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## **Typically Female Features in Hungarian Shopping Tourism\***

### **SUMMARY**

Although shopping has been long acknowledged as a major tourist activity, the extent and characteristics of shopping tourism have only recently become the subject of academic research and discussion. As a contribution to this field of knowledge, the paper presents the characteristics of shopping tourism in Hungary, and discusses the typically female features of outbound Hungarian shopping tourism. The research is based on a survey of 2473 Hungarian tourists carried out in 2005. As the findings of the study indicate, while female respondents were altogether more likely to be involved in tourist shopping than male travellers, no significant difference was experienced between the genders concerning the share of shopping expenses compared to their total travel budget. In their shopping behaviour, women were typically affected by price levels, and they proved to be both more selfish and more altruistic than men by purchasing more products for themselves and for their family members. The most significant differences between men and women were found in their product preferences as female tourists were more likely to purchase typically feminine goods such as clothes, shoes, bags and accessories, in the timing of shopping activities while abroad, and in the information sources used by tourists, since interpersonal influences such as friends', guides' and fellow travellers' recommendations played a higher role in female travellers' decisions.

**KEY WORDS:** shopping tourism, Hungary, gender

### **Introduction**

“God, I adore shopping abroad”, sighs Rebecca Bloomwood, the heroine of Sophie Kinsella’s popular Shopaholic books, and goes on to explain the advantages of doing shopping abroad: “you can buy things you can’t get at home, you can name-drop when

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you get back, and foreign money doesn't count, so you can spend as much as you like". Although Rebecca is far more obsessed by shopping than the average person, her reasoning strikes a familiar chord with many shopping tourists throughout the world. In this paper, an attempt is made to analyse the typically female features of Hungarian tourists' shopping behaviour in order to understand the emotional and rational characteristics of this particular tourist segment.

Sixteen years after the collapse of the socialist regimes in East Central Europe, the region is still considered as one of the prominent areas in international shopping tourism. Although accession to the European Union has affected both the opportunities and the motivations of shopping abroad, the political and economic consequences of the 10-year-long preparation process have not significantly reduced the scale of international shopping tourism (Michalkó and Timothy, 2001). As market studies indicate, Hungary has remained a major shopping destination for incoming travellers – particularly for day trippers arriving from the neighbouring countries – while Hungarians also show a willingness to travel abroad with the specific motivation to buy goods and, to a smaller extent, services (Magyar Turizmus Rt., 2006).

Before the change of regime, pleasure shopping in Hungary was limited, due to the inadequate quality, range and marketing conditions of Hungarian goods (Wessely, 2002). Opportunities for shopping abroad were also rather narrow, as a result of travel restrictions and enormous differences between eastern incomes and western prices (Dessewffy, 2002). Therefore, many Hungarians replaced actual shopping experiences with browsing catalogues of Western European department stores, and a culture of so-called "virtual shopping" flourished (Gecser and Kitzinger, 2000). Consequently, when the opportunities to travel to the West widened in the late 1980's, hundreds of thousands of Hungarians "invaded" neighbouring Austria to buy modern consumer electronics and other household appliances. During one month in 1989, Hungarian shopping tourists spent in Austria the near equivalent of the country's total annual GDP in foreign currency (Nyitrai, 1990; Siebert, 1991). The era's shopping tourism was commonly called "Gorenje tourism", after a particularly popular brand of freezer purchased in large numbers by Hungarians.

Although today's customers are not confined to the supply of local retailers, since most consumer goods have become available online, people nevertheless seem to be willing to set out and travel hundreds of kilometres for a better deal or for a more enjoyable shopping experience. As several researches (Lestrade, 1998; Laudon and Traver, 2003) have indicated, those rejecting online shopping tend to emphasize the lack of ability to personally check and try the selected goods as one of the major disadvantages of virtual shopping, i.e. they prefer to touch rather than to click on the monitor.

## **Shopping and tourism**

Although shopping has been long acknowledged as a major tourist activity, the extent and characteristics of shopping tourism have only recently become the subject of academic research and discussion. To date, research papers in this field have focused on a variety of themes, such as the role of shopping precincts in destination planning and development (e.g. Getz, 1993; Getz et al., 1994), service quality and shopping satisfac-

tion in tourism (e.g. Heung and Cheng, 2000; Reisinger and Turner, 2002), the characteristics and structure of tourists' shopping behaviour (Yu and Littrell, 2003; Littrell et al., 2004; Moscardo, 2004; Oh et al., 2004), the social and economic consequences of shopping tourism development and the tourist shopping phenomenon (e.g. Dimanche, 2003; Snepenger et al., 2003; Michalkó and Váradi, 2004), the characteristics of souvenir purchase and the role of souvenirs shopping in destination image formation (e.g. Rátz and Puczkó, 1998; Michalkó, 2002; Swanson, 2004), or the motivations for, and benefits of, participation in shopping tourism (e.g. Michalkó and Timothy, 2001; Smith and Olson, 2001; Geuens et al., 2004; Lehto et al., 2004).

When discussing the relationship between the phenomena of shopping and tourism, a distinction should be made between shopping tourism and tourist shopping. Shopping tourism is travel with the primary motivation of purchasing goods and services (stimulated by a favourable price-quality ratio, a wider range of supply or the added value of temporarily escaping a routine living environment), whereas tourist shopping is part of most trips as a very important leisure pastime (Butler, 1991). In quantitative terms, cross-border demand dominates the global shopping tourism sector, due to the utilitarian nature of the travellers' motivation. Cross-border shopping is common along nearly all borders in Europe; it also plays a significant role in the Americas, primarily on the USA–Canada and the USA–Mexico borders (Timothy, 2005). In Europe, the cross-border shopping phenomenon has received most attention in the Denmark–Germany (Bygvra, 1998), Ireland–Northern Ireland (Boyd, 1999), Switzerland–Italy (Leimgruber, 1988) and East-Central European (Michalkó and Timothy, 2001) contexts.

Although shopping as an additional activity enjoyed at the destination visited is a more frequent tourist pursuit than taking a trip with shopping as the primary reason to travel, both aspects of tourism play a major role in destination development and both have a significant impact on travellers' and local residents' quality of life. A destination's popularity among shopping tourists is influenced by a variety of factors including the availability of merchandise, the price-quality ratio of goods, and the area's specific features such as characteristic local products, famous shopping areas, themed shopping facilities or well-publicised shopping festivals (Timothy, 2005).

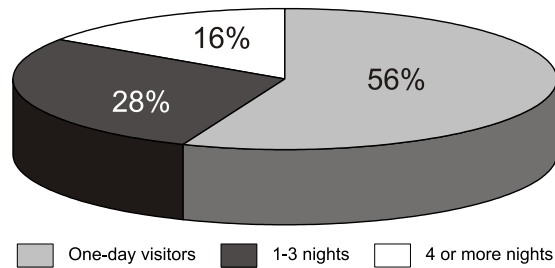
Leisure shopping is a universal tourist activity that usually adds to the overall attractiveness of a destination. As several researchers have pointed out, shopping on holiday may even appeal to people who normally do not particularly enjoy the activity at home (Anderson and Littrell, 1995; McCormick, 2001 in Timothy, 2005). However, when assessing the relationship between tourists' socio-demographic characteristics and their shopping behaviour, several studies suggest that female travellers are generally more likely to be involved in shopping tourism (Carmichael and Smith, 2004; Lehto et al., 2004; Moscardo, 2004). Therefore, after a brief description of the major characteristics of shopping tourism in Hungary, the paper focuses on the typically female features of outbound Hungarian shopping tourism.

### **Shopping tourism in Hungary**

In 2004, 17,558 millions Hungarians travelled abroad (Magyar Turizmus Rt., 2005). Considering that the country's population is just over 10 million people, this figure means

over 1.7 border crossings for each Hungarian citizen. As Figure 1 indicates, the majority of outbound Hungarian travellers were day visitors, i.e. did not spend a night abroad.

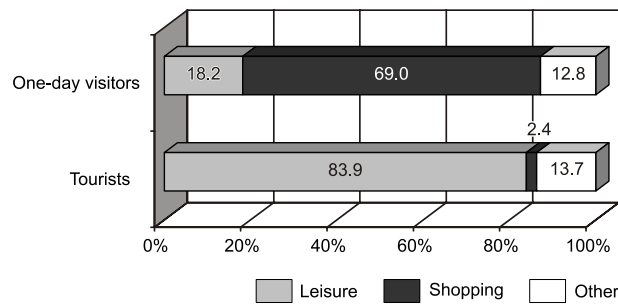
Figure 1: Outbound tourism in Hungary, 2004 (%)



Source: Central Statistical Office, 2005

When assessing the motivations of Hungarian outbound travellers, a significant relationship is experienced between the purpose of a trip and the length of stay (Figure 2): shopping plays a dominant role in one-day visits, but only 2.4% of Hungarian tourists take longer trips abroad with shopping as their primary motivation.

Figure 2: The motivations of Hungarian travellers abroad, 2004 (%)

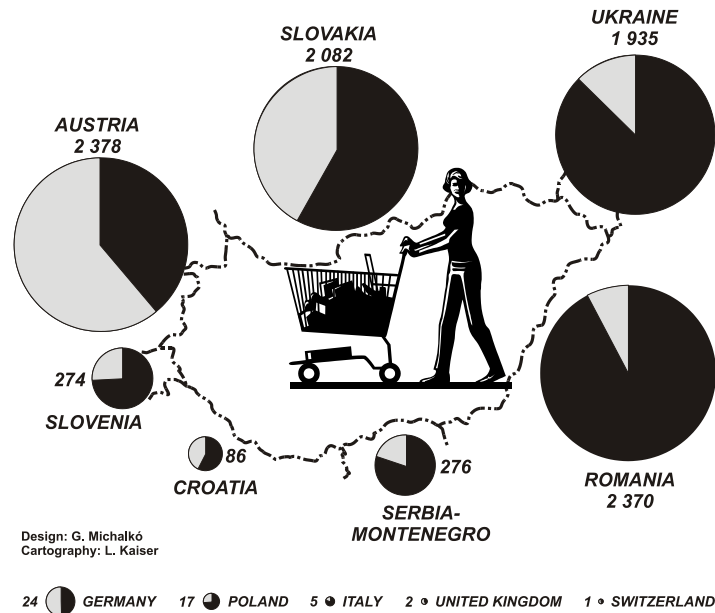


Source: Central Statistical Office, 2005

The geographical distribution of shopping tourism demand indicates that distance significantly affects travel behaviour: typically, Hungary's neighbouring countries prove to be the major destinations of one-day outbound shopping tourism (Figure 3). In 2004, the number of Hungarian arrivals reached or exceeded app. 2 million in Austria, Romania, Slovakia and the Ukraine, and several hundreds of thousands visited Serbia–Montenegro, Slovenia and Croatia. While these data are in close correlation with the population figures of Hungarian minorities living in these countries (i.e. VFR – visiting friends and relatives – is also a significant motivation of day trips), travel to these destinations – particularly to Romania and the Ukraine – is highly stimulated by the availability and range of inexpensive goods.

Slightly surprisingly, non-neighbouring countries such as Poland, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and the United Kingdom also feature among the shopping tourism destinations of Hungarian day trippers. However, as larger distances make travel more expensive, in these cases, fashion and status also play an important role in affecting travellers' decisions, and typically purchased products tend to be of rather high value.

Figure 3: Typical destinations of Hungarian one-day visitors and the proportion of trips motivated by shopping, 2004 ('000)



Source: Central Statistical Office, 2005

In 2004, Hungarians spent 578 billion HUF abroad, out of which 108 billion HUF (18.7%) was spent by shopping visitors, with an average daily spending of app. 10,000 HUF per person (less than 40 EUR).

### Research methods

In 2005, a questionnaire-based survey on the shopping habits of Hungarian tourists was conducted by the Geographical Research Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in cooperation with Kodolányi János University College (KJUC). A structured questionnaire based on close-ended questions was implemented through face-to-face interviews with respondents, conducted by interviewers from the KJUC who were selected according to their academic achievements and survey expertise. Participation was limited to adults (over the age of 18) who in the past five years have made at least one trip abroad. In total, 2473 questionnaires were evaluated. Although a convenience sampling method

was used, the sample may be considered representative to the Hungarian population as the data were weighted by gender, age and region of permanent residence.

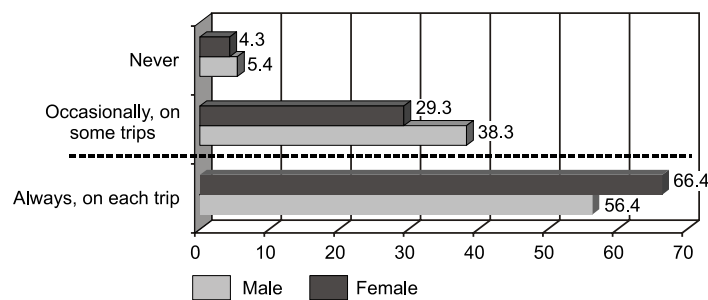
26.5% of the convenience sample were between the age 18–26, 40.3% between 27–39, 26.5% between 40–59, and 6.8% above the age of 60. 42.6% of the respondents were male and 57.4% female. Concerning participants' permanent residence, although the majority came from Central Hungary (including Budapest) (50.9%) and the Western part of the country (30.7%), all Hungarian regions were represented.

In the interpretation of the survey findings, cross-table analysis was used to separate male and female habits and behaviour. Replies were categorised as typical and atypical for women. Those activities and factors were considered typically female where the ratio of women participating in certain activities or influenced by certain factors was higher than that of men. In the illustrations of the following chapter, typically female behavioural characteristics are seen above the line, while atypical features are seen below the line.

### Female features in Hungarian shopping tourism

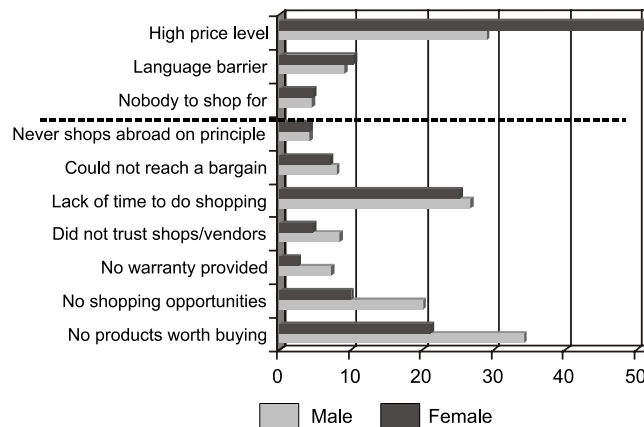
As Figure 4 demonstrates, a significant relationship exists between respondents' gender and their level of participation in tourist shopping ( $\chi^2=86868.424$ , sig.=0.000): during their trips abroad, female respondents were more likely to be involved in tourist shopping than male travellers. However, app. 95% of both genders did at least some shopping while travelling, and no significant difference was experienced between men and women concerning the share of shopping expenses compared to their total travel budget: in both cases, shopping expenses accounted for 25% of the overall spending.

Figure 4: Respondents' participation in tourist shopping (%)



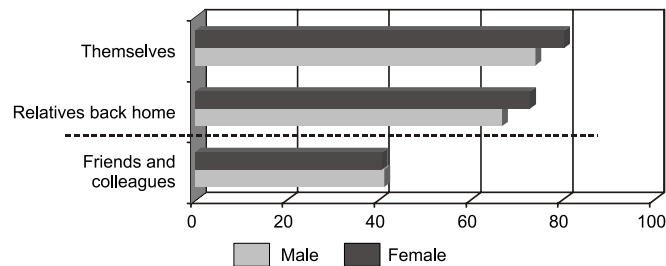
When assessing the reasons for not always participating in tourist shopping, women were most likely to be affected by the unfavourable price levels, and the language barrier experienced in a foreign environment (Figure 5). The lack of leisure time also limited female respondents' shopping activities, although male participants felt similarly constrained by their pre-planned and pre-booked programmes. It should also be pointed out that women were much less likely to visit a place that did not offer any shops or any products worth buying, which might be related to their more shopping-oriented destination choices, but might also be explained by their more sophisticated skills to discover a shopping opportunity.

Figure 5: Reasons for not always participating in tourist shopping (%)



Tourists travelling abroad often purchase souvenirs and gifts in order to make their experiences tangible and to be able to share them with friends and relatives (Snepenger et al., 2003). As Figure 6 shows, female respondents were more likely to buy products for themselves and their family member travel companions, as well as for their relatives left at home, while men and women were almost equally willing to buy any goods for friends and colleagues. Generally, the closeness of personal relationships affects both genders' shopping behaviour. The difference between men and women might be partly explained by the traditional female role of caring for others and anticipating others' needs.

Figure 6: Persons to buy products for while travelling abroad (%)



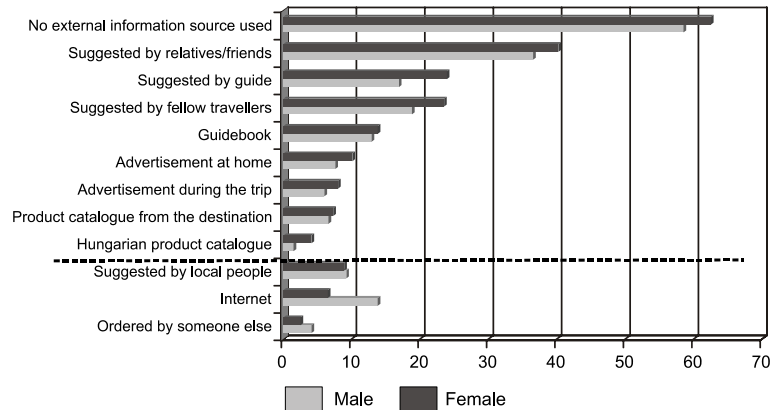
Although the majority of Hungarian travellers did not make use of any specific information source when choosing goods on their trips, a few differences might be experienced between male and female respondents (Figure 7).

On the one hand, women seem to be more affected by personal advice. It is interesting, however, to notice the different levels of trust expressed towards different kinds of people: both female and male respondents were most likely to rely on relatives' and friends' recommendations. Guides and fellow travellers – who represent the same cultural background and might have been considered as “being on the same side” by the

respondents – were also relatively highly trusted compared to local people’s suggestions, the latter often perceived as sales- and profit-oriented.

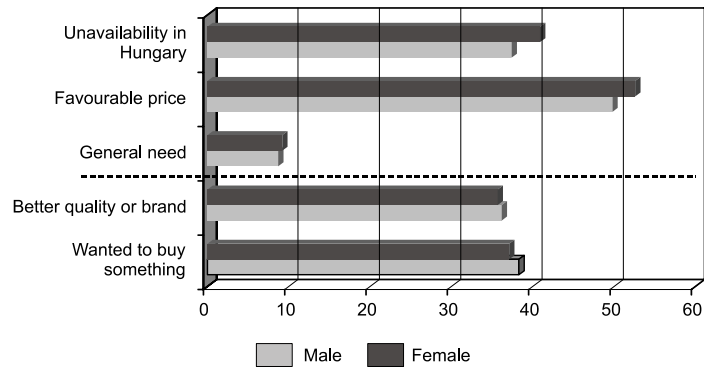
On the other hand, women’s choices were more strongly influenced by promotional messages including advertisements and product catalogues. Altogether, female travellers seem to be slightly more conscious shoppers, since they used more information sources and were more likely to plan their purchases abroad or at least ponder the range of available goods.

Figure 7: Information sources influencing product choice (%)



As Figure 8 shows, although no significant differences exist between men and women according to the main factors affecting their product choice abroad, female travellers proved to be slightly more rational in their shopping behaviour, since they were more motivated to make a purchase by lower prices or by the lack of certain goods or certain brands in Hungary. Women were also a little more likely to be influenced by the general need of buying certain products, i.e. they needed a new pair of shoes or a new coat anyway, so they bought them while being abroad.

Figure 8: Factors affecting product choice (%)

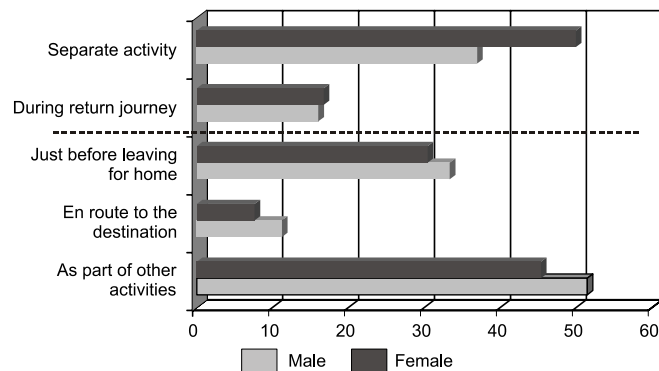




The better price-quality ratio of specific goods or brands influenced both genders' product choice, with male travellers being slightly more value-conscious in their decisions. Similarly, men and women were almost equally affected by the unwritten rule of having to buy something abroad, as over 75% of the survey participants admitted that they simply did not want to return home empty-handed.

Shopping as a tourist activity may already start on the journey to the destination, and may influence the whole stay as well as the return journey home (Figure 9). However, most respondents preferred to do their purchases in the destination, with men and women slightly differing in the inclusion of shopping in their general programme schedule: while female respondents were more likely to regard shopping as a valuable activity on its own right, males were more inclined to have it done as part of their other programmes.

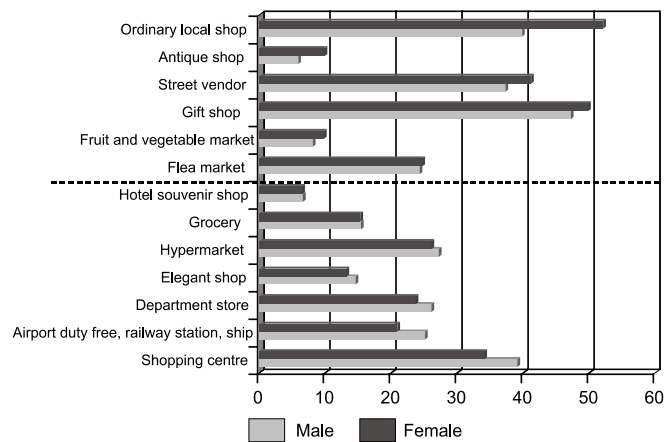
Figure 9: Inclusion of shopping activities within the trip (%)



Tourist shopping, due to its highly social nature, may be strongly influenced by the milieu of the shopping venues, thus it is particularly important to understand travellers' preferences and choices of such venues (Timothy, 2005). As Figure 10 demonstrates, ordinary shops used mainly by members of the local population proved to be the most popular type of shopping venue among female respondents, followed by traditionally tourist-oriented gift shops and street vendors. Women's preferences are partly explained by their higher level of price sensitivity on the one hand (see Figures 5 and 8), since shops aimed mainly at the local population may be perceived as more favourable choices among budget-conscious travellers.

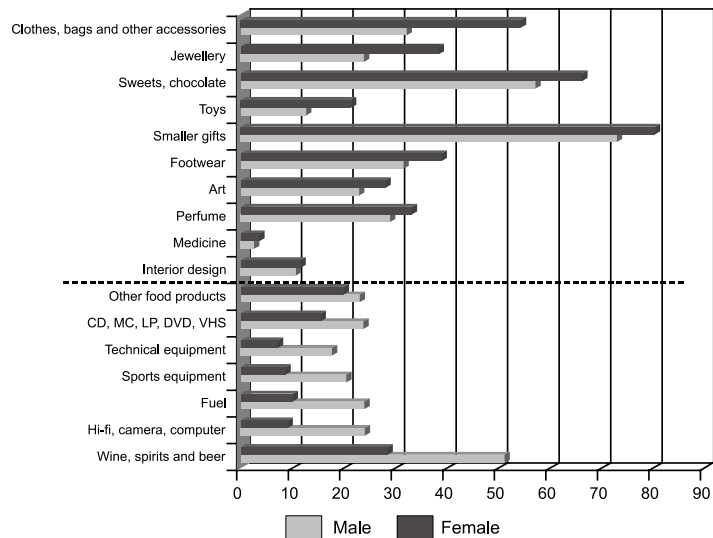
The popularity of gift shops on the other hand may be related to female respondents' relatively high willingness to buy products for themselves as well as for family members and other relatives (see Figure 6), as these venues are usually seen as the most suitable places for buying destination-specific souvenirs (Anderson and Littrell, 1995). In addition, gift shops are also generally able to satisfy those tourists' needs who do not have any specific goods on mind, but do not want to leave the destinations without having made any kind of purchase either (see Figure 8).

Figure 10: Shopping venues used by respondents (%)



As the survey results suggest, the most significant differences between male and female tourist shopping behaviours exist with respect to the range of purchased goods (Figure 11). Women were far more likely to buy clothes, shoes and accessories including jewellery (which might be seen as slightly surprising, since high-priced diamond rings are rarely bought for oneself, but the response category in the survey included all kinds of fashion jewellery as well). Clothes, shoes and accessories are generally considered popular travel purchases, since they satisfy the consumer’s aesthetic needs and may be worn in public, thus providing an opportunity for the wearer to discuss travel memories, to gain status among peers by “name-dropping”, or simply to be reminded of the trip and the destination.

Figure 11: Products bought by respondents (%)

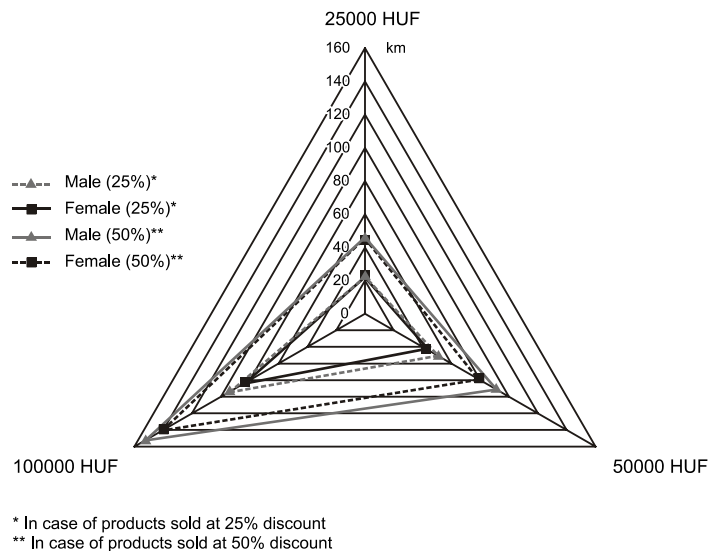


The second category of products that female travellers were more likely to purchase includes sweets, toys and smaller gifts – goods that are typically bought for friends and family members, including children.

The fact that women also showed a slightly higher interest in buying art, decorative objects and interior design products is also in line with the traditional role of women as homemakers. In addition, as the survey results show, stereotypical social roles still rather prevailing in Hungary are further reflected by male travellers' significantly higher involvement in purchasing alcohol, consumer electronics and other technical equipment as well as fuel.

In order to study male and female travellers' price-sensitivity and "bargain-hunting" characteristics, respondents were asked to indicate the distance they were willing to travel in order to buy otherwise necessary products sold at certain price discounts. As Figure 12 shows, a significant relationship exists between the original price of the product, the discount to be received and the distance that participants were willing to travel. In addition, the results of an ANOVA variance analysis suggest that gender is significant in explaining variations in distances that respondents were ready to travel to find a bargain (in case of 25% discount:  $F=24886.012$ ,  $\text{sig}=0.000$ ; in case of 50% discount:  $F=6865.135$ ,  $\text{sig}=0.000$ ).

Figure 12: Relationship between product price (HUF), discount (%) and travel distance (km)



The survey results demonstrate that although women's participation in tourist shopping seemed to be more affected by price levels (Figure 5), male respondents proved to be more attracted by bargains: although the difference in travel distances was a moderate 2.84 km in case of a 25,000 HUF product sold at 50% discount, on average, men were willing to travel almost 12 km more to buy either a 50,000 HUF or 100,000 HUF product at 50% discount.

However, both genders proved to be highly rational in their decisions: when comparing the costs of travel (i.e. fuel consumption) with possible savings, on average, travel expenses amounted to only 12–17% of the savings realised by buying the product away from home.

## Conclusions

Neither the favourable economic consequences of the political transformation process following 1990 – e.g. the rise of living standards or the increasing availability of a global range of products – nor the country's EU accession that facilitates the free movement of goods have discouraged the Hungarian population from travelling abroad for shopping purposes. Shopping as a primary motivation to travel still plays an important role in Hungarian outbound tourism, and the majority of tourists who cross the border for other purposes will not arrive home empty-handed either. Although the economic and social contribution of tourist shopping is quite significant, relatively little is known about the motivations and travel behaviour of this segment, so the presented research project aimed to contribute to this field of knowledge.

In Hungary, women are generally more interested and also more involved in shopping activities, motivated partly by pleasure and partly by necessity, since everyday shopping is often a household chore performed by female family members. However, when travelling abroad, even though women proved to be slightly more attracted by shopping opportunities, both genders spent approximately equal proportion of their overall travel budget on purchasing goods and services. On the other hand, by allocating some specific time for shopping while on holiday, women seemed to assign a higher social value to this activity as a leisure programme.

The only similarity between self-confessed shopaholic Rebecca Bloomwood and female Hungarian tourists was experienced in their product choices: both the fictional heroine and the real travellers preferred typically feminine personal items such as clothes, bags, shoes, accessories and jewellery. In all other aspects of their shopping behaviour, however, Hungarian women proved to be highly rational. Since Hungary's neighbouring countries are the most popular destinations among those one-day travellers whose primary motivation is purchasing goods, the potential for "name-dropping" is extremely low as not to many people would be impressed by a product bought in any of these destinations. In addition, Hungarian women seem to be particularly price-conscious: among female travellers, high price level is considered the most important feature of a destination that discourages participation in tourist shopping, while favourable prices are among the main factors influencing their product choices. These research findings on female tourists' rationality are also reinforced by the relatively low distances that women were willing to travel in order to gain a bargain, and the fairly high proportion of savings realised by buying a product away from home. And although interpersonal influences played a particularly significant role in female travellers' decisions which might be seen as a contradiction compared to their otherwise highly rational choices, relying on personal advice might actually be considered a specific type of rational behaviour, since friends', guides' and fellow travellers' first-hand experiences may offer more detailed

and more valuable information on certain products and services than any standardised product catalogue or formal website.

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## TIPIČNO ŽENSKA OBILJEŽJA MAĐARSKOGA SHOPPING-TURIZMA

### SUMMARY

Premda se kupovanje (*shopping*) već odavno smatra glavnom turističkom aktivnošću, opseg i karakteristike *shopping*-turizma tek su nedavno postali predmetom akademskog istraživanja i rasprava. Kao prinos tom znanstvenom području, ovaj rad donosi obilježja *shopping*-turizma u Mađarskoj i raspravlja o tipično ženskim obilježjima mađarskoga *shopping*-turizma u inozemstvu. Istraživanje se temelji na ispitivanju 2473 mađarska turista provedenom 2005. godine. Kao što pokazuju rezultati ispitivanja, dok su ispitanice više uključene u *shopping*-turizam, s obzirom na udio troškova kupnje u odnosu na ukupni putni proračun nije pronađena značajna rodna razlika. Što se tiče ponašanja prilikom kupnje, na žene su tipično utjecale razine cijena te su se one istodobno pokazale i sebičnijima i nesebičnijima od muškaraca, kupujući više proizvoda za sebe i članove svojih obitelji. Najznačajnije razlike između muškaraca i žena odnose se na stvari koje najviše vole kupovati, jer turistkinje radije kupuju tipično ženske proizvode kao što su odjeća, cipele, torbe i modni dodaci, zatim na dobar odabir vremena za kupnju dok su u inozemstvu i na korištenje izvorima informacija kojima se obično služe turisti, budući da međuljudski utjecaji kao što su preporuke prijatelja, vodiča i suputnika imaju veću važnost u odlukama ženskih putnika.

KEY WORDS: *shopping*-turizam, Mađarska, rod

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## CARACTÉRISTIQUES TYPIQUEMENT FÉMININES DU TOURISME DE SHOPPING EN HONGRIE

### RÉSUMÉ

Bien que le *shopping* soit considéré depuis longtemps comme une activité touristique, l'ampleur et les caractéristiques du tourisme de *shopping* ne font que depuis peu l'objet de recherches et de débats universitaires. Le présent article apporte une contribution à ce domaine, en décrivant les caractéristiques du tourisme de *shopping* en Hongrie et en traitant les caractéristiques typiquement féminines du tourisme hongrois à l'étranger. La recherche s'appuie sur une enquête menée en 2005 et englobant 2473 touristes hongrois. Ainsi que le montrent les résultats de cette enquête, tandis que les femmes interrogées accordent une place plus importante au tourisme de *shopping*, compte tenu de la proportion des dépenses consacrées aux achats par rapport au budget global de leur voyage, aucune différence distinctive n'est apparue entre les deux sexes. En ce qui concerne leur comportement d'acheteur, les femmes sont typiquement influencées par la hauteur des prix et se montrent à la fois plus égoïstes et plus altruistes que les hommes dans la mesure où elles achètent plus de produits pour leur usage personnel et pour les membres de leur famille. Les différences principales entre les hommes et les femmes concernent leurs achats privilégiés, car les femmes achètent plus volontiers des produits typiquement féminins, tels que vêtements, chaussures, sacs et accessoires de mode, leur choix de temps consacré aux achats pendant leur séjour à l'étranger, et les sources d'informations auxquelles ont ordinairement recours les touristes, sachant que les influences interpersonnelles telles que les conseils d'amis, des guides et des compagnons de voyage ont une plus grande importance dans les décisions des touristes femmes.

MOTS CLÉS: tourisme de *shopping*, Hongrie, sexe