providers and the state.

According to the recently published ETC analyses, *travellers' attitudes* are also changing; overall, "they are most likely to adopt sustainable practices while in destinations (e.g. interacting with local communities, learning about local traditions, buying local products and choosing locally owned restaurants). The survey of pre-pandemic, current and projected travel behaviour, value orientation, and belief and norm patterns revealed *four distinct clusters*. The four clusters are the following (ETC 2022, p. 6):

- *"Frontrunners*: Low-footprint travellers with the highest likelihood of adopting sustainable travel behaviour in the future. The cluster with the strongest biospheric and altruistic value orientation;

- *Comfortable Crowd:* Habitual low-footprint travellers with interest in alternative destinations in ones' proximity and in travelling in low season;

- *Entitled Stewards:* Medium-footprint travellers who are less likely to compromise on location and time of travel but willing to adjust otherwise;

- *Laggards*: Habitual high-footprint travellers with the lowest level of likelihood for considering sustainable alternatives in the future. The cluster with the weakest biospheric and altruistic value orientation".

3. Destination in focus

Lake Balaton, the greatest freshwater lake (with a water surface of app. 600 km^2) in Central Europe plays a significant role in the tourism of Hungary (Balatonland, 2022): it is the most popular area among domestic visitors, and the second most popular (after Budapest) area among foreign tourists (Hungarian Central Statistical Office, HCSO). The core attraction and base for various tourism experiences is the lake and the unique, protected natural environment itself, with summer waterside holidays still being a dominant product. In the 2010s, besides passive waterside tourism activities, auxiliary tourism products gained increased attention in tourism development. The development of water independent experiences such as cultural tourism, active tourism, and health tourism resulted in a growth in the spatial extension of the touristically attractive areas within the region. That enabled new micro destinations to enter the tourism sector (Sulyok & Lőrincz, 2016). The region that has a rural character covers altogether 174 settlements out of which 42 are located directly along the lakeside, the number of local inhabitants is around 270 thousand (Balaton Development Council, 2022).

The core attraction of the destination is the lake itself with tourism experiences closely linked to water (e.g. boating, sailing) or with experiences where the lake provides an added value (e.g. panoramic view) (Sulyok & Lőrincz, 2016). Previous studies addressing sustainable tourism in Hungary (such as Formadi et al., 2022) point to the room for attitude shaping of visitors towards more sustainable consumption.

Tourism around Lake Balaton has shown a continuous increase in the past few years. Commercial accommodation establishments registered 1.9 million guests in 2019 who spent, according to the figures of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HCSO, 2022), almost 6 million nights in the destination. Two-thirds of the guest nights were generated by domestic visitors. Although the COVID-19 pandemic situation stopped tourism for a certain period, the summers of 2020 and 2021 were very successful. In 2020, during June-August, the number of guest nights was 2.3 million, and in 2021, for the same period, it was 2.5 million. Besides tourism at commercial accommodation facilities, the region receives a significant volume of non-conventional tourists (e.g. one-day excursionists, second home owners, visitors staying with friends and relatives). Tourism at Lake Balaton has a strong temporal

(dominance of the summer period) and spatial (popularity of shore areas) concentration that affects sustainability as well (Lőrincz et al., 2020).

4. Methodology and data collection

Based on the literature review, and the analysis of the tourism performance at Lake Balaton, the following conclusion can be drawn: three problem areas as key local obstacles resist successful and sustainable regional development. One is *extreme seasonality*, which means a short, intensive summer period with a high tourism load. Second, there is the *conflict relationship* among four segments: residents, settlers, summer cottage owners and tourists. Finally, *environmentally damaging investments* are occurring with increasing frequency.

This explorative study has set itself a dual research goal. On the one hand, mapping the development needs based on the type of stakeholder groups (decision-makers, locals, tourists). On the other hand – in close context of the previous goal – perspectives of the main pillars (environmental, economic, social) of sustainable tourism have been surveyed.

Considering the importance of multi-stakeholder perspectives and the complex nature of sustainability, current study is based on a three-stage methodology. From the wide variety of stakeholders, the views of tourists, local residents and decision-makers, tourism industry professionals have been tracked, using a combined methodology including quantitative and qualitative data collection.

For the purpose of exploring the development needs expressed by locals and tourists, data from previously conducted surveys were used. In 2018, a quantitative survey (online and face-to-face fieldwork) among tourists and local residents was conducted in the Lake Balaton region. The tourist-oriented survey mapped the main features of the temporary visitors (covering demographics, and leisure trip features), while locals-oriented survey tracked the main features of the areas as a residence (settlement features' evaluation). In the case of tourists, a convenient sampling was made. The criterion for filtering respondents was the realisation of at least one overnight leisure trip in the Lake Balaton area. In the case of local residents, the sample was representative with respect to gender, age and place of settlement within the Lake Balaton area's population. Data collection took place in person (with the assistance of tourism students at the University of Pannonia), and online (by sharing survey link on social media sites). In both cases (tourists, locals), participants of the research could share their opinion about necessary development areas at the local/settlement level by answering an open-ended question. This approach enables a deeper insight, a more detailed understanding of stakeholders' needs. The total sample size – the respondents who shared their views about future developments – was 318 tourists and 690 locals. In the case of the tourist sample, the results reflect the preferences of summer leisure holiday takers who make up the most significant segment in the destination.

The results of the quantitative survey have been coded. For coding, word frequency counting and tourism product development framework (ETC – UNWTO, 2011) were used. The infrastructure of tourism (ETC – UNWTO, 2011) identifies five levels: accessibility (transport systems – route, terminals, and vehicles), attractions (natural, man-made, artificial, purpose-built, heritage), and activities 1 (things to do – outdoors/indoors, land/water/air-based), activities 2 (accommodation and catering facilities, retail, other tourist services), and activities 3 (banks, telecommunications, posts etc.).

Table 1: Sample profile of the quantitative survey respondents

	Local community	**Tourists**
Gender	Male – 33.6% Female – 66.4%	Male – 44.1% Female – 55.9%
Age	Below 25 years – 30.9% 25-44 years – 31.3% 45+ years – 37.8%	Below 25 years – 44.7% 25-44 years – 29.6% 45+ years – 25.7%
Education	Primary – 2.3% Secondary – 48.4% Higher education – 49.3%	Primary – 3.0% Secondary – 58.6% Higher education – 38.4%

Source: Authors' research

Insights about sustainable tourism development from public, non-profit and private tourism industry professionals were collected using semi-structured interviews. The fieldwork was conducted in January-February 2022, altogether ten stakeholders participated in the qualitative research. Among them, three representatives of local government, three representatives of tourism destination management organisations, and further four private service providers (attraction, accommodation, and catering) were interviewed. Stakeholders were recruited via the partners of Lake Balaton Tourism Research Centre (operating at the University of Pannonia), and the participation in the survey was voluntary.

The semi-structured interviews, lasting 40-60 minutes each, covered the following topics: perceptions about sustainable tourism, sustainable tourism in Lake Balaton destination, stakeholders and their role in sustainable tourism, best practices, and future outlook. In line with the literature, environmental, economic and social pillars of sustainable tourism were tracked. In order to map the differences between stakeholder groups, the main actors, their roles and responsibilities were identified during the interviews.

Table 2: Sample profile of the interviews

	gender	**qualification**	**sector**	**organization profile**
interview 1	female	university	public	Municipality
interview 2	female		public	Municipality
interview 3	female		public	Municipality
interview 4	male		non-profit	destination management organization
interview 5	female		non-profit	destination management organization
interview 6	female		non-profit	destination management organization
interview 7	Male		for-profit	service provider
interview 8	Male		for-profit	service provider
interview 9	Female		for-profit	service provider
interview 10	Female		for-profit	service provider

Source: Authors' research

5. Results and discussion

5.1. Tourists' perspectives

Development needs expressed by tourists to Lake Balaton have been grouped into five main categories including infrastructure, settlement environment, attractions, services, and human resources. The ideas respondents shared are strongly oriented towards infrastructure: two-thirds of the tourists would like to see advances in the infrastructure. This is followed by attractions (14% of the respondents indicated this category) and services (13%). The settlement environment has a less significant role, one reason behind this may be that there were numerous developments aimed at the settlement environment (cleanliness, green areas, dustbins) in the region in recent years. Furthermore, the area has a rural character, so green spaces are easy to reach during travelling. Within the infrastructure, transportation is a significant element. With reference to sustainable modes of transport, tourists can be considered less sustainable: 31% of the respondents indicated that parking facilities should be developed (that means using their own car, and getting the closest possible to attractions, service providers). A more sustainable way to get around is public transport (11%) or cycling route (4%) that were also mentioned. In the case of public services, local supermarkets could be developed (indicated by 4% of the respondents). The existence of attractions is a key factor in tourism. Participants of the survey would mostly prefer developments at beaches (7%) (that is one of the most dominant service elements in Lake Balaton tourism), and developments of cultural programs (5%) that could be a popular activity during a trip. Attractions outside the summer season that could be directly linked with sustainable tourism (economic pillar) were mentioned only by a few respondents. Regarding tourism services, survey participants expressed the greatest need for catering, gastronomy facilities, followed by entertainment. At this point, a few respondents highlighted that restaurants should be opened also during the off-season period, which is again linked with the sustainable operation. In the case of accommodation developments, special groups' (e.g. dog friendly) need has been expressed. Although the lack of human resources in tourism has been an important issue in recent years, the survey did not reflect the need for this kind of development. Regarding human resources, a few respondents have mentioned that local residents should be more welcoming towards tourists, which can be linked with the social pillar of sustainable tourism.

5.2. Local residents' perspectives

Local residents had a little more than one development idea shared on average. The main categories are similar to those mentioned by visitors, so most (two-thirds) of the residents think infrastructure should be developed, which is followed by attractions (12.5%) and services (12.0%). Settlement environment and human factors have a more significant role for locals than for visitors. Within the infrastructure, roads and pavement (mentioned by 28.0% of the respondents), as well as public transportation (14.8%), are the most critical points. Commercial facilities were mentioned by 4.4% of the locals participating in the survey. Among the public services, utility services, healthcare system, educational institutions, and housing circumstances are at the forefront. Regarding the settlement environment, green areas are mostly prioritised by respondents. Attractions support leisure programs of residents, and for them beach development and cultural programs were the most mentioned regarding future development potential. Within the services available at the destination level, entertainment for youngsters, and catering/restaurant facilities are the ones preferred by locals. As with visitors, attractions development outside of the main season and services during the off-season period were mentioned by some of the residents. Because of the

employment opportunities, locals put greater emphasis on human resources than visitors. Furthermore, they would welcome strengthening the local community. Only a few locals mentioned the need for a more harmonised relationship between visitors and locals. Local residents with a higher education degree are more interested in the development of attractions and services, which are probably in line with their consumption patterns.

Table 3: Main development needs of locals and tourists

Development areas	Locals	Tourists
Infrastructure	Roads, pavement **Public transportation**	Parking facilities **Public transportation** Cycling route
Settlement environment	Green areas	
Attractions	**Beaches Cultural programmes Off-season attractions**	**Beaches Cultural programmes Off-season attractions**
Services	Commercial facilities Public services Services for youngsters **Restaurants**	Local supermarkets Restaurants Special groups (e.g. dog-friendly)
Human resources	Local community Employment opportunity **More harmonised relationship between visitors and locals**	**Local residents more welcoming/positive attitude towards tourists**

Source: Authors' research

Comparing development needs expressed by locals and by tourists, some common areas can be found. Regarding infrastructure, public transportation can serve both target groups. In the case of attractions, locals and tourists shared similar views such as the need for further development of beaches, cultural programmes and attractions available during the off-season period. Regarding services, locals put a great emphasis on public services, while tourists would favour special segment services. Restaurants could be attractive for both locals and temporary visitors. In the case of human resources, the – not always harmonized – the relationship between locals and tourists was mentioned as a common area. The observed common areas and differences can result in conflicts between these groups, local stakeholders should find harmonized solutions serving both locals' and visitors' needs.

5.3. Industry stakeholders' perspectives

In the interpretation of sustainable tourism, the general opinion of the interviewees is that it means the tourist does not generate environmental damage. Seasonality generating overtourism has to be relieved to avoid extreme environmental load. Besides minimising persistent environmental load, the environmental footprint of service providers should be reduced. Finally, sustainability of the ecosphere is ensured by the long-term protection of flora and fauna.

They agree on the three dimensions of sustainability, but the *environment dominates their view*. As regards the economic dimension, labour shortages – which is partly due to seasonality – should be eliminated, while investments lacking in resources and long-lasting return on investments in time are to be supported. In the short term, the price policy

challenges exacerbated by the pandemic can be counteracted by increasing the content of services. In the social dimension, the main obstacles to sustainability are on one hand different attitudes of the ageing residents and the settlers and the age gap in sustainability approach on the other hand.

Besides this, the interviews reflected that three key problems of regional sustainability are the extreme regional seasonality originating from the characteristics of the tourist destination area, the different and partly conflict preferences of resident / settler / summer cottage owner and tourist segments and the environmentally damaging investments in the region.

When asked what the *critical elements of the future of sustainable tourism* are, and what can serve to solve the problems several factors were highlighted by the respondents. In the environmental dimension, the optimization of the water quality and volume of Lake Balaton and the exemplary programs organised by the national parks are underlined. In the interviews, the sustainability contradiction has been experienced in countless popular destinations. On one side, visitors should be shown as much as possible. On the other hand,nature is already overloaded by the great number of tourists so tourism visitation should be limited Concerning economic issues, infrastructure development is the most critical element. It is because its bottlenecks – coupled with the weaknesses of public transport – result in extreme car use. Strengthening the sustainability dimension of development projects can also serve a better future in this sense. At the level of the small local service firms, the use of local products would be desirable. Generally, the latter is not typical but positive experiences are increasing. Among them, the risky phenomenon of mass tourism can be observed, i.e. if something works, a lot of service providers start copying it with more or less success. In social terms, the approximation of the approach of the above-mentioned four segments towards sustainability –for example, by community-forming programmes – could be a forward-looking practice.

In the interview, we asked if there were *metrics for managing sustainability* more successfully. There was a great deal of uncertainty and no consensus on this issue. As regards to tourism, the environmental impacts (energy use, recycling, waste management) of tourism flow is a significant issue. Furthermore, involved stakeholders see a potential in motivating visitors towards the use of sustainable transportation such as public transport instead of own car.

We did not exclude the *local service firms* from the series of interviews. They belong to the for-profit sector, which is apparently outside the non-business sphere. Nevertheless, in their marketing environment, numerous public and non-profit organisations make significant influence on their (business) effectiveness and vice versa. This mixed network of powerful actors makes up the total stakeholder structure. As far as the views of local entrepreneurs are concerned, with sustainability no substantial differences can be observed, except for some shifts in emphasis. For example, they better realise the contrast between short-term effects and long-term returns based on their own business management. As regards an opportunity to break out, they mentioned the protection of the original environmental milieu, including the preservation of cultural values. However, they believe that high cost of developing for sustainability will trigger a purification process. "*Only the strong survive.*" In the segment policy, moving towards the premium category and higher quality can support long-term sustainability. They agree with non-business stakeholders that the current investment activity is environmentally destructive and eviscerates the lake.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic situation has aggravated the environmental problems. Public utility networks and the ecological system are also suffering. The greatest attractiveness/advantage of Lake Balaton is that it is still relatively untouched. If we look at the European lakes, then Lago Maggiore, Lake Garda, which are in competition with Lake

Balaton on their scale, are already irreversibly overloaded. Besides this, in the opinion of local entrepreneurs, government and municipalities are the most powerful stakeholders in sustainability. Educational institutions such as universities, and other knowledge-sharing actors such as consultants, can act as a facilitator in the process, as well.

Finally, here are some citations from the interviews first, regarding the positive examples then the challenges:

"The Hungarian Tourism Agency prefers family-friendly and cycling-friendly aspects in beach developments, but these funds could also be given for (other) sustainability aspects."

"A good example is the beach bus that goes around the settlements…"

"The tourist... likes to use services where (s)he feels (s)he is local, so (s)he came here to get to know us, the people who live here, the customs that live here, eating the food here…"

"Sustainability is a way of life. And you can't think of it as being sustainable only from a tourist point of view."

"Civil organisations are represented in the city in large numbers, and they also have a very keen interest in this topic, so we have several attitude forming events…"

"Many people move in from the big cities, and they bring with them a more environmentally conscious approach, especially young families."

"The "death" of Balaton is local transport, because there is really a lot of tourists and everyone chooses the car…"

"Overtourism exists in a few highly preferred areas in the high season, while ten-fifteen kilometres from them there are attractive but under-visited locations…"

"...and the locals are very resentful that someone who is not constantly here wants to have a say in the issues that affect them."

"Developments on the lakeside are worth reviewing, so even the existence of the weeds is very important that Lake Balaton can be sustainable in the future."

6. Discussion

As highlighted in the literature review, the results of this study can be addressed on two levels: the level of sustainability's three pillars as well ason the level of certain stakeholder groups. The destination in focus is a nature-based tourism area where natural environment serves as a core attraction and unique selling point. Not surprisingly, industry professionals indicate the fundamental role of environmental sustainability. However, this is only partly supported by locals and tourists, as these groups expressed the need for – unsustainable - infrastructural developments, so 'convenience' of a contemporary tourist is ahead of a sustainable behaviour.

Economic sustainability has a greater role for industry professionals. Locals and tourists put less importance on developments such as off-season attractions and services that could contribute to a more sustainable operation of service providers. Social sustainability has a marginal role at the time of the research in the views of all involved stakeholders. The differences between the perceptions of stakeholder groups highlighted by the research point to the potential conflicts of interest; local decision-makers are the main actors in balancing these needs. Regarding the potential of more sustainable developments, the results of the study note the importance of cooperation between stakeholders (Gössling et al., 2021). New products, services may emerge as a consequence of tourists' and locals' needs, and parallel with this, industry professionals may have a decisive role in shaping attitude and motivate for a more sustainable behaviour.

7. Conclusion

The results of the current study underline the complex nature of sustainable tourism, and the heterogeneity of stakeholders involved in sustainable tourism. From an environmental perspective, sustainable tourism represents nature-based tourism development. Due to overtourism, the principle of *presenting nature protecting it at the same time* must be followed. Because Lake Balaton is a destination where natural environment is the core attraction and base for tourism, environmental pillar of sustainable tourism plays a cutting-edge role.

Tourism mobility still shows a significant temporal concentration around the Lake Balaton region. Recent years' developments in supply resulted in a diversification of tourism experience supporting the decrease of seasonality. In line with the tourism strategic documents, active tourism (such as cycling, hiking, and water-based products) can play a cutting-edge role in a more balanced tourism flow (Lőrincz et al., 2021).

As regards a profit/economic perspective, buying local products and choosing locally owned restaurants, local markets play significant role in the region. The rural character has an impact on sustainable tourism: development needs regarding infrastructure are strong among both locals and residents. Due to the lack of appropriate public transport, 'unsustainable' modes (e.g., own car) are preferred. The differences in consumption patterns among locals and visitors are reflected in the lower need for off-season tourism offer (locals do not need it that much; visitors consider the region as a summer destination). In the case of industry stakeholders, especially for profit-oriented business, the economic benefits are important.

From a people/social perspective, the interaction among local communities is a key element. Personal knowledge and commitment of industry stakeholders can influence perceptions on sustainable tourism. There is a recognized need for knowledge sharing and attitude forming. A special task is to attract young target groups who insist on modern communication tools. For them it is needed to find solutions to "look around then look for information and communicate on your smartphone". A firm opinion of interviewees pointed out that there is a need also for top-down regulation, since only bottom-up innovation cannot support successfully sustainable tourism (this is so probably because of the socio-cultural background of Lake Balaton region).

On the *sustainability tasks of public and non-profit actors* the main conclusions are as follows. Regarding the role-players in the public sector, responsible value selection framing with a long-term thinking must be in the focus. They have to be able to achieve a balance between the stakeholders. Creation a supporting environment motivates travellers to become more conscious, and enables for-profit organisations to realize the real benefit of sustainable operation. As for non-profit stakeholders, they must play a leading role in the formation of attitudes and knowledge sharing. In the practice, this attitude shaping may be in the form of information provision, offering sustainable products and services, or sustainable operation.

Research results may not be free of certain distortions. For example, the time difference between the surveys, namely 2018 in the case of the tourists and residents, and 2022 in the population of industrial stakeholders, may have caused small but not negligible inconsistencies. Concerning the limited generalizability of the results, a small number and relatively homogeneous composition of the interviewed stakeholders can be mentioned. The same effect is likely due to the special destination of unique features. This narrowing of the research target creates, however, an adaptation potential in the future to similar areas or exploration of other dominating pillars of sustainability in the case of different destinations. Nevertheless, the time period of second field work (interviews) included COVID-19, which cannot be ignored either. During the pandemic situation, sustainability came into the forefront, so this can limit long-term validity of the results.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Annex

Semi-structured interview with stakeholders – Interview guide
Sustainable tourism development at Lake Balaton

Introduction
10 minutes

Short introduction by the moderator (not explaining any definition!).

Rules of interviews:
- No use of mobile phones.
- Microphon and webcamera.
- There is no bad answer, every opinion counts.
- Length of the interview: 1 hour.
- Interview recorded.

INTRODUCTION OF THE INTERVIEWEE: NAME, ORGANIZATION, PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE/BACKGROUND.

Topic 1 – Sustainable tourism at Lake Balaton, current situation
10 minutes

What comes to your mind when hearing 'sustainable tourism'?
What do you think about Lake Balaton tourism? Is it sustainable?
What is you opinion, can sustainable tourism be tracked at Lake Balaton?
Has it changed during the last years? What kind of trends can you observe?

Topic 2 – Main pillars of sustainable tourism at Lake Balaton
15 minutes

What do you think about the environmental pillar of sustainable tourism at Lake Balaton? What kind of positive and negative impacts could you mention?
What do you think about the economic pillar of sustainable tourism at Lake Balaton? What kind of positive and negative impacts could you mention?
What do you think about the social pillar of sustainable tourism at Lake Balaton? What kind of positive and negative impacts could you mention?

Topic 3 – Involved stakeholder groups, roles, task, and responsibilities
15 minutes

What do you think, how are the main actors in sustainable tourism at Lake Balaton?
What kind of tasks they have?
What kind of resources, responsibilities they have?
What kind of cooperation, networks can be found at Lake Balaton regarding sustainable tourism?

Topic 4 – Best practices
5 minutes

What kind of best practices you know at Lake Balaton regarding sustainable tourism?
What kind of negative examples you know at Lake Balaton regarding sustainable tourism?

Closing
5 minutes

Now I kindly ask you to summarize your thought. Is there any issue not yet mentioned that you would like to share regarding sustainable tourism at Lake Balaton?
What do you think about the future (next 5 years)? What do you think how sustainable tourism at Lake Balaton is going to be then?