Multi-Channel Funding of Social Tourism Programs: The Case of the Association of Friends of Youth

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Introduction

Social tourism is notyet a well-known or well-understood concept in tourism studies or across large sections of the tourism industry (Minnaert, Diekmann, & McCabe, 2012). It essentially refers to initiatives that aim to include groups into tourism that would otherwise be excluded (Minnaert, 2014) or, in other words, social tourism is defined as 'helping people travel who would not otherwise be able to do so' (European Commission, 2010, p. 2). The leading authors and researchers of the social sustainability, Minnaert, Maitland, and Miller (2013, p. 16), claim that 'social tourism research is still at a relatively early stage, and further research is needed before 'scientification' of the concept can take place.' They propose defining social tourism as 'tourism with added moral value, of which the primary aim is to benefit either the host or the visitor in the tourism exchange.'

Since the definition of social tourism remains a work-in-progress, it is understandable that different interpretations and models of social tourism have been introduced; these models represent various facets of social tourism as it exists today and provide the rationale for these interpretations. Uncertainties also exist regarding who the beneficiaries of social tourism are. Although four principal target groups in the European context were recognized by the Calypso project (European Commission, 2010) (young people, persons with disabilities, senior citizens and families) there are still a number of groups in contemporary society who are excluded from tourism (Diekmann, McCabe, & Minnaert, 2012; Diekmann & McCabe, 2013). Therefore, social tourism not only seeks to address economically disadvantaged individuals but also aims to address a whole range of societal phenomena affecting different groups in society (Diekmann & Mc-

Cabe, 2013, p. 26). Social tourism initiatives/products are also very diverse and, in various European countries, are oriented towards different groups in society. According to Minnaert (2014, p. 283), the concept of social tourism has been implemented in different ways, primarily to suit national contexts: several countries operate holiday voucher programs (for example France and Hungary), other countries have established public-private partnerships (for example Spain, Portugal and Flanders, Belgium), while in the UK and the USA, social tourism is traditionally not a part of public policy and is mostly provided via charities. It is also clear that social tourism provides economic and social benefits (European Economic and Social Committee, 2006). Economic benefits, including increased employment, reduced tourism seasonality and greater economic activity and growth, are becoming widely recognized by the tourism industry (European Commission, 2010). Furthermore, numerous social benefits (Griffin & Stacey, 2013; Tourism Flanders & Brussels, 2008; McCabe 2009; Minnaert, Maitland, & Miller, 2009; Sedgley, Pritchard, & Morgan 2012; McCabe, Joldersma, & Li, 2010; McCabe & Johnson, 2013; Gabruč, 2014b, 2015) are recognized and presented in terms of different improvements in the lives of beneficiaries and also as benefits to the wider society: social tourism increases social cohesion, quality of life and general public welfare as it increases social and family capital, reduces social inequalities, and promotes social inclusion.

In recent years, there has been a noticeable and dramatic increase in research on social tourism in the European context (McCabe, 2009; Minnaert, Maitland, & Miller, 2006; Sedgley, Pritchard, & Morgan, 2012; McCabe, Minnaert, & Diekmann, 2012; Minnaert, 2014); several studies on the emergence of so-

cial tourism and programs of social tourism (Gabruč, 2014a, 2014b, 2015; Bizjak, Knežević, & Cvetrežnik, 2011) already exist in Slovenia. Nevertheless, there are some outstanding fundamental questions on what social tourism is, what forms/practices it includes, and who the beneficiaries are (Minnaert et al., 2013; Diekmann & McCabe, 2013).

The central assumption of our research is that due to poor knowledge of the social tourism phenomenon it is consequently very difficult to identify existing social tourism programs and their particular funding characteristics. The aim of this research is twofold: first, to prepare the literature review on social tourism funding, and second, to explore how the funding of social tourism programs is organized and conducted by The Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth (afy). An exploratory, qualitative study was carried out: in an interview with a representative of the organization and in documentary material, youth summer holiday programs and their funding system were explored.

Literature Review: Funding of Social Tourism
As the aims and goals of social tourism are primarily non-commercial, it is often defined in contrast to commercial tourism (Diekmann & McCabe, 2013, p. 21), for which making a profit is the central goal. Through the understanding of social tourism as a generator and promotor of socio-economic benefits, its 'social character' is revealed, and the foundation for public funding has been laid.

According to Diekmann and McCabe (2013), for social tourism to work there needs to be a system to deliver funds; without those, social tourism as a phenomenon is virtually impossible. In their research, Minnaert et al. (2013) addressed the question of why social tourism was supported by public funding in some societies, but not so in others. They report that in countries like France, Belgium, Portugal and Spain the public sector is a major stakeholder in social tourism provision, whereas in other countries, like the United Kingdom and Ireland, public sector support for social tourism policies is all but non-existent; social tourism is primarily understood as a luxury; consequently, social tourism initiatives usually are not a part of social and/or health policies. Nevertheless, the concept of so-

cial tourism is often supported by public funding and mostly takes the form of low-cost domestic holidays (Minnaert et al., 2009, p. 317).

Diekmann et al. (2012, p. 38) emphasize the presence and importance of funding structures to support social tourism, where funding structures can address specific target groups of social tourism, according to the interpretation of social tourism in each country. Their research points out that funding mechanisms are highly complex and multi-layered, consisting of: (1) direct state funding at diverse political levels (local, regional, national and supranational) and, at the national level, depending on different ministerial portfolios as well as the degree of integration of tourism within state welfare policies; (2) indirect state funding, through health insurance or charities; (3) trade unions or social tourism organizations; and (4) self-financed charities and faith organizations. The authors report that these funding mechanisms are directed towards the support of one or more target groups, often to achieve specific outcomes (benefits) for those groups.

According to Diekmann and McCabe (2013, p. 25), two major types of funding can be observed: infrastructure-oriented funding and beneficiary-oriented funding. Their research reveals the major distinction is between direct and indirect state funding with one exception being the uk, where social tourism is primarily organized by a third sector, charities, who receive the majority of their funding via individual donations, the tourism industry and income from trusts or through events. The research also reports that in other countries social tourism is funded directly by the state (or region), this is delivered through a ministry grant either to beneficiaries or suppliers. The authors emphasize that in terms of indirect funding, the state subsidizes unions or health and welfare organizations.

Caire (2012, p. 85) emphasizes that the trend in funding has moved from financial aid for construction to financial aid to individuals, as a result of the substantial decrease in subsidies granted to social tourism. He claims that rather than subsidizing the construction of social tourism facilities, the public sector grants financial support directly to the holiday-maker; the beneficiary can then choose to spend mo-

ney on social tourism or in the commercial sector, and, as an example, a holiday voucher program is presented. According to the study, holiday vouchers can be used with registered transport, accommodation, or leisure companies.

As previously mentioned, systems of national or regional social tourism are substantially dependent on funding mechanisms (Diekmann et al., 2012). Research emphasizes that even with the multitude of funding mechanisms, three main delivery systems can be distinguished (specific accommodation facilities, holiday vouchers and charitable funding for disadvantaged individuals), although many countries combine more than one system. The research reports organizations owning specific accommodation facilities available for their members that distinguish themselves from commercial suppliers because their main aim is not profit but welfare, which is a core element of all policies and activities. On holiday vouchers, the study mentions that most countries allow the consumer to use commercial tourism infrastructures and are available to employees as a kind of tax-free bonus: in France, holiday vouchers are combined with specific accommodation facilities. Charitable funding for disadvantaged individuals, according to the same research, relies on charities, which can be directly or indirectly subsidized by the government and which may use commercial supply for holiday provision.

McCabe et al. (2012) claim that social tourism is inevitably reliant on some form of stimulus funding, often provided by the state or the public sector, due to the financial downturn in recent years and public sector spending coming under increased scrutiny. According to Diekmann and McCabe (2013), the degree of public funding given to social tourism is one defining aspect that has been largely overlooked. They report that a range of different funding mechanisms has been discussed, from direct state aid, funding via membership organizations, charitable funding, as well as the Danish system, where funding is provided through interest accruing on paid vouchers. The study emphasizes that funding is moving away from investment in physical resources and towards stimulus for collaborative or partnership programs, in a (more) pluralistic model. The study also highlights that it is imperative

for the public sector to develop innovative approaches to funding to ensure that social tourism is not dependent on vulnerable sources of funding and that the justification for such funding is not solely evidenced by benefits to health and social welfare, but also by the added value to the national/regional economy. The study points out that collaborative public-private funding partnerships demonstrate cost-effective solutions. In the case of Hungary (Puczkó & Rátz, 2013), welfare tourism operators exploring additional revenue opportunities were surprised that the ratio of 'other revenues' (such as commercial accommodation services, meetings, and events) within social tourism increased from 11% to 48% between 1978 and 1987.

The study examines different AFY summer holiday programs and their system/characteristics of funding. More specifically, the objectives of the study were as follows: (i) to identify the main channels/mechanisms of funding, and (ii) to identify how funding is carried out according to different types of funding (Is funding more infrastructure- or beneficiary-oriented?) and to examine the scope of funding and the funding trends.

Methodology

Because the concept of social tourism initiatives/programs in Slovenia is poorly known and poorly understood, it was difficult to access providers of social tourism or to identify various social tourism programs. The creation of a representative sample is therefore based on a (virtually) impossible foundation because the relevant information is not available through any registry/list of social tourism providers from which to create a sample and secondly, because there are (according to the numerous and different interpretations of social tourism) many uncertainties in relation to what social tourism programs are. Due to the limitations presented, we decided on qualitative research conducted using the principles and procedures of qualitative analysis (Mesec, 1998).

The selected social tourism provider (AFY) and available information on it was accessed for the first phase (in September 2014) and reviewed over the Internet; through the second phase (October and November 2014), we undertook short informative telephone

interviews with a representative of the organization, where we presented the purpose of our study and established contacts with the organization, which was the entry point (Mesec, 1998, p. 74). She was asked to participate in the research and also to briefly describe their activities with emphasis on their social tourism programs or holiday programs. We requested additional written material relating to the holiday programs they offer. The following January, the AFY representative was invited to take part in a roundtable event, where an interview with her was carried out.

For the data collection (1) an interview with the AFY representative was conducted (in the context of roundtable event) and (2) written material and available documentation about the organization was collected (i.e. Booklet of the AFY Anniversary) (Zveza prijateljev mladine Slovenije, 2013). Both documents were later analysed and processed according to qualitative analysis methodologies; textual records were broken down into topics: topics renamed in terms of everyday language, research topics renamed by encoding, the key concepts were then selected and relationships between them were defined, and finally a tentative theory was formed (Mesec, 1998, pp. 350–377); the data were coded inductively and analysed thematically. Most of the codes were attributed on the basis of the literature review. To maximize the respondent's voice in the research and to answer the research questions as much as possible from the respondent's point of view, quotes will be used extensively. In that way, a clear distinction between the researcher's and the respondents' interpretations is made.

Funding Holiday Programs at AFY

As mentioned earlier, the goals of the study are to examine different AFY summer holiday programs for children and their system of funding. The starting points/questions for our research were what the main channels or mechanisms of funding are, how it is carried out according to different types of funding (infrastructure-oriented or beneficiary-oriented funding), and what is the scope of funding and the funding trends.

The study of children's holiday programs in AFY reveals mainly non-commercial targets (in particular,

related to increasing social inclusion for children and for greater social cohesion), which represent an essential foundation not only for public funding but also for charity fundraising, as we see from examples below. The example below emphasizes that the type of funding in no way determine the holiday program of the children and in that respect, all the children are equal regardless of the different channels of funding.

> With regards to AFY holiday programs, there is a double maxim: first making holidays available to all children and, secondly, the same holiday for all children. [AFY representative]

> When the kids are at the resort, they receive all the same services, the same program, regardless of how it is financed or how those services are covered. [AFY representative]

The aforementioned social goals and aims of children summer holiday programs also reflect the status of AFY, which is a non-governmental, voluntary, humanitarian and non-profit organization. Because of its activities, it has also gained the status of organizations in the public interest. This different status allows the organization to obtain funding from various sources to finance holiday programs.

> Funding is channelled in many directions [. . .] Children's holiday programs are funded from various sources: The Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia (HIIS), the Foundation for the Funding of Invalid Humanitarian Organizations (FIHO), a significant proportion from parents, a large proportion from local community contributions, and also from campaigns – humanitarian and others – organized to raise funds from various sponsors and donors. [AFY representative]

In the AFY case, as we see from the example above, the funding of holiday programs normally and in a significant proportion passes directly to the users themselves: the parents of these children. Other funding mechanisms include direct funding at the local level – local community funds – as well as indirect state fund-

ing through health insurance and the FIHO. One of the important mechanism for funding is also through the self-financed charities via humanitarian and donor campaigns, which usually take place in partnership with other (profit-based) organizations, as we will see from examples below.

The response below is an example of the two different ways of funding that are carried out at AFY; running in parallel are both resort-infrastructure funding and the funding of the holiday programs themselves. AFY warns that the greatest threat to the existence of their holiday programs is a lack of funding for both infrastructure funding and the funding of programs/beneficiary-oriented funding.

> The biggest problem is of a financial nature (for renovation and modernization, as well as the cost of holiday programs) – municipalities spend less money on it each year. [AFY document]

It is clear that the reduced amount of financial resources earmarked for infrastructure represents a particular problem for AFY. This is mainly because the organization itself must provide funding for resort maintenance; also, it requires financial resources to pay operating costs. Since AFY owns numerous resorts, this is a very challenging task for the organization.

> AFY owns or operates 16 resorts with a combined total of 2,275 beds, and most resorts have the status of youth hostels – most of them in Croatia, running as corporations or institutions. [AFY document]

To gather necessary funds for financing the infrastructure and to pay operational costs, AFY has developed a diverse set of special programs, which usually take place during the low season, in cooperation with external contractors and organizers; these special programs have little in common with the summer holiday programs. The primary aim is, as mentioned before, to obtain the necessary funds for the infrastructure by offering it for rent to external contractors; these programs are undoubtedly important in terms of users/beneficiaries, but their primary aim is in terms of 'survival' for program providers, in that

case, AFY, seeking to reduce the impact of seasonality on their business or maintain employment and 'pay the bills.' Funds raised in that way (through special programs and with external contractors) represent an additional, second channel of infrastructure-oriented funding. The example below shows the variety of programs that AFY runs in the low season.

> Happy English vacation or various foreign language courses; sailing school, and school for asthma sufferers; implementing science and project days; during pre-out-of-season and post-out-of-season there are other programs such as Nature school, Gold reader's badge reward holidays; extracurricular activities, camps, workshops, sports team preparations; youth workshops, tennis school, swimming school, travel workshops and creative workshops, etc. [AFY document]

In relation to the funding of the holiday programs themselves (i.e. beneficiary-oriented funding), AFY provides a variety of holiday program financing schemes that focus on specific target groups of children, for example, children with health problems, children with special needs, and children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

> Humanitarian initiatives provide an annual average of more than 1,000 free children's holiday program places, with several thousand children able to obtain funding for subsidized holidays through local communities and the Institute of Public Health. [...] Holiday programs for children with special needs are mainly funded by the FIHO Foundation and the program includes between 100 and 150 children each year. [AFY document]

As we see from the example above, most of the presented channels of funding are beneficiary-oriented: only local community funds are directed to both the beneficiaries and infrastructure, as mentioned above, where the municipalities' contributions and infrastructure oriented funding was examined.

However, the dominant mechanism of funding holiday programs is a financial contribution from the

parents of these children, and the proportion of parents who can pay the full cost of the program decreases; this indicate a trend that the volume of funds from this channel decreases.

> Nowadays only 30 per cent of parents can pay the full cost of the holiday program. [...] The organization is particularly concerned that all children be able to take part in holidays and leisure activities irrespective of their social status. [AFY representative]

In the past and also today, as we can see from the examples above and below, AFY has taken care to ensure that the children's holiday program are 'socially sensitive' and (co)funded from different channels/funding mechanisms that allow the participation in holidays for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

> In the past, for holidays organized by AFY, 30–50 per cent was financed by parents, 24 per cent from WSIG (Worker self-managed interest group) child care, 21 per cent from the WSIG health and social care, and 15 per cent from WSIG welfare. [AFY document]

AFY has the status of the humanitarian organization, which means that part of the funds for implementing holiday programs is obtained from 'humanitarian initiatives' by which donations and sponsorships at the local and national levels are received. According to the AFY documents, an important feature of the funding of holiday programs is, therefore, the solidarity that comes about through the various humanitarian activities (e.g. Wink at the Sun, We Were All Kids, Compassionate Snowflake). With the help of selected donations and sponsorship funds, AFY funded holiday program places for children from disadvantaged families. AFY usually organizes the campaigns in partnership with commercial organizations and in that way public-private partnerships are formed which, as a trend, are noticeable also in the broader European setting (McCabe et al., 2012).

> The largest contributions to free holiday program places for children from socially disad-vantaged environments are received from the annual Wink at the Sun campaign. [...] At the end of the 1990s, AFY's charitable activities sky-rocketed [...] through its partnership with the Lek pharmaceutical company, the Wink at the Sun campaign began. [AFY document]

According to the AFY documents. another very successful charity campaign was also launched as the public-private partnership between the AFY and two commercial organizations: Pejo trading and Mercator.

> Money for free holiday programs is also provided by other charitable initiatives, and among the most successful has been 'We were all Kids.' The campaign was supported by the Pejo trading company and provided one-week holiday program places for 1,500 children: 100 per year during the winter holidays and 200 per year in the summer holidays. The campaign ran from 2003 to 2007, also in cooperation with Mercator, which contributed a part from the sale of certain products. [AFY document]

In relation to the campaign 'Wink at the Sun,' another fundraising mechanism was launched to reach individual donors, again in partnership with a newspaper company.

> In 1998, AFY launched the difficult and, at the same time, risky concept of fundraising through direct marketing using unaddressed letters with payment slips sent to all households in Slovenia; due to the high costs, this action was subsequently limited to legal entities and individual donors, who received mailshot and payment slips, delivered with daily newspapers. [...] To date, more than €1.8 million has been raised, with free holiday program places going to 10,500 children. [AFY document]

Firstly, the examples above all reveal that the humanitarian activity of AFY is growing and becoming increasingly necessary and in parallel with local community contributions and FIHO and HIIS funds annually ensures a substantial part of the funds in the funding system of children summer holiday program

at AFY. Secondly, all the examples above indicate that funding is aimed more towards providing financial assistance for users/beneficiaries and less for infrastructure funding.

In a context of beneficiary-oriented funding, the responses above shows that the scope of the funds raised from charity campaigns rises from year to year: from 300 children on free holidays in 2003–2007 to more than 1000 children in 2013, in addition to several thousand children having subsidized holidays from municipalities. This information is also supported by the fact that fewer and fewer parents can afford an annual holiday for their children, and that the scope of available financial resources from parents is diminishing. The tendency of the AFY to also include children with health problems and disabled children makes the organization a candidate for FIHO in HIIS funds. There has been a reduction in funding from both of these channels; FIHO funds due to the concession fee reduction from the lottery, while HIIS funds due to a tightening of the criteria for children to access holiday program places and consequently a reduction in funding from this source. Regarding the infrastructure-oriented funding, research shows reduced funding from the municipalities, which has increased the scope of the funds that must be ensured by AFY itself.

The funding system of AFY, including beneficiary and infrastructure funds, is highly complex and multi-layered and, as such, today enables a relatively high proportion of children to take part in holiday programs:

> On average, around 20,000 children benefit from holiday programs annually. [AFY document]

However, as the examples show, the total volume of the gathered funds is in decline, and consequently we can expect that the number of children benefiting from the AFY summer programs financial schemes will decrease in the future, but hopefully not significantly since the organization has developed a multi-channeled funding system, which should prevent such a negative outcome for the children summer holiday programs.

Conclusion

This paper contributes to the insight of funding in the field of social tourism. Significant findings of the research were that multi-channel funding system in AFY exists, which is an exceptional case of social tourism funding, not only in Slovenia but also in the wider European context and, as such, is potentially a good funding practice, which should be promoted. The AFY multi-channeled system consists of six different channels of funding children's summer holiday programs. In the context of public funding, there are three different channels; in addition to the FIHO and HIIS funds designated for funding summer holiday programs for children with special needs and children with health problems (children's summer programs funded from these two channels are fully covered), there are also community contributions, which are primarily used for (co)funding summer holiday programs for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds (municipalities allocate another part of these funds for the investments in infrastructure of the holiday resorts). The fourth channel is charity fundraising and funds from which the organization covers the full costs of summer holiday programs for more than a thousand children per year. The last and very significant channel of funding children's holiday programs are parents' contributions; their own funds represent a primary channel for funding the programs, which are usually (co)funded due to the increasingly unfavourable socio-economic status of many Slovenian families.

Another significant finding was that the system of fundraising is strongly linked to the status of the organization, and it represents an essential foundation for raising funds in the presented ways from various organizations and individuals, not only from parents but also from individual donors. Only two channels of infrastructure-oriented funding exist: community funds and the funds of the AFY organization obtained through launching special products, usually in the low season and in cooperation with outside contractors.

According to our research question about how the funding is carried out according to different types of funding and what is the scope of funding and the funding trends the research shows that two major

types of funding can be observed: running in parallel are infrastructure-oriented funding and beneficiary-oriented funding. Research also shows trends in funding going from infrastructure oriented funding (only two channels exist in this area: community funds and the organization's own funds) to beneficiary oriented funding where five channels exist - FIHO, HIIS, community and parents' funds and charity funds. It is a matter of concern that all the channels and raised funds are decreasing, and consequently humanitarian/charity activities and fundraising is increasing; probably the best known is the celebrated 'Wink at the Sun' campaign. For funding holiday programs through the charity actions, the organization is trying to introduce some new/innovative funding: AFY together with external, profit-based organizations, develops and agrees relatively stable/long-term public-private partnerships, which provide relatively more stable or permanent sources of funding. Therefore, another important finding of the research is that the beneficiary-oriented funding suffers from less and less direct and indirect public funding (municipalities, HIIS, FIHO) while funding from humanitarian activities is apparently rising. Furthermore, the critical finding of the research is that parents are to a large degree not able to finance the holidays for their children and a significant source/channel of funding of AFY children summer holiday programs is also in decline.

The most remarkable finding of the research was that although the organizational funding system is very complex and multi-layered, it still fails to ensure steady funds. In that context, the biggest threat for the AFY is that it will run out of necessary funds to obtain the summer holiday programs at the present scope since the volume of funds raised through most of the existing channels (parent's contributions, municipality contribution, HIIS and FIHO funds) is declining each year. To compensate the loss of parent's and public funding, in the last two decades, AFY has become increasingly oriented to charity fundraising. In order to ensure the necessary funds for the holiday programs, namely to ensure steady sources, fundraising is becoming the central task undertaken by the organization.

The interest in the subject of the funding of social tourism is extensive, and it will continue to be so in the future, since, as Diekmann and McCabe (2013) claim, for social tourism to work there needs to be a system to deliver funds. In the case of AFY, both beneficiary-oriented and infrastructure-oriented funding are in decline and children's holiday programs are threatened and increasingly dependent on funds raised by the humanitarian actions and campaigns organized to raise funds from various sponsors and donors. The trend in funding social tourism programs is changing course; from public funding to charity funding, which is characteristic of more 'individualized societies' (Minnaert et al., 2013), in which social tourism could at best be argued to be a desert and funding it always a question of who deserves the state help; this is more in the line with the neo-liberal social model. Nevertheless, the research has highlighted the importance of funding for social tourism programs to exist and benefit different groups of children at AFY, but there is still a need for further research into, as Minnaert (2014) says, 'the transformative power of tourism and its potential for social policy,' in which the long-term effects of social tourism participation are explored.

At this step, we suggest that social tourism priority programs should be identified at the national level, where children are defined as one of the key beneficiary groups and are actively targeted inside those social tourism initiatives, especially children with health problems, children with special needs, and children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Those programs should be substantially supported and (co)financed from public funds, as a part of social or health policy. Secondly, due to the poor knowledge of social tourism and social tourism funding systems, we also suggest the educational programs and promotion of the social tourism phenomenon and its funding system not only among the charitable and non-profit sector but also among commercial tourism providers, since the cooperation between sectors is evidently essential for the future development and funding of social tourism.

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