

# BARON FOR A DAY: GUESTS' PERCEPTION OF HISTORICAL PAST IN CASTLE HOTELS

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## **Abstract**

Heritage destinations convey important messages to those in quest of historical past and identity. Interpretation of these destinations can contribute to the (re)building of national identity. Castle hotels are destinations that combine heritage and hospitality. Castle hotels' image as a tourism destination is primarily a place of luxurious conditions, accommodation with landscape park, built and owned by aristocrats. They convey the image of luxury and aristocratic lifestyle, high-class amenities and therefore they offer ideal settings for experiencing luxurious lifestyle environment of aristocrats of past era. The paper investigates into castle hotel guests' attitudes and perceptions of historical past with the objective of understanding underlying motivations resulting in destination selection. The question is raised: can the connection to one's past - evoked by these heritage destinations - be detected and can it contribute to the reinforcement of national identity?

## **keywords:**

*castle hotels, destination image, historical heritage, lieux de mémoire, hospitality, national identity, aristocracy, perceptio, interpretation*

## **Introduction**

*'There is no national heritage product but an almost infinite variety of heritages, each created for the requirements of specific consumer groups; viewed from the side of the costumer, each individual necessarily determines the constitution of each unique heritage product at the moment of consumption.'*(Ashworth 1998, p.18)

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Heritage and hospitality combined: castle hotels stand on a crossway between heritage and hospitality, their uniqueness further enhanced by being embedded in both cultural and historical heritage settings. Visiting or returning to one's heritage – in direct and indirect terms is a growing moral and emotional necessity in recent times, when globalisation threatens individual nations with the risk of losing on national cultural and historical identity. Gaining (or regaining in some cases) or reinforcing national identity in terms of culture and history can be a solution forward to escape from the generalised state of anomy that some societies suffer from, especially in Central and Eastern Europe.

There is a surprising lack of literature on castle hotel guest attitudes and perceptions, most likely because these frequently luxurious accommodations are reserved for high-income guests and the respect of their privacy, meticulously executed by management staff, prevents researchers from establishing contacts and furthermore, none of the survey methods find an appreciative public.

Castle hotel guests, when available and approachable, constitute an interesting segment of hospitality customers, and consumer attitude, perception, satisfaction and visitation patterns can be studied. The contribution of this study to hospitality and historical heritage research is two-fold: first, it extends the literature on these relationships by providing empirical evidence of their applicability in a different setting; second, it explicitly considers the intervening role of overall image in determining satisfaction. By sketching the universe of castle hotels and based on customer feedback, explaining their attitudes to culture and history, interpretation of historical heritage, visit intentions and decisions and finally experience at the destination, heritage tourism can be better understood.

For this purpose, the article starts with a review of the literature on images of heritage destinations, the structure of destination image and its relationship with other factors such as satisfaction, overall image, emotions, and perceptions. Subsequently, the research sites (castle hotels) are described along with the research methodology, which includes a

description of the questionnaire and sample design. Thereafter, the findings are presented and the relevant theoretical implications are drawn. The article concludes with an outline of the research limitations and areas of further research in the field.

### **Heritage, identity, nationhood, lieux de mémoire**

*'A significant amount of the movable and immovable cultural capital of any country is held in public or quasi-public institutions such as museums, galleries, archives, monasteries, shrines, historic buildings, heritage sites, etc. In addition, these institutions are also often repositories of intangible cultural capital, as in the case of heritage locations, for example, which are inextricably bound up with their history and with the rituals and customs with which they are associated. These institutions contribute cultural output primarily in the form of services, consumed by both local people and visitors. With regard to the latter, the tourism potential of some of these institutions may be substantial.'* (UNCTAD 2010, p.116)

Tourism is understood – among other possible interpretations - as a communicational setting, a space in which to relate, become closer or more distant, hence its inherent identity-related dimension (Abram, Waldren, & Macleod, 1997; Urry, 1990, 1994). When tourist activity focuses on heritage and culture, the link between tourism and identity is accentuated even further. In heritage tourism, the convergence of the host community, tourist activity and visitors is chiefly mediated by local heritage, which has a dual role to play: it is the central focus of the tourist activity whilst at the same time being a fundamental element in the construction of community identity. Therefore, when looking at heritage tourism, identity and community must undoubtedly be two of the reference points (Park 2010).

In addition to the economic benefits that the attraction of tourists to a heritage site or area can generate, the recognition of such locations may also bring with it a number of other advantages. Identification of a site or area as of historic, cultural or natural importance should promote greater awareness of, and appreciation for, its value, thereby increasing the chances of its preservation in the future. Realisation of the existence and significance of its

unique resources by local residents is likely to enhance community pride and help strengthen sense of place and identity (Nagy, Horváth 2012). People and communities identify with or through heritage in a variety of ways, but one of the strengths of heritage, perhaps especially in its intangible dimensions, is that most heritage objects or landscape can accommodate different, divergent or even competing demands.

Identities and representations of community are clearly affected by tourism. Tourists' and visitors' identities formation by way of relating to heritage tourism has been analysed (Ashworth 1998, Palmer, 1999, 2005; Pretes 2003, Poria, Butler, Airey, 2003; Poria, Reichel, Biran, 2006; Yu-Ju, WU, Yuan, 2010; yu Park 2010). For the definition of heritage tourism, Garrod and Fyall (p. 683) quoted Yale (1991, p. 21), "tourism centred on what we have inherited, which can mean anything from historic buildings, to art works, to beautiful scenery". For the purpose of this research the definition for heritage/culture tourism is "visits by persons from outside the host community motivated wholly or in part by interest in the historical, artistic, scientific or lifestyle/heritage offerings of a community, region, group or institution", (Park, p.128.)

Heritage sites provide real-world classrooms where both children and adults--local and visitors--can learn about the history, nature and/or culture of an area. Beyond these opportunities for education regarding the site or wider vicinity, lies the additional potential for increased awareness and understanding of resource preservation. Pretes (2003) describes the more profound impact that heritage sites can have on the formation and maintenance of national identity among domestic visitors. Heritage sites can offer nostalgic images of traditional lifestyles, as well as of the progress of a region or country. Heritage-based tourism can also be tied into the notion of sustainability. The creation of tourism attractions using existing assets--whether natural, cultural, or built--negates the need for the building of new facilities, allowing communities to "look to the past for a sustainable future" (Hargrove, 2002, p. 10). Park (2010) reveals the importance of individual interpretations and unofficial narratives in articulating and affirming national sentiment, especially in relation to the

emotional and subjective nature of heritage encounters and experiences. Palmer (2005) emphasises that heritage tourism assists tourist in conceiving imagining and confirming their belonging to that nation. Visits to heritage sites are seen as ways to encourage nationals to feel part of and be connected to the nation's past in their national imagination. Heritage attractions are often considered as 'sacred centres', places of spiritual and historical pilgrimage that reveal the nation's unique 'moral geography' (Smith 1991, p.16) that facilitate ways in which 'individuals variably position themselves in a broader context of cultural construction and symbolic embodiment of the nation and national identity' (Park 2010, p.120.). A considerable amount of research has been undertaken in social psychology to determine the criteria which are central to the social identity process (Tajfel, 1982; Breakwell, 1986). Drawing on this research the dimensions which serve to define social identity were applied to an investigation of place identity. Uzzell (1998) takes four dimensions of identity from Breakwell's social identity process model as they seemed to have a particular affinity with the goals of heritage interpretation. These were distinctiveness - as this emphasises uniqueness; continuity - which emphasises stable links with the past; self-efficacy - as this places emphasis on a sense of control and competence, the absence of which is alienation and helplessness to which I referred earlier; and self-esteem - a sense of pride and self-respect.

Many researchers (Anderson, 1991; Giddens, 2004) view national identity as a multilayered concept operating as a homogenizing force. As its components, they list the historic homeland (territory), linguistic (ethnic) origins, social system, common values and traditions, common cultural and symbol systems, which link the past and the future. As an important characteristic of national identity, they view dynamism, which is constructed in the common social space.

## **Castles and country houses of the aristocracy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire**

### ***Historical background***

Prior to starting analyzing the historic background of the castle tourism, it is important to note that the proportion of the nobility, who had castles and mansions built, was the highest in Hungary after Poland. The majority of Hungarian castles and mansions were built – for reasons of defence from intruders - in mountainous areas such as the Northeastern region of the country during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Once, there were 4500 castles and mansions in the historic territory of Hungary, however many of them had been ruined in the midst of the history. Nowadays, there are approximately 3500 historical buildings left standing, active, abandoned and in ruins (The National Trust of Monuments for Hungary, 1992). Regarding the present situation, it can be stated that the number of castles combined with mansions in Hungary is 718. The number of mansions is estimated to be between 200-250 in number, which leaves us with about 500 castles in Hungary. Ninety castles are state-owned, protected by legislation on the protection of historical heritage. The rest of the castles have been previously privatised.

Nobility dwellings have two sub-categories: castles, typically commissioned by higher ranking aristocrats are bigger in floor space, number of rooms, size of surrounding park, whereas mansions, commissioned by lower ranking noblemen are smaller in size, and serve as administrative centers of the estate surrounding it.

In the past, it was fashionable for the elite society of Europe to pursue the social circuit from country home to country home (otherwise called mansion), with intervals at town homes, so unfortified country houses supplanted castles and the modern mansion began to evolve. These buildings, due to the special status of aristocracy had been a prerequisite of social standing and had always been the meeting points of arts during centuries - almost all branches of arts : architecture, design, interior decoration, painting, furniture-making, sculpture, inlays, goldsmith's works and textiles are represented. These residences give an insight into the social stratification of the Hungarian noble families, their wide range of relationships, habits and life styles. Therefore, a castle can be an essence or a symbol of the national cultural heritage from the period it had been built and decorated. They had also

been the centre of the period's theatrical, musical, artistic, scientific and cultural life. Moreover, castles gave place to salons of literature, especially in the Reform era (2<sup>nd</sup> part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century), when they served as scenes of reading nights.

Although the terminology of '*castle hotel*' covers a variety of meanings and qualities of hospitality destinations used in various countries, for the purposes of this study the following, Hungarian definition will be used:

The Castle Hotel Section of the Hotel Association of Hungary made a proposal for a bill, to declare that a hotel containing the following definition: 'a building, part of man-made heritages, possessing a representative historical tradition, suitable for at least 3\* accomodation amenities and lastly including catering facilities organised and managed on a sustainably high level, is taken into consideration as a castle hotel (2007). As a result of the definition, Rubovszky, Szigeti, Walkó (2009, p. 351) state that there are now in Hungary 65 castle hotels and 20 hunting castles, opened for general public.

Nonetheless, the midst of the history, the military events of the World War II and the following years were a great blow to these esteemed buildings. Furthermore, the repertory of valuable art treasures, works of art, libraries, archives, and famous portrait galleries collected by the aristocratic families during centuries cannot be replaced.

With the nationalization of 1949, the aristocrat families were forced to move out of their properties and a large number of them emigrated from the country, and the historic buildings received unusual functions to serve working class benefits in the framework of the then prevailing socialist ideologies. For example, in better cases, they were converted to resorts, primary schools, foster-homes, welfare centres, town halls or in extraordinary cases, museum was placed in the "nationalized" castles. In worse cases, they received community centre functions, such as farmer's co-operative centre, machine station, stable, granary, factory or depot- these unusual and often harmful functions contributed to the degradation of the condition of these previously luxurious sites (Nagy, Petykó 2007). Needless to say that in

many cases the decoration and furniture fell victims of the new and politically encouraged peasants' and working class' systematic sackings.

Realising the importance of national historical heritage in tourism, different organizations associated with managing castle tourism came to existence one after the other from the middle of 1950's. However, the turning point in the national protection of historical buildings was Act III. of 1964. which overtly declared that castles are national monuments and part of the national historical patrimony and as such, they must be protected. Castle programmes – reconstruction and renovation of some castles - were gradually introduced, and were speeded up in 1981 when the National Economic Commission made a decision about the protection and utilization of the historical castles and other public buildings. The socio-economic transition introduced in 1989 created a new situation in the protection of historical patrimony resulting in the establishment of the National Monument Protection Office in 1992 and subsequent entry into vigour of a new Act of 1997. Today, the management of historical heritage belonging to national historical patrimony, such as historical monuments, buildings, archaeological finds and their locality, art treasures are regulated by the act nr. LXIV of 2004.

The most memorable man-made heritages are the border fortresses, castles and mansions, which can be found in large numbers in Hungary. These ancient buildings play a special and emphatic role in tourism; therefore, it serves the collective representation of a region's complex historical value as an individual attraction. Hungary is rich in castles and mansions, however, the state, the major owner cannot utilize and manage this treasure being short of the necessary funds. All in all, unfortunately, correct information about the exact number of the ancient buildings cannot be given for the simple reason that there aren't any databases holding adequate data. As a matter of fact, regarding the present situation it can be stated that the number of castles awaiting utilization in Hungary is 718<sup>3</sup>. Out of this, ninety castles

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<sup>3</sup> Corrected data of National Heritage Protection Office, 2012. May; first version published in *Tourism Bulletin* 2002/4

are state-owned which are protected by the monumental legislation<sup>4</sup>. The rest of the castles have been privatised, and thus owned by private individuals, or they belong to local governments of the localities where they are found. The privatisation of the castles was an inevitable measure and solution offered by the managing authorities to contain the rapidly degrading condition of these otherwise invaluable sites of cultural and historical heritage. The new owners were contractually obliged to invest into the maintenance and the historical heritage authorities minutiously supervise and control any alterations from the original architectural style and design. Prior to any alteration, conservation authorities must be consulted and their written authorisation obtained.

## **Research**

### ***Methodology***

The core topic of the investigation is the exploration of castle hotel guests' attitudes and perceptions of historical past. Clearly, when understanding castle hotel guests' attitudes and perceptions, destination management and marketing can prepare to enhance experience and maximise the guests' satisfaction. Segmentation of the customers can provide an invaluable insight into the preferences and likings of the customers. In today's fierce competition, when each destination fights to secure its position by offering unique and distinguished services, the more information there avails on customers, the more efficient the design and planning of the marketing and management can become. In today's turbulent times, can destinations add value to their services by playing on the customers' national feelings, can this be used as distinctive feature that attracts more customers? The final question is then raised: can the connection to one's past - evoked by these heritage destinations - be detected and can it contribute to the reinforcement of national identity?

In the target area of research, the statistical region of Northern Hungary, there are as many as 123 castles (The National Trust of Monuments for Hungary, 1992). Among them there are 16

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<sup>4</sup> According to the Monumental Act nr.LIV. 1997, modified by the Cultural Heritage Protection Act nr.LXIV. 2004.

castle museums and 22 castle hotels ( 3 inactive) in the region. We contacted 11 castle hotel managers, 8 of them showed interest in cooperation. Having compiled the questionnaires, we found that only 4 hotels provided us with fully completed questionnaires, suitable for sampling in our research. A castle hotel as a control destination in the South Trans-Danubian region was designated and questionnaires distributed among guests.

The research instrument used for the purposes of this study was a structured questionnaire implemented through face-to-face interviews at the hotel locations. The questions discussed in this survey are taken from a longer questionnaire that was distributed to the castle hotel guests at five locations. It has been a requirement of the survey to find locations that are comparable in order to assure the reliability of comparison of guests' attitudes and perceptions in a given environment. The hotels included in the survey - although belonging to different categories (4 and 5 star accommodations) and having varied room capacities, were built in the same period, bear similar architectural characteristics both for the exterior and the interior design, are situated in large, landscape park, dispose of the same amenities (see Table 1. and below for the list of comparable features).

*Figure 1. Location of Castle Hotels examined*

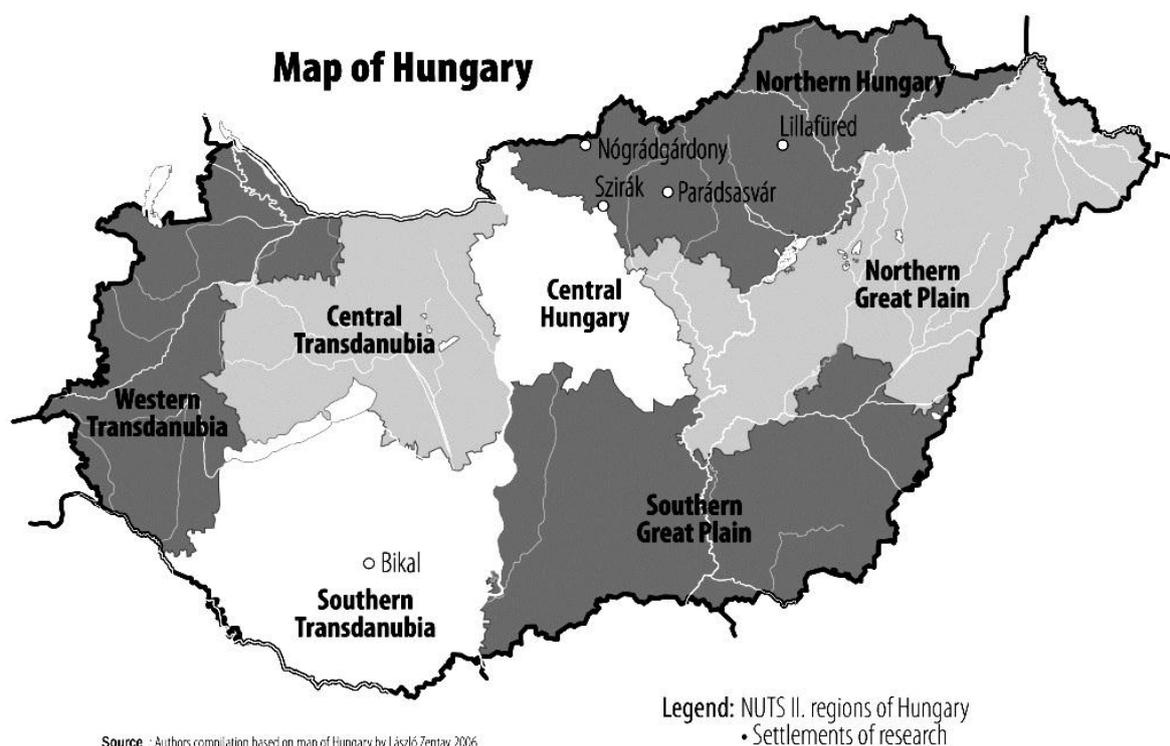


Table 1. Castle Hotel features

Nr:	Castle hotel:	Cate-gory:	Settlement:	Rooms:	Style of castle:	Unique features:
1.	Mansion Hotel Sasvár	5*	Parádsasvár, (Heves)	52+5	Romantic	First 5* countryside hotel
2.	Castle Hotel Puchner	4*	Bikal, (Baranya)	22+24+31	Classical	Renaissance Theme Park
3.	Hunguest Hotel Palota	4*	Lillafüred (BAZ)	133	Neo-renaissance	Largest Castle hotel in Hungary
4.	Főnix Castle Sanatorium	4*	Nógrádgyárdony (Nógrád)	40	Classical	First health care centre in a castle
5.	Castle Hotel Szirák	4*	Szirák (Nógrád)	21+6+2	Baroque	Forever Resort Chain member

Source: authors' compilation

- ❖ Geographical location: mountainous area in small villages, number of resident population is less than 2000 persons<sup>5</sup>.
- ❖ Minimum one-hour drive by car from the capital.
- ❖ Buildings are older than 100 years, in private ownership.
- ❖ Buildings are surrounded by large landscaped parks.
- ❖ Amenities include wellness and open-air sport facilities.
- ❖ Extensive information or exhibition on Architect, Builder Family and former utilisation of the castle on display.
- ❖ Availability of cultural-, training- and leisure programmes and events.

<sup>5</sup> Based on census of 01.01.2010 (KSH)

- ❖ All year-round opening.
- ❖ Renovated or extended in the last ten years.

The interviews were conducted by tourism and hospitality students selected on academic criteria and under the guidance of the authors. Hotel guests were approached by the researchers at the end of their stay where they have had the opportunity to gain an experience at the destination. A pilot survey took place in March 2012 and the main data collection took place between early April and mid-May 2012. The interviews were carried out mainly on weekends where there was a likelihood of higher visitor frequency at the destinations. It has not been an objective to reach a representative sample, as the visitors themselves (due to the higher room rates) originate from more affluent layers of society, but to provide diversity among personal attributes and perceptions. This diversity of tourists in turn enables the generalization of the findings (Poria, Reichel, Biran 2006, p.167). In addition, it should be noted, that female guests were more approachable and more willing to reply.

In order to address the research objectives, first the reliability of the statements aimed at capturing the participants' perceptions of the site was measured. For this, guests were asked to reply to questions about the castle hotel in relation to their own heritage. A one to five scale was used, where 1 indicated *disagree* and 5 indicated *agree*.

The study objectives were articulated around the following assumptions:

1. Castle hotel guests are usually of a more mature age, and have a high level of education
2. Castle hotel guests' leisure time activities include visiting other cultural or historical heritage destinations
3. Castle hotel guests value the historic setting and the extra attribute of the destination that can provide authentic experience of reviving a specific epoch in history – this is reflected in their perception of and associations to the milieu

4. Castle hotel guests believe that visiting and experiencing heritage locations can contribute to the reinforcement of national identity which in turn can help build solid foundations for survival in times of anomy

Answers to the questions were then analysed using SPSS 20. statistical software.

### **Survey findings**

The whole sample consisted of 270 participants (39,5 % male and 60,5 % female). The unequal ratio of female to male could be due to female guests more willing to participate in the interview. Of the total sample, the distribution of educational attainment was the following: primary level (8 classes): 9,1 % ; secondary education: 22,6 % ; vocational education: 14,3 % ; tertiary education: 53,6 % ; other type of education: 0,4 %.

The age distribution was as follows: under 18: 6,7 % ; 18-24 yrs: 18,4 % ; 25-44 yrs: 43,1 % ; 45-64 yrs: 24,7 % ; above 65 yrs: 7,1 % . This distribution is in line with the findings of Garrod and Fyall (2000) reporting that ‘typical heritage tourists are older, with an interest in nostalgia. They are often wealthy’. Income questions in the sample have not been asked, due to the sensitive nature of the topic. Participants were also asked about their faith: 42,2% said they were religious, 39,3 % said they were not religious and 15,1 % refused to answer. On the other hand, when asked about the practice of their religion, the results turned out to be different: 29,3 % commonly practiced religion, 49,6 % did not practice religion and 15,6 % refused to answer.

*Table 2. Visitors’ historical interest and perception of the site*

Question no.	Interest and perception	Disagree					Agree				
		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Visiting castles is part of your cultural interest ( <i>mean= 3,38</i> )	6,8 %	9,4 %	36,5 %	33,%	13,5 %					
2.	You are generally interested in history ( <i>mean=3,49</i> )	6,7 %	10,8 %	29,9 %	32,5 %	20,1 %					
3.	Experience in castle hotels is embedded in history ( <i>mean=3,30</i> )	9,8 %	12,0 %	30,5 %	33,8 %	13,9 %					
4.	Knowing one’s history constitutes a solid foundations that can help society overcome crisis ( <i>mean= 3,10</i> )	13,2 %	13,6 %	37,7 %	20,8 %	14,7 %					

One-way ANOVA search found that socio-demographic features such as age, gender and education level do not have a strong correlation to the above perceptions and attitudes, except for 'Education' on item no.2.: 'Interest in history' (Sig: ,039). In other words, those with higher education attainment level are more interested in history, and the majority of the sample (53,6 %) belong to this category.

Poria, Butler and Airey (2003, p.249) conclude in their survey that 'heritage tourism stems from the relationship between the supply and the demand. It is not so much the attributes themselves, but the perceptions of them, which is critical. ... visitation patterns have to do with participants' personal characteristics, their views, and the meanings they attach to different spaces'. The above four questions targeted at attitude and interest of guests *prior* to their stay at the castle hotel, so that motivation patterns could be obtained. From the answers (mean=3,38) it seems that guests' cultural visitation patterns is slightly above the average, and there may be other considerations that motivated them to stay at the castle hotel. General interest in history (mean =3,49) scores higher than castle visits. Interestingly, guests' perception of their stay at the castle hotel does not show any significant relationship to historical experience ('embeddedness in history'), which may mean that it is difficult for modern people to revive or place themselves in the castle builder aristocrat's luxurious life.

Another explanation for this phenomenon can be that the castle interior design and the atmosphere, design attributes do not allow guests to be fully immersed in the period when the castle dwellers lived. This is an issue for the management to consider whether or not the guests' experience can be further enhanced and by what solutions. It is also true that due to the specific status of the aristocracy in the region, 'ordinary' people still perceive a distance from them and cannot fully identify with their lifestyle and behaviour (Godsey1999). The score for the fourth question (knowing historical past can constitute a foundation helping society to overcome crisis) with mean=3,10 is inferior to the score of the previous questions. This can mean any of the followings: Hungarian society is composed of members that are

highly individualistic. Hungary ranks on the 5<sup>th</sup> place in terms of individualism vs. collectivism as cultural value (Füstös, L., Róbert, P., Tárnok, O. eds. 2011, p.112). On the other hand subjective well-being is undoubtedly the lowest in the region (Böhnke 2008) and Hungarians have lost in faith in the political institutions of the country (Füstös, Róbert, Tárnok, eds. 2011, p.114). The combination of these factors may result in the unclear perspective for overcoming anomy, value- or economic crisis. It is not necessarily the loss of faith in the historical past, as historical past as a value category is highly appreciated by the population. The results of the above attitude and value questions clearly follow vale patterns explored in the most recent value investigations such as World Values Survey Wave 5: 'Hungarians are distrustful, frown upon social inequality and think the welfare system is unfair. They are in two minds about breaking rules and are deeply committed to state redistribution. They live according to historical patterns embedded in their everyday life. They are in favour of tradition, this attitude is slightly rising between 2004-2008. This places their values and attitudes closer to those of Eastern Orthodox countries than to the West.' (TÁRKI 2009, p.123)

In a second instance, the correlations between the attitude and perception items were investigated, using bivariate Spearman correlation.

*Table 3. Attitude and perception correlations*

		Castle visits	Overcome Crisis	Interest in history	Stay embedded in history
Spearman's rho	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,346**	,454**	,453**
	Castle visits Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,000	,000	,000
	N	266	261	264	262
Overcome Crisis	Correlation Coefficient	,346**	1,000	,449**	,476**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	.	,000	,000

	N	261	265	263	262
Interest in history	Correlation Coefficient	,454**	,449**	1,000	,416**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	.	,000
	N	264	263	268	264
Stay embedded in history	Correlation Coefficient	,453**	,476**	,416**	1,000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	.
	N	262	262	264	266

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The investigation reveals significant correlations between the items in the attitude and perception inventory, but the most significant correlations, in order of significance are found between *'Stay embedded in history'* and *'Overcome crisis'* = ,476; followed by *'Castle visits'* and *'Interest in history'* = ,454; and *'Castle visits'* and *'Stay embedded in history'* and *'Castle visits'* = ,453.

The next phase in the investigation process was the domain of associations. Castle hotel guests were asked to – focussing on the word *'castle'* select from a repertory of items any 5 that are conjured up. The repertory items pertain to architectural, social, cultural, historical and lifestyle characteristics of castles. Associated items did not have to be in a rank of importance. It resulted that many respondents did not even provide more than 2-3 associated items. Reported items were then aggregated and a rank, based on the number of mentions was calculated. The associated items are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Items associated to 'Castle'

Rank	Item name	Percentage	No. of mentions
4.	Aristocracy	9,4 %	113
5.	Representative building	8,9 %	107
	Expensive maintenance	1,6 %	19
1.	Historical past	14,1 %	170
	Hotel	6,7 %	81
	Museum	5,0 %	60
	Estate administrative centre	2,7 %	32
3.	Luxurious lifestyle	11,0 %	133
	Ample space	6,2 %	75
	Servants	3,1 %	37
	Cultural salon	2,0 %	24
	Balls, receptions	7,9 %	95

	Historical monument	8,5 %	102
2.	Landscape park	13,0 %	156
<i>Total</i>		<i>100</i>	<i>1204</i>

The first element that stands out of these results is that guests, although their interviewing took place in a historical setting, in a 4 or 5 star hotel, did not associate the castle with hotel accommodation. In fact, hotel as an item of association reached a very low ranking (6,7 %). On the other hand, the first rank item in the guests' associative work is '*historical past*' with 14,1 %, followed by 'landscape park' 13,0 % and 'luxurious lifestyle' with 11,0 % on third place. All these three features pertain to the luxurious lifestyle of aristocrats and amenities that castles built in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century included. '*Aristocracy*' as a social class is on 4<sup>th</sup> place with 9,4 % of the total number of mentions, followed by '*representative building*' with 8,9 % .

The results of this associative phase reveal the following pattern: although guests' perception and attitudes relating to history are not extremely articulate and strong as seen in Table 2., the ranking clearly demonstrates that castles belong to historical past, and as such they are heritage sites. Castles in the respondent's cognition are surrounded by landscape parks and the combination of these two features result in the luxurious lifestyle that aristocrats lived and which can be revived by staying in a castle hotel. Now, this result has a special message for destination management: guests are motivated by reviving historical past and benefiting from the aristocrats' special lifestyle, but the destination fails to accomplish this objective.

## **Conclusion and future research**

### ***Implications for Management***

When promoting the castle hotel feelings and emotions underlying the historical heritage attribute are relevant in order to attract guests. Previous research shows that tourism destinations and their management offer emotional and cognitive stimuli and facilitate service experience consumption (Horváth 2012). Results of the current survey reveal that search for emotional connection was the most important motivation factor for hotel guests, therefore, communication elements should emphasize emotional experience connected to the historical heritage aspect guests are expected to have. In an attempt to provide better and more

holistic experience for the castle hotel guests, the heritage interpretation process should be facilitated and enhanced. Management should fully deploy the characteristics of the physical structures of the castle hotels in order to provide a staged authentic experience for the guests. Guests, based on their former experience, knowledge and emotional state will interpret historical heritage differently. Ashworth (1996, 1998) highlights this point and suggests that different individuals perceive and encounter heritage spaces in different ways based on their own cultural backgrounds. Moreover, history on display often represents far more than just a formal educational experience; for example, it may evoke an emotional experience (Poria, Butler and Airey 2003c) or allow one to “feel connected to ancestors and ancestral roots” (McCain and Ray 2003, p.713). Additionally, Uzzell (1998) suggests that “museums and interpretive centers can be seen as places where people come to understand themselves” (p.16).

The survey tried to conjure a picture of guest attitudes and perceptions of historical past as well as associations to historical past at a special hybrid destination that combines historico-cultural heritage and hospitality. Its findings demonstrate that guests’ perception of historical past is embedded in their personal value system, and visitation patterns depend on personal characteristics such as education attainment and general interest in history. Guests are hesitating to commit themselves to the idea that crisis situations (value crisis, anomy as a consequence of globalisation, socio-economic transition or economic crisis) can be solved by reinforcing national identity formation based on historical identity and understanding one’s historical past. This postulate needs more in-depth analysis and survey, as there are other components of identity formation, which – due to the limitations of this study – were not addressed. As a first approach, it can be stated that the uncertain attitude towards solutions by knowing historical past is partly the consequence of value crisis and more particularly, Hungarians’ distrust of political institutions.

Castle hotels’ image as a tourism destination is primarily a place of luxurious conditions, accommodation with landscape park, built and owned by aristocrats where a period of history

can be revived. It is the image of luxury and aristocratic lifestyle, high-class amenities and not so much the need to be connected to historical past that motivates visitors. It is clear from the survey that guests distinguish between 'castles' and 'the castle hotel site' where they stayed during the interview period. 'Castles' are perceived with more positive attributes than castle hotel, the actual destination. 'Castles' conjure up images of luxurious lifestyle or aristocrats, somewhat distant from contemporary hotel guests' lifestyles.

Another observation and proposal for elaborating future research plan is the issue of *explicit* vs. *implicit* perceived image. The value of understanding the destination images perceived by potential tourists is generally recognised, as such images are crucial in the actual travel decision-making process, (Chen and Tsai, 2007). The measurement of destination image traditionally relied on self-report measures (Echtner and Ritchie, 1991) and (Tasci et al., 2007), such as questionnaires and group interviews, focusing on the explicit cognitive process. Meanwhile previous studies have empirically confirmed the validity and sensitivity of implicit cognition in a consumer behaviour setting ( Brunel et al., 2004), Self-report measures measure *explicit* perceived image. Therefore, the limitations of self-report measures and the importance of implicit cognition urge tourism researchers to take implicit measurement of destination image into consideration. In light of a growing amount of social psychology research, explicit measure is restricted by the respondent's introspective ability; and individuals may have two different cognitive processes toward an object at the same time – one is conscious explicit cognition and the other is unconscious implicit cognition (Yang, He, Gu 2012, p.51).

*Figure 2: Castle Hotel Sasvár, Parádsasvár*

*Figure 3: Puchner Castle, Bikal*

*Figure 4: Hunguest Hotel Palota, Lillafüred*

*Figure 5. Főnix Castle Hotel, Nógrádgárdony*

*Figure 6. Castle Hotel Szirák, Szirák*

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