

Industrial tourism – trends and opportunities

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Abstract

Over the last few decades, new types of destinations appeared in tourism because of the ever growing competition and economic restructuring of regions. In some cases such places became attractions which were considered ugly and unattractive earlier.

As part of this process, industrial tourism was also strengthened. This means that former or still operating factories and other industrial facilities have become tourist destinations. This paper reviews the conceptual framework of industrial tourism and presents the main trends in it. We also analyse the possibilities for industrial tourism development in Hungary. The study is based on qualitative and quantitative content analysis of homepages. We investigated homepages of travel agencies, local and regional municipalities and companies to find out whether they see possibilities in industrial tourism or not. According to our results, Hungary despite the existence of rich industrial heritage and still operating factories, industrial tourism is underdeveloped in.

Keywords: *tourism, Hungary, deindustrialisation, industrial tourism*

Rezumat. Turismul industrial – tendințe și oportunități

În ultimele decenii, au apărut noi tipuri de destinații turistice ca urmare a unei competiții tot mai strânse și a unei economii în schimbare a regiunilor. În unele cazuri, unele locuri, care anterior erau considerate urâte și repulsive au devenit atracții turistice. Ca parte a acestui proces, s-a afirmat și turismul industrial. Asta înseamnă că fostele fabrici sau cele care sunt încă funcționale au devenit atracții turistice. Lucrarea de față prezintă cadrul conceptual pentru turismul industrial și discută principalele tendințe ale acestui sector. De asemenea, sunt analizate posibilitățile pentru dezvoltarea turismului industrial în Ungaria. Lucrarea se bazează pe studiul calitativ și cantitativ al conținutului paginilor web, în urma analizării site-urilor web ale agențiilor de turism, autorităților locale și regionale și ale altor companii pentru a afla în ce măsură acestea consideră că există vreo posibilitate pentru turismul industrial. Conform rezultatelor acestui studiu, Ungaria, deși dispune de un bogat patrimoniu industrial, și fabrici încă viabile, nu are dezvoltat turismul industrial.

Cuvinte-cheie: *turism, Ungaria, dezindustrializare, turism industrial*

Introduction

Because of the ever increasing competition and the economic restructuring of regions new forms of tourism and new types of destinations emerged in the last few decades (Aubert – Berki 2007, Lengyel 2001). In some cases, places and facilities which were considered ugly and unattractive earlier, drew significant attention and became popular tourist destinations.

The growing importance of industrial tourism is part of the above mentioned process. In the case of industrial tourism, former or still operating industrial facilities (e.g. factories, mills, forges, etc.) and related buildings are becoming attractions. These attractions can form clusters which are based on industrial regions – therefore, they can cover large territories. Industrial tourism is often related to deindustrialisation: it occurs in regions where jobs disappeared and local economy is in crisis because of the collapse of the former industrial activities. Therefore, industrial tourism means not only a new form of tourism but it can be a tool for enhancing

well-being and quality of life and also can contribute to the successful economic restructuring.

In this paper we draw up the main tendencies and opportunities of industrial tourism. In addition, we also present the situation of industrial tourism in Hungary, concentrating on the supply side of it.

Methods and data

The study is based on the content analysis of internet homepages. This method is widely used in the analysis of tourism because the role of the internet as an information source is more and more important. Growing number of tourists use it for gathering information about the possible destinations and the supply side of tourism considers internet as one of the most important medium of their marketing.

Various types of web pages were analyzed:

- homepages of tourist agencies;
- homepages of companies (from sectors in which the appearance of industrial tourism is likely based on international literature);
- homepages of municipalities and regions.

During the research we analyzed web pages from Hungary and from other countries as well. 256 web pages were analyzed altogether. No in-domain searches or filtering were applied; we analyzed all subdomains of the homepages. Based on pre-defined criteria we examined the web pages searching for any reference of industrial tourism. If industrial tourism is mentioned what is the attraction? Which industrial sector is related? How much are the industrial attractions emphasized in the tourist offer?

It is important to mention that we did not aim to create a full database of the supply side of Hungarian (or Central European) industrial tourism. We only wanted to draw up the main tendencies.

The concept and relevance of industrial tourism

According to a widely used definition, industrial tourism is based on former or still existing production (manufacturing or other). This activity can have various forms such as industrial heritage tourism or scientific parks etc.

From a different point of view, industrial tourism means that objects which were created not for being attractions (and in some cases it is not their primary function in the present) became tourist destinations. It means that sometimes the production itself can be a part of the attraction. However, the term, „industrial tourism” is a bit misleading because not only industrial activities and facilities can become attractions in this type of tourism, but all kinds of economic activities and buildings. Visiting agricultural facilities or service centres also can be defined as industrial tourism, according to literature (Otgár et al. 2010).

Industrial tourism can have various benefits but maybe the most important ones are strengthening the image of the region and contributing to public relations activities. In the case of dangerous or environmentally hazardous facilities (such as power plants) this function can have a particular importance. Tourism can help the residents feel safer about the industrial activities near them as well. Information transfer and learning are also important motivations for developing this type of tourism – to this end, governments and local authorities also tend to support industrial tourism (e.g. through the construction and maintenance of scientific parks or interactive knowledge centres). In most cases interactivity is the key to transfer knowledge (Soyez 1986, Barta – Czirfusz – Kukely 2008, Boros – Garamhegyi 2009, Otgár et al. 2010).

In addition, tourism can help companies to enhance their performance in their main activities (i.e. production). That is why several companies use industrial tourism to build and enhance brand loyalty. Visitors get familiar with the production

process which boosts their confidence in the product – therefore, it increases the chance that they would buy it again. By getting familiar with the company and its activities the visitors can even become future employees, while those who are already employed at the firm can become more committed and loyal because tourism highlights the importance of their work. It is also important that tourism offers additional income for companies.

Industrial tourism can contribute to the development of the whole region in several ways. Because of the deindustrialisation and tertialisation, and the global restructuring of economy former prosperous regions have to find new ways for their development. Their former manufacturing, mining and other industrial activities can offer an answer to this challenge, since the identity and built heritage of these areas are closely associated to industry. The closed factories can be revitalized for new activities: cultural and heritage tourism, or creative industries (Hospers 2002). Improving tourism offer enhances the competitiveness and attractiveness of the above mentioned regions. Furthermore, industrial tourism can accelerate the restructuring process through the enhanced image and the creation of new jobs (Soyez 1986).

Besides trends on the supply side, the changes of demand side also contributed to the growing popularity of industrial tourism. In recent years the need for new and unusual destinations grew significantly. Furthermore, active tourism gained popularity as well (Michalkó 2007; Puczkó, Rátz 2005). These processes are interlinked with the transformation of declining industrial regions where new economic activities are developed for tackling the economic problems (Harris 1989, Kiss 2010, Pál, Boros 2010, Otgár et al. 2010).

From the practical point of view it is important to highlight that several difficulties can hinder the development of industrial tourism. One of the most important problems is the lack of funds since the potential destinations are often located in crisis hit regions characterized by declining income, severe economic and social problems etc. Moreover, companies want to keep their business secrets; therefore, they are not open to visitors (Otgár et al. 2010).

Lack of experiences can cause problems as well as does the bad image of manufacturing. Last, but not least the lack of cooperation and weak cooperation links between possible actors can also compromise the development of industrial tourism.

Global trends in industrial tourism

Industrial tourism is not a new phenomenon: factory visits are possible since decades (e.g. breweries opened their gates to the public or the Peugeot car company has been organizing study tours in their factories since the 1930s). But their growing popularity

and spreading was not experienced before. The interest towards these destinations grows especially in Europe. New sectors, facilities and regions are becoming the part of this process, for example power plants or high tech factories (Soyez 1986, Otgar et al. 2010, Zhang – Lei – Li 2010).

As we mentioned earlier, industrial tourism was introduced in food industry, breweries and the production of luxuries. One of the first examples was the Jack Daniel brewery in Lynchburg, USA. This company accepts visitors from the very beginning. Breweries are still popular destinations throughout the world; in Scotland for example numerous tourists visit the famous scotch-making breweries (McBoyle 1998). In addition, vineyards and breweries are popular in Italy, Spain, Germany, the Czech Republic and Hungary as well (Gyuricza 2008, Michalkó 2010, Van Westering – Emmanuelle Niela 2008). The production of national products often becomes an attraction because this process is an element of national identity, too. For example, cheese making has become attraction in France. Candy factories are particularly popular: Cadbury World in Birmingham has about 500 000 visitors per year – this means that the factory is the most popular attraction of the city (Otgar et al. 2010). In a candy factory located in Moscow visitors have to book their places months in advance.

Power plants accept tourists to enhance their image, to disseminate knowledge on power production and to present the environment friendly and risk free character of their activities. Moreover, the plants with special or extravagant architecture and/or technology are also popular among visitors (e.g. Hoover Dam in the USA, the tidal power plant in France – this latter is the most visited industrial destination in the country). In Lombardy, Italy, there is a thematic route named “The route of energy” which connects the power plants of the area.

The Ruhr Region which is one of the most important industrial concentrations in Germany has developed its industrial tourism as part of the structural changes of local economy. Several mines and factories got new functions and became attraction, presenting the former industrial activities (Bangstad 2011, Hospers 2004). Landschaftspark in Duisburg (Photo 1) is one of these developments: it was an industrial site until 1985 with serious environmental impact. During the recultivation, playgrounds, parks and public spaces were formed and the former steel mills can be visited as well. Oberhausen the former gas container named Gasometer became a cultural centre with exhibition spaces and a viewpoint with outstanding panorama.

Culture is also an important element of the redevelopment of Zollverein coal mine in Essen, which is enlisted on the World Heritage list of the UNESCO. There are about 3500 industrial heritage sites in the region altogether - many of them are

part of the Route of the Industrial Culture (Mader 2003). In the case of Germany it is important to highlight that the Autostadt in Wolfsburg is one of the most visited industrial attractions with more than 2 million visitors per year. The facility was opened in 2000 as a result of a 430 million euro investment. Its unique architecture and functional diversity made Autostadt a new city centre themed around the automotive industry. Car exhibitions, drivers’ trainings and the presentation of Volkswagen car production are among the main attractions here (Otgar et al. 2010).



Photo 1 Landschaftspark in Duisburg (photo by Lajos Boros)

In Alsace industrial sites are enlisted among the heritage sites and industrial tourism is emphasized by the regional tourist offer. Its main foci are the former oil and steel industry and the still functioning beer production (Bangstad 2011). As the result of the deindustrialisation processes, industrial tourism gains momentum in Wallonia, Belgium as well. The regional tourist agency dedicates a special web page to promote industrial sites as destinations. Their guiding principle is that industrial past should not be forgotten or denied even if there is a bad image attached to that and it caused several environmental problems.

To promote industrial tourism an Interreg project called European Route of Industrial Heritage (ERIH) started in 2002 with members from United Kingdom, The Netherlands and Germany. The main aim of the participants was to build an international network which can contribute to the development of industrial tourism. Their core activities were cross marketing, training and knowledge transfer. The project ended in 2007 but the network still exists, therefore, it can be said that it reached its main goal and helps to create a new tourism brand based on the rich industrial heritage of the regions concerned.

There are developments outside North America and Western Europe too: for example, Russia, which has a rich industrial heritage, also plans to invest to

enhance the attractiveness of manufacturing facilities. There are travel agencies in Russia specialised to industrial tourism. The spatial pattern of these activities is strongly concentrated: Moscow and its neighbouring regions have a dominant role, but the government plans to strengthen industrial tourism in Ural region and Siberia, too (**Error! Hyperlink reference not valid..** 2013).

In Japan industrial tourism became trendy a few years ago. It is named *kojo moe* (Factory Infatuation) in Japanese. In *kojo moe* industrial facilities are not appreciated because of the past but because of their aesthetical value: according to Japanese industrial tourists, the plants and factories are beautiful. In some cases industrial tourism has made the development of the local tourism possible. For example, in Kawasaki the local government unsuccessfully wanted to strengthen tourism for decades but *kojo moe* increased the number of visitors. The government also reacted to the new trends: they submitted a proposal in which they made it possible to suggest functioning industrial sites to the World Heritage list.

Former or still functioning mines can become destinations as well. These sites can be interesting because of the extent of the transformation of nature (e.g. open-pit mines) or their historical relevance (Rudd – Davis 1998, Cole 2004). Cerro Rico in Bolivia was one of the biggest and most important silver mines in the World between the 16th and 18th centuries. The mine had a significant role in the emergence of slave trade because the conditions of mining caused significant death toll among Indian workers.

The above mentioned examples prove that industrial tourism is gaining importance throughout the World and there is a real market opportunity in association to former or still operating factories, power plants and mines. All kinds of industrial activities can be involved in industrial tourism. Furthermore, not only declining industrial regions have possibilities but prospering countries and regions can also diversify their economies through industrial tourism.

The effect and importance of industrial tourism depends mostly on the uniqueness of the attraction: the more unique objects can attract lot of visitors, generating significant income and enhancing local competitiveness. But industrial tourism seems to have little impact on local and regional employment: this is one of the main obstacles regarding the preservation of manufacturing heritage and the development of industrial tourism (Hospers 2002, Conesa et al. 2008).

According to European experiences, it is not necessary to invest significantly into industrial tourism (e.g. destination development) to attract large number of visitors – but in some cases huge investments also occurred in industrial tourism (most notable example is the Autostadt). However,

the role of human resources is important; since the destinations' original function is not tourism, they have no experience in hospitality. Therefore, some investment in human resources (i.e. hiring new employees or re-training current ones), marketing materials and visitor facilities are needed and the reorganization of the company (i.e. establishing a division responsible for company visits) can be helpful as well. Those companies tend to invest more (and develop better quality visitors services) into industrial tourism which aim to enhance their image and public relations (Otgar et al. 2010).

Market segmentation can also help the success of industrial destinations but it is not unusual to aim at a very broad audience (e.g. Shanghai Industrial Tourism Promotion Centre). Four particularly important segments can be highlighted: i, those who seek adventure, new and/or unusual destinations (mostly young and well educated people); ii, those who are interested in the product of the company (i.e. potential car buyers at Autostadt in Wolfsburg); iii, opinion makers who have influence on other actors, decision makers; iv, students and those who want to gain knowledge about technology or about the company and its products. According to Otgar et al (2010) public bodies aim broader audience than companies do.

Industrial tourism in Hungary

Hungarian tourism is dominated by "nice" and "attractive" destinations as well as global industry (Csordás 2000). Thus, industrial facilities are rarely considered as possible destinations – because these are labelled as ugly and unattractive places. However, the experiences presented earlier highlight the possibilities of developments of tourism in industrial regions.

In the course of the research we analysed 256 homepages operated by companies (e.g. Audi, Suzuki, Gyermelyi, Unilever), industrial heritage sites (e.g. water mills, furnaces), development agencies, local and regional authorities (e.g. Budapest, Northern Hungary), and travel agencies (e.g. IBUSZ, TUI, Best Reisen). Our aim was to survey the online presence of industrial tourism in Hungary; how it appears on the supply side of tourism.

Based on our analysis of the supply side, industrial tourism is barely present in Hungary. Neither the companies nor the travel agencies or regions highlight this type of tourism. Moreover, when industrial tourism is presented as an option it is an unorganised activity in most cases. At the same time, several towns offer industrial heritage among their places of interests.

The term itself "industrial tourism" was not used on the analysed websites, while only a few homepages mentioned thematic routes. In the case of companies

which can be involved in industrial tourism according to the European experiences, we also analysed the homepages of the settlement concerned and that of the region as well. We found that the links between municipalities and companies are weak; in such cases when the company itself offered possibilities for visits the municipalities did not mention anything about it – and vice versa. This leads to the conclusion that the actors of supply side do not act together, which weakens the efficiency of marketing and their co-operation could and should be strengthened.

We analysed the homepages of companies from those sectors which are popular in industrial tourism in Western Europe and the United States (N=106). Only about 20% of the analysed companies offered tourism related opportunities. The programs offered are not considered as separate attractions but as supplementary parts of organised company visits or other kinds of programs (e.g. culinary tourism). Surprisingly, while automotive industry and science parks are popular destinations in several countries, in Hungary these kinds of facilities rarely take part in industrial tourism – at least according to the analysed homepages. On the other hand, food industry seems to be quite active in tourism, especially in the case of consumer goods and alcohol production (beer, wine, palinka). The few operating porcelain manufactures also provide possibilities for visiting the company and their touristic activity is quite similar to that of the Western European manufactures. The infrastructural elements of the landscape (bridges, viaducts) are usually available for visits but these are only highlighted in the homepages of municipalities while the operators of these objects do not present them as attractions. We also analysed the importance of industrial tourism on those homepages which mention any kind of industrial attraction. If there's an occurrence, then industrial tourism is an important part of the marketing activity and it is a highlighted element of the offer. However, the graphic design and style of these web-pages vary. Some of them have simple factual design concentrating on facts regarding the destination concerned, while other ones use colourful and inviting design – i.e. there are no clear trends (or widely used "best practices") in the design.

The number of industrial heritage sites is high and contrary to the above presented facilities their owner or operator considers them as attractions. This category includes museums and relics of agrarian and industrial activities (blacksmith shops, forges, windmills, water mills etc.). They all have in common their medieval origin which suggests that developers and other important actors of tourism offer do not consider modern-era facilities attractive. A very few factories from the dawn of modern manufacturing or the socialist era belong to the Hungarian industrial heritage – most of them are mining-related. Our findings raise an important question: are the industrial heritage sites parts of industrial tourism or not?

According to the definition presented above they are, but the socio-economic goals of this type tourism could be achieved through a better involvement of more recent or contemporary factories.

Industrial attractions are presented more often on the homepages of municipalities and regions than those of the companies but the term "industrial tourism" is not even once used. They focus on former companies, industrial heritage and museums, but these kind of offers are only a small part of their whole tourist offer. We have not found any settlement which developed its tourism based on its industrial background. Even industrial towns such as Paks prefer to emphasise other types of attractions (the Duna River, recreation, gastronomy, festivals) and the nuclear power plant only represents a supplementary offer. (We assume that tourism and place marketing experts did not find energy production and the plant attractive.)

The municipal homepages offered very little visual content on industrial tourism and hyperlinks to other pages. According to their development documents most of the towns, counties and regions have not got developments plans for industrial tourism – excluding the municipalities of Miskolc, Százhalombatta and Northern Hungary Region. This latter organises thematic routes to present its industrial heritage.

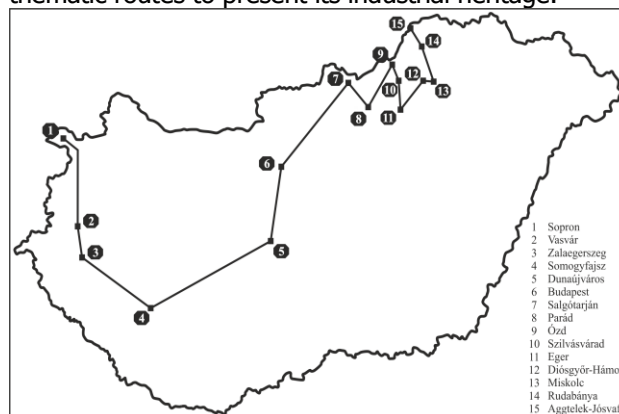


Fig. 1 The Route of Iron Culture (edited by Gábor Dudás)

We found only one travel agency specialised on industrial tourism (Lemwig Travel) which offers environment protection-related company visits to Denmark. However, industrial destinations are present in several travel agencies' (11 agencies in our sample) offer but they do not mention these as industrial tourism. The above mentioned destinations are not fundamental parts of the offer; in most cases they are related to heritage tourism or gastronomy. In addition, automotive industry is also presented among destinations but all of them are foreign-owned factories (therefore, as new developments, they are not part of industrial heritage). Some of the portals (e.g. Heritour, Nordtour) offer thematic routes based on industrial heritage. But in this case we also experienced the

problems of missing links: for example Heritour offers the Route of Industrial Heritage with Ajka as one of the key destinations. However, the municipality of Ajka does not mention this route at all. Nordtour Agency suggests the Route of Iron Culture (fig. 1) in which it presents the industrial heritage of Northern Hungary (main elements: Miskolc – Telkibánya – Rudabánya – Ozd – Salgótarján) but the homepages of the towns concerned have no information about this route or industrial heritage tourism.

It is worth to briefly present some cases to illustrate the interaction between companies and places and to present some paths of Hungarian industrial tourism as well.

Audi factory in Győr is one of the most attractive and well-known industrial destinations. It offers company visits on the company webpage: the visitors have to book their place in advance. The page is well structured with appropriate information and images. The municipality and IBUSZ travel agency also offers this destination on their homepages.

The nuclear power plant in Paks is also an attractive facility which aims to enhance the image of nuclear energy production. To this end they operate a museum, have a demonstration area and they offer guided tours in the power plant. The fact that the facility has 25-28 000 visitors per year shows its popularity. Paks' city marketing counts on the plant but there are further possibilities to strengthen the role of the plant in place marketing.

Herend, which is well-known because of the porcelain manufacture, emphasises the industrial destination on the municipality's homepage: on the opening page visitors can choose whether they want to read about the town or the manufacture. This was the most integrated co-operation between company and municipality amongst the cases we analysed. The local tourism offer and the industrial attraction are intertwined. The homepage is extremely appealing: virtual tours, webcams, images and information are all available on this well-structured and stylish page.

There are many places in Hungary where industrial tourism could be developed, but it is not utilised enough. Miskolc is one of these places; the town has a rich industrial past but it is barely used in the tourism offer – despite the fact that Miskolc is the part of Route of Iron Culture. Nevertheless, some positive steps were taken, in the last few years: for example recent development documents suggest a thematic route named "Our industrial heritage". In addition, a new homepage was created in relation to an EU funded project entitled Central European Industrial Heritage, in which Miskolc is the only Hungarian partner. The project is targeted towards those who are interested in cultural tourism – it illustrates how unfamiliar the term "industrial tourism" is in Hungary.

Another underutilised industrial heritage is that of Salgótarján in Northern Hungary where relics of

industrial capitalism and socialist era are present at the same time. The majority of former industrial activities ceased because of the crisis after the change of regime and most of the factories closed about 20 years ago. The closed facilities (factories, mines) could be the basis of the development of industrial tourism. The town has a museum to present the history of mining which is located in the original tunnels of the mine (Horváth – Csüllög – Karancsi 2012). But this museum is not promoted enough: the homepage of the local municipality does not even mention it. However, there are attempts to use local industrial heritage better. A few years ago a festival was organised around the topic of mine monsters (the term mine monster also means ugly person in Hungarian) and a memorial was also erected in the town centre to commemorate the former mining. In relation, an initiative called "Mine under our feet" started, aimed to enhance local knowledge about the past of Salgótarján. There are plans to develop the Mine Museum but without sufficient marketing activity visitors would not have information about it. Therefore, Salgótarján should use its homepage to spread information.

There are numerous towns where the local past could be a basis of industrial tourism, but it is not capitalized yet. Usually these settlements have several serious socio-economic problems which development policy should deal with. Therefore, industrial tourism would not be enough to foster local economy, but based on Western experiences it can be a useful alternative and supplementary tool for economic development.

Conclusion

Based on international experiences, industrial tourism is a good example of unusual attractions and proves that not only nice and aesthetic objects can become destinations. These examples also highlight that not only the demolition or complete rebuilding and functional change (e.g. loft living, commercial use) can be the solution for the utilisation of old industrial facilities. It is important because factories built in the 19th century or earlier often represent architectural values beyond their historic meanings. The same can be said about machinery as well: many of them were milestones in the history of technology. Thus, industrial tourism can contribute to heritage protection, too, helping to strengthen local and regional identities.

According to our results, nowadays industrial tourism is not a highlighted element of Hungarian tourism offer. However, because of the industrial heritage of the country and the still operating factories, there are possibilities to enhance industrial tourism in Hungary. At the present time we do not have information about demand side: are Hungarian tourists interested in

former and still operating industrial facilities? The next steps of our research will focus on this question, aiming to present a broader picture of the possibilities in Hungarian industrial tourism.

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