Original Article

Characteristics of adventure parks with a focus on human resources and visitor profiles

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Abstract:

Purpose: In order to map human-resources supply, in our research, we conducted in-depth interviews with directors (6) of leading Hungarian adventure parks. We looked for characteristics of recruiting methods and incentives as well as factors of choosing between candidates. We used a questionnaire survey to discover motivations of adventure park visitors (N=406) and in the case of two adventure parks we also assessed visitors' (N=206) satisfaction with services. The returned questionnaires were processed using SPSS 22.0. We computed descriptive statistics, analysed cross tables and checked Chi² statistics and Gamma coefficient to find significant relationships.

Results: In connection with recruiting the dominant methods are online and through personal connections, for initiatives of the various positions in the adventure park non-material incentives (varied and youthful work environment, discounts for family members) appear most often while in the selection process, instead of professional competencies, personal competencies (communication skills, personality, team work) are the most important.

Conclusions: Consumer satisfaction is therefore undoubtedly constituting the basis of a well-functioning business, but the supply of individual services and focusing on different target groups can also make a significant contribution to economic growth.

Key Words: adventure park, HR, recreation, tourism, satisfaction test

Introduction

In our modern world, experience-cantered and nature-based entertainment forms and services are gaining significance. Instead of recreational activities and recreational sports, providing experience and entertainment is becoming more and more pronounced, (Sárközy, 2017), (Horkay, Lenténé Puskás, & Bíró, 2018). The adventure parks operating in Hungary fully satisfy the consumer's needs for experience and entertainment. It is probably due to this fact that their number is growing rapidly, as they meet a growing demand. Adventure parks are typically located in beautiful natural environments, which are aligned with the "recharge in nature" leisure and tourism trends (Fuggle, Kow, Burkhard, & Silva, 2017). There is a growing need for new types of leisure activities. In extreme sports, which is one of them, new type of experience, challenge, rise of adrenaline levels and the motivation to take risks are the dominant motivational factors (Celsi, Rose, & Leigh, 1993) (Olsen, 2007) (Shoham, Rose, & Kahle, 2000) (Ritchie & Adair, 2004) (Ritchie & Hudson, 2009). As looking for experience, challenges and taking risk are dominant motivational factors among visitors of adventure parks too (Boda, Bácsné Bába, & Müller, 2018), fans and consumers of extreme sports can be one possible target audience group for adventure parks (Müller, Bolega, Gabnai, Bácsné Bába, & Pfau, 2018). Looking for experience is an important motivation of the tourist of the XXI. century. At the Krakow conference of the WTO it was emphasized, "Customers focus not so much on price/value ratio but rather on the relationship between the invested energy and efforts (not only money) and the products provided in return." (Halassy, 1999) The development and the service portfolio of adventure parks is based on this experience-centeredness. This study aims to present characteristics of Hungarian adventure parks from several aspects. It examines characteristics of human resources supply and consumer/visitor qualities.

In the field of tourism, including active tourism, human resources are an essential factor. One of the most significant economic impacts of the tourism industry is that it significantly improves employment through job creation (Budeanu, 2005) (Holloway, 2009) (Michalkó, 2012). Every 11th employee in the world worked in tourism in 2012 (WTTC, 2013). The dominance of high added value products and services in the economy is growing (Czeglédi & Juhász, 2015). In tourism, service dominance is apparent making it a labour-intensive industry. In addition to being necessary, the quality of workforce is extremely important in how customers rate

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service providers. Therefore, their role in the life of businesses / organizations is gaining more and more importance. A well-planned HR strategy is essential to maintain competitiveness. It is therefore essential to develop an appropriate HR strategy and attractive job opportunities. The organizational structure of small tourism businesses (e.g. adventure parks) is typically not well-defined. Owing to this, HR activities are carried out in a less regulated and not so much classical framework. It is usually the head of the enterprise who does administrative tasks. Tasks requiring more specialized knowledge (e.g. payroll, work and social security administration, making reports) are outsourced. Middle-sized companies more often employ a full or part time HR professional. In this way specific HR tasks can be identified (Kürtösi, 2013)

In 2011 survey market leading travel agencies (n=99 accounting for 85% of organized tours) which were members of the Association of Hungarian Travel Agencies (MUISZ) were asked about HR issues in a questionnaire. The authors (Papp & Formádi, 2014) found that in the Hungarian travel agencies recruiting new employees is typically done relying on personal connections and employing trainees who can become full time workers after performing at a required level. The study also suggests that travel agencies use traditional recruiting sources (e.g. professional journals, internet) and selecting candidates involves a pre-selection based on the submitted CVs followed by a personal interview.

According to Gold (Gold, 2007) recruiting is the process in the course of which the organization creates a group of people suitable for the given tasks. In a 2011 research conducted in Macau concluded that the most typical recruitment method is the project-based interview where candidates' attitude to the project, interest level, communication and presentation skills and motivation were assessed (Chan & Kuok, 2011).

In order to map visitors, we found it essential to explore their leisure habits and motivational drives as well as conduct a service satisfaction survey. The most recent time-scale survey revealed that a Hungarian adult has a daily average of nearly four and a half hours of free time most of which is spent in front of the TV screen. Sports and exercise activities are practiced by less than 16% of people and time spent on sport had fallen compared to previous years. Compared to 19 minutes in 1999/2000, it decreased to 15 minutes in 2009/2010 (Statisztikai Tükör, 2011).

According to a study published in 2014, Hungarian people aged 16 or over rated the amount of their free time available 6,33 on a scale of 0 to 10 (KSH, 2014). In a survey conducted in the European Union, almost half of Europeans (49.2%) are somewhat satisfied with their use of time on average, on a scale of 0-10 the value being 6.7 on average. As an interesting point, people spend 37.5 hours per week working on average in the EU Member States and spend 3.3% of their total spending on recreational and cultural services. This is 39.5 hours a week in Hungary with 3.6% of total spending on recreational and cultural services (Eurostat, 2013).

Regarding the motivation of choice, a large part of tourism research deals with this issue. Crompton (Crompton, 1979), in his study, identifies tourist motivations that influence the choice of a tourist destination. Crompton categorized the motivations into 2 types one being socio-psychological and the other cultural. The study of travel motivation is important if we want to understand the demand for tourism and the behaviour of tourists, and to predict the purchase decisions (Crompton, 1979) (Yoon & Uysal, 2005) (Huang & Hsu, 2009).

Hsu and Huang (Hsu & Huang, 2008) divided socio-psychological motivation into 7 elements: escape from everyday life, recreation / relaxation, self-exploration / self-discovery, prestige, increase / emphasis on relatives, social interaction and regression. Cultural motivation, the second big motivation group, includes two other elements, novelty and education. Satisfaction is a key factor in tourism and other services as the satisfaction of tourists influences the number of visitors to the park, both through word of mouth advertising and the willingness to return. The latter has to be underlined because returning guests serve as information source for other tourists (Liang, 2009) (Zhang, Su, & Hu, 2012) (Ráthonyi, 2013) (Ráthonyi, Ráthonyi-Ódor, Várallyai, & Botos, 2016). The level of visitor satisfaction is also influenced by the quality experienced which can boost the number of returning guests (Ahmadi, 1997) (Lees-Miller, Hammersley, & Davenport, 2009) (Zhang, Su, Li, & Hu, 2013) (Li, Lai, Harrill, Kline, & Wang, 2011) (Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

Material & methods

Several methods were used in our research. For the purpose of mapping human resources supply we have contacted the market leaders of the leading adventure parks in Hungary with the aim of making an in-depth interview on the topic. The interviews were semi-structured focusing on recruitment, selection, and insertion. In the course of the in-depth interview in connection with selection criteria we selected some international literature which we modified according to the specialties the adventure park (Okeiyi, Finley, & Postel, 1994) (Kavanagh & Drennan, 2008) (Tanyel, Mitchell, & McAlum, 1999) (Heneman & Judge, 2006) (Chan & Kuok, 2011). Our goal was to discover whether there is a difference between adventure parks or whether there is any special element in the HR's recruitment, selection and insertion process. Are they using the classical methods that are typical for other industries? What do they consider important for the candidates and through which channels are they looking for new workforce?

Our study includes the information gained in interviews with leaders of six adventure parks: Orczy Adventure Park (currently not operating) in the heart of Budapest, in the Bükk the Kalanderdő Adventure Park in Szilvásvárad, the Zemplén Adventure Park, the Sobri Jóska Adventure Park in Bakony, the Adventure Island of Tiszafüred and the Oxygen Adrenalin Park in Sástó. Each one of them is unique in their own region. Five of

them are in the mountains or have some natural attraction and the facility in the capital city is located in a bustling downtown area making it unique in Hungary. The Orczy Adventure Park, which started its operation in the early 2000s, is the oldest one of them. The data was processed using Excel to determine the average values for the presentation of the graphical output.

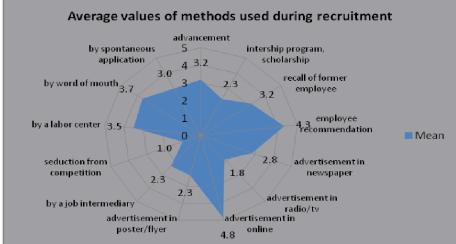
A questionnaire was applied to survey consumers. In compiling the questions, we strived to obtain a broad and complex picture of the visitors' behaviour in connection with visiting adventure parks and of their leisuretime habits. The first phase of data collection took place between September and December 2017. Consumers who visited Hungarian adventure parks at least once (n = 408 people) were selected by convenience sampling. Data were analysed using SPSS 22.0. During the analysis descriptive statistics was computed and during the cross-table analysis we looked for significant differences using the Chi2 test supplemented by the analysis of Gamma coefficient. Of the 408 people, 190 (46.6%) were men and 218 (53.4%) were women; 83.8% of the respondents were under 30 years of age. On weekdays, 30.9% of the respondents have 2-3 hours of leisure time. This figure reaches 4-5 hours for the majority of respondents at the weekend. More than half of the respondents (51%, 208 people) visit the adventure park less frequently than each year, 21.6% (88 people) do this every year while 14.2% (58 people) have not been to an adventure park yet. The visit itself was an additional program for the largest percentage of the sample (59.1%, 241 people) primarily traveling for a different purpose while 40.9% (167 people) visited the tourist destination only to use the adventure park services. Most of the visits were made together with family (43.4%, 177 people) and mostly in the summer and at weekends (70.6%, 288 people). More than 35% of the respondents in the sample stated that they try to be active in their leisure time and described this period free from obligations as youthful, modern, active, innovative and sporty. Our previous research had shown that men are more active while spending their leisure time than women, a fact which should be taken into account when developing adventure park services, or in marketing messages sent to female and male consumers (Boda, Bácsné Bába, Szabados, & Müller, 2018). The most frequently chosen motivation to visit the adventure park was the parks' entertainment quality (44.4%; 181 people).

We assumed:

- Personal competencies are more important in selecting new workforce than experience and practice.
 The "place" of recruitment is shifting towards online media and the most common motivators for those working in adventure parks are non-cash incentives.
- There is a correlation between the motivation of the visit and the amount of free time available and these two factors affect one another. People with more leisure time prefer adventure parks and entertainment is the main reason for visiting.
- There is a positive relationship between satisfaction and the availability of some services for the visitors
 of the Zemplén Adventure Park and Oxygen Adrenalin Park. The more satisfied the consumer is with
 the service, the more important it will be for him.

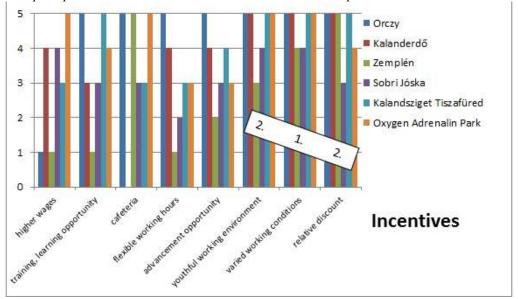
Results

We begin by analysing the results of the interview. In general, it can be stated that the interviewed executives think that providing adequate supply of human strength is crucial in the life of an adventure park. It is essential to select the most appropriate human resource for a particular job as the quality of the services and the reputation of the park are dependent on it. The presentation of our results is approached considering three aspects: recruitment method ("location"), incentive / motivating factors and critical aspects of selection. Previously, we assumed that, modern techniques are preferred to classical ones by park manager in the recruitment process. During the interviews the directors were asked to comment on the channels used to look for new workforce and also to rate between 1-5, how effective the method is. Graph 1. depicts the results of the answers to the question.



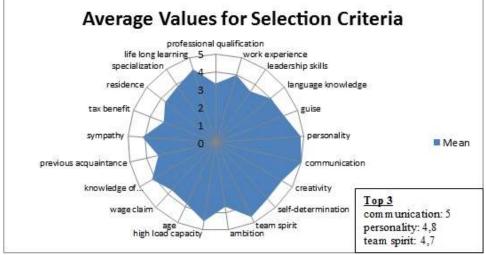
Graph 1. Average values of methods used during recruitment (based on own data collection, 2016-2018)

It is apparent that the job advertisements on online channels rank highest followed by the recruitment based on employees' recommendation and world of mouth tradition also with higher rating. In conclusion, as we had assumed, modern channels and personal connections are used in this sector as well to reach the suitable workforce. Following this we asked the directors what motivating factors they were using to make the job attractive. Graph 2. presents the most used incentives for each adventure park.



Graph 2. Incentives and most popular forms of recruitment (based on own data collection, 2016-2018)

As it was previously assumed, this sector is characterised by non-material attractions. The most favoured factor was found to be the promise of a varied work workplace while the attractions of a vibrant and youthful work environment and discounts for relatives (in which a material factor appears) followed with similar rankings. Choosing the right workforce is crucial in the life of a service provider as consumers are met personally every day and because of this the behaviour of a worker has a significant impact on guest satisfaction (Boda, Müller, & Bácsné Bába, 2018). In the course of the interviews, we developed a system of criteria, in which the subjects were asked to evaluate them between 1-5 according to how important they considered them. Following this the top 5 were selected and ranked. Graph 3 shows the mean values of each aspect. It can be seen that the subjects responsible for selection appreciate the existence of communication skills the highest, followed by personality traits (including internal qualities and appearance) and as the third most important, team spirit (cooperating in a group, adaptation for the sake of the group etc.). It is interesting to note that having the right professional qualifications does not represent such a great advantage in this area, neither does previous acquaintance. Our earlier assumptions therefore seem to be justified in connection with the human resources supply, that is, modern channels and personal connections dominate the recruitment methods. In the case of incentives, the non-material ones appear most often for the various jobs in the adventure park, while in the selection possessing the right personal competences counts as an advantage.



Graph 3. Average values for selection criteria (based on own data collection, 2016-2018)

Out of the results of our consumer survey leisure and motivation related results are presented first. We looked for a link between the available leisure time at weekends and on weekdays and the motivation to visit

adventure park. In the questionnaire, we had identified six types of motivations that had been adapted to the range of services offered by adventure parks. Respondents had to rate them on a 1-6 scale according to how important they thought them in making a decision. The amusement factor motivates most of the adventure park guests to visit, which is 44.4% of respondents. Similar results were obtained in our previous research (Boda et al. 2018 c). These results support the existence of the leisure, sport, fitness-wellness and tourism trends that confirm or predict the importance of the entertainment factor (Müller, A legújabb trendek a sportmarketing és a menedzsment területén, 2009) (Szabó, 2006) (Bodnár, 2008) (Müller, és mtsai., 2013) (Müller, és mtsai., 2017) (Herpainé Lakó, Simon, Nábrádi, & Müller, 2017).

The most adventurous-specific statement was a visit for "challenge and extremity", which was found to be the second most popular motivation among respondents. 31.6% of the sample, 129 people chose the most typical response while the most popular answer was the visit for entertainment chosen by 181 people, representing 44.4% of the sample. 20.1% of respondents chose, as absolutely typical, the proximity to nature as a reason to visit. The growing importance of natural values in tourism has been confirmed by several studies (Könyves & Müller, 2001) (Várhelyi, Müller, Torday, & Kovács, 2009) (Bíró, 2017). In the case of four of the six motivations a significant correlation with the amount of free time was detected. These results are summarized in Table I. below:

Table I. Summary of significant differences depending on the volume and spend of motivation and leisure (based on own research)

Aspects examined	Chi ² value	df	р
Motivation: Considering a New Type of Popular Entertainment Vs. Average daily leisure time	30.464 ^a	16	.016
Motivation: Considering a New Type of Popular Entertainment Vs. Average weekend leisure time	59.466ª	16	.000
Motivation: Proximity to nature Vs. Average weekend leisure time	29.229 ^a	16	.022
Motivation: Curiosity Vs. Average weekend leisure time	27.733 ^a	16	.034
Motivation: Fun activity Vs. Average daily leisure time	42.448 ^a	16	.000
Motivation: Fun activity Vs. Average weekend leisure time	129.973 ^a	16	.000

Our assumption that the motivation to visit the adventure park is influenced by the consumer's free time, and that people with more leisure time at the weekend will prefer to visit, seems to be verified. In case of 4 motivations we discovered a significant difference and in the case of 2 motivations correlation was found in connection with both the weekend and the weekday free time. Many respondents having 1-2 and 2-3 hours of leisure time on an average weekday rated motivations to visit an adventure park at least 3 (somewhat typical), but even more rated them with 4 or 5 on the scale. For the weekend this amount of leisure time showed significant results for respondents having 4-5 hours of leisure time.

In our research, a satisfaction survey was also conducted among the visitors of two parks (Zemplén Adventure Park and Oxygen Adrenalin Park). In the sample, 206 of the 408 people were retained because the other respondents did not comment on these two parks. To do the survey, we used a questionnaire prepared by Ryan et al. (Ryan, Shin Shuo, & Huang, 2010). This questionnaire was specialized for adventure parks.

We asked the visitors about 15 factors. Besides their satisfaction we also focused on the importance of the factor, that is, how much the consumer felt the quality of the factor was significant. Among the factors analysed were the presence of the park's entertainment function, a diverse range of programs, active relaxation, the atmosphere of the park, design elements/ overall impression of the park, the availability of extremes/challenging services. These statements / factors had to be evaluated on a forced selection scale of 1 to 4, where 1 meant not at all important or not at all satisfied, while 4 meant very important or very satisfied.

In Table II., the mean is supplemented by standard deviation. The top3 means have the lowest standard deviation for both tests. They deviate from the average by less than 0.6 indicating that the ratings (1 to 4) differed only slightly from each other.

Table II. Summary of values and standard deviation of importance and satisfaction factors (based on (Ryan, Shin Shuo, & Huang, 2010) own research)

How important and how satisfied are you with the controls?	Mean Importance	Std Dev. Importance	Mean Satisfaction	Std Dev. Satisfaction
The park has safe rides	3.70	0.598	3.53	0.660
The levels of hygiene	3.74	0.531	3.35	0.730
To spend time with family	3.68	0.611	3.71	0.561
There are easily accessible toilets	3.41	0.752	3.19	0.783
Enjoy period of fun	3.70	0.596	3.55	0.695
Provides active recreation	3.66	0.627	3.67	0.574
The entry price	3.55	0.722	3.15	0.791
The entertainers	3.59	0.654	3.25	0.810
The service personnel	3.59	0.6.39	3.43	0.714
Existence of meal options, its offer and quality	3.27	0.858	3.10	0.805
The park has a queuing time for rides of less 10	3.56	0.650	3.12	0.814

minutes				
The overall atmosphere of the park	3.50	0.675	3.41	0.712
Extreme, challenging services	3.28	0.824	3.30	0.787
Security and clarity of on-site information	3.50	0.731	3.38	0.754
The adventure park website, and the information	3.44	0.823	3.26	0.790
on the website				

Following the cross-table analysis, Chi²-test was performed for each factor in terms of relevance versus satisfaction in order to find significant differences. In our case, it is virtually irrelevant which of the variables are designated to be dependent and independent, but we had chosen the importance to be the dependent one. Out of 15 10 factors showed a strongly significant difference, proving that satisfaction has an impact on the importance of the existence and good quality of services. The degree of freedom took values of 9 and 6. We also considered the Gamma coefficient during the analysis. It showed positive value in all cases, hence it can be concluded that those who rated the satisfaction for each factor higher, attached greater importance to their importance. Significant correlation cannot be demonstrated for 3 factors which were: the price-to-value ratio of ticket, the availability of meals and the low waiting time. The price-to-value ratio has been mentioned earlier in the study in connection with satisfaction results as being the lowest rated factor. Dining options vary from park to park around the country. It is not a factor closely related to the experiential elements of the park, but rather an additional service that the consumer does not necessarily regards to be a necessity, hence the management of the park can consider whether to set up a separate buffet.

In the two parks examined there is a way to do it, however, as the results show, there is no correlation between its importance and how satisfied visitors are with it. No correlation with the waiting time was found either. This might be explained by the fact that one visits an adventure park as a leisure activity, as he relaxes with family and friends outdoors, he can tolerate it better if he has to wait more at a particular game item. The study confirmed our second assumption, as we had previously assumed, that is, there is positive correlation between the two factors examined. Table III. summarizes the quantified results.

Table III. Summary Table of Chi² Analysis of Importance and Satisfaction Data (Own Research)

Tuble III. Summary Tuble of Citi 7 marysis		Chi² value			
	Asymp.	Cni vaiue	df	Gamma	Most typical marking
	Sig.				(Person, %)
Security importance vs. satisfaction	.000	30,455 ^a	9	.442	4 – 4 (106 p., 51,5%)
Hygiene importance vs. satisfaction	.005	18,673 ^a	6	.436	4 – 4 (88 p., 42,7%)
Social leisure activity importance vs.	.000	75,608 ^a	9	.810	4 – 4 (137 p., 66,5%)
satisfaction					
Access to toilet importance vs.	.000	32,505 ^a	9	.301	4 – 4 (58 p., 28,2%
satisfaction					
Fun function importance vs. satisfaction	.000	42,810 ^a	6	.696	4 – 4 (120 p., 58,3%) 4 – 4 (127 p., 61,7%)
Provides active recreation importance vs.	.000	49,648 ^a	6	.719	4 – 4 (127 p., 61,7%)
satisfaction					
Entry price importance vs. satisfaction	.190	12,429 ^a	9	.199	4 – 4 (61 p., 29,6%)
The entertainers importance vs.	.000	108,690°	9	.541	4 – 4 (78 p., 37,9%)
satisfaction					
The service personnel importance vs.	.038	13,316 ^a	6	.338	4 – 4 (86 p., 41,7%)
satisfaction		•			•
Existence of meal options, its offer and	.590	7,451 ^a	9	.117	4 – 4 (42 p., 20,4%)
quality importance vs. satisfaction					
Little waiting time importance vs.	.201	8,536 ^a	6	.165	4 – 4 (57 p., 27,7%)
satisfaction					
Atmosphere importance vs. satisfaction	.000	32,566 ^a	6	.527	4 – 4 (84 p., 40,8%)
Extreme, challenging services	.000	31,866 ^a	9	.370	4 – 4 (63 p., 30,6%)
importance vs. satisfaction		•			•
On-site information importance vs.	.000	44,711 ^a	9	.567	4 – 4 (89 p., 43,2%)
satisfaction		Ź			
The contents of the park's website	.000	45,338 ^a	9	.459	4 – 4 (73 p., 35,4%)
importance vs. satisfaction		-			

Discussion

Adventure parks as tourism or leisure time service providers are labour intensive businesses. Quality of the service is impacted by the performance of the workforce and, as it is well-known, its level is not constant as services are characterised by heterogeneity (Veres, 2002) (Tsitskari, Tsiotras, & Tsiotras, 2006). Consequently, recruitment, selection and insertion of good workforce have an influence on the success of service providers. In our research we found that the examined adventure parks make conscious HR efforts in connection with human resources supply and consider it as a strategic factor. The most frequently used method of recruitment is the online surfaces and recommendation by employees. Directors of adventure parks consider the following factors important in choosing new workers: personality, communication skills, team spirit, tolerance of big workload, previous knowledge about the park, foreign language skills, appearance, independence and specialised knowledge or willingness to obtain such knowledge. As for insertion, employers prefer the probation period spent under the guidance of an experienced worker. Based on our research focusing on consumer leisure

preferences, motivation and satisfaction with the services of adventure parks, it can be asserted that in the analysis of services it is worth examining issues related to how people spend their leisure time, as there may be interesting correlations between motivations and the culture of spending leisure time. It has also been proved that the quality of services is an indispensable factor in ensuring competitiveness in any market. Consequently, it is also true for adventure parks operating in the active tourism and sport sector (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985)

Conclusion

Consumer satisfaction is therefore undoubtedly constituting the basis of a well-functioning business, but the supply of individual services and focusing on different target groups can also make a significant contribution to economic growth. Despite the fact that they are not geographically far apart, the two parks investigated, are successful businesses in their own sector, the key to which being the difference in target groups and the satisfaction of the visitors.

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