



**Sociology Ph.D Program**

**THESIS SUMMARY OF PHD DISSERTATION**

**Formádi Katalin**

**New Professionalism in the making – the case of the Tourism  
Sector?**

**Supervisor:**

**Kuczi Tibor, Professor, DSc**

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**Institute of Sociology and Social Policy**

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## Content

I.	RESEARCH PRELIMINARIES .....	4
1.1	Relevance of topic .....	4
1.2	Theoretical approaches to the profession.....	5
1.3	Professionalisation in a new approach .....	7
II.	Structure of the dissertation .....	9
III.	Research methodology .....	9
IV.	Research findings.....	12
4.1	Definition of professions of health tourism and event management .....	12
4.2	Features of work activities in health tourism and event management .....	14
4.3	Process of professionalisation.....	17
4.4	An ideal-typical professionalisation model.....	18
V.	Main References .....	21
VI.	Author's Publications related to the topic .....	23

## I. RESEARCH PRELIMINARIES

### 1.1 RELEVANCE OF TOPIC

Tourism is a relative *novelty*, which became en masse and got into the centre of attention of the public and the sciences in the 20<sup>th</sup> century only. Parallel, it turned multicolour and conquered new geographical territories and became an individual field as well. Owing to its rapid *modification* and *development* the problem and process of its becoming a profession can be traced well. My aim is to observe the features of the professions related to tourism; compared to earlier studies my research is novelty in the following areas; it:

- Steps out of the frames of the frequently observed hotel industry and applying the market rather than the branch approach it concentrates on two dynamically developing areas: *health tourism*, whose running up is due to the more and more popular health consciousness and activity and the *event and conference tourism* (later used as event management), which became popular as an effective channel of the distribution of novelties and professional knowledge and relationships;
- Observes the existing and emerging professions in the investigated areas and, using a structuralist-functionalist, interactionist, neomarxist and neweberian and postmodern theoretical framework, determines the professional criteria;
- Analyses the subjective and objective features and conditions of work;
- Examines the professions on both micro and macro levels,
- Instead of the static examination methods and findings it focuses on the

process of professionalisation and the history of the profession and carries out a comparative analysis on the market of health tourism and event management.

Therefore the dissertation reveals the processes of professionalisation of two, many-actors' newly emerging areas, using objective and subjective approaches and trying to find answers to questions as follows

- The formation of which new professions can be traced?
- What are the features of these professions?
- What conditions play role in the formation of these professions?
- What processes lead to the formation of these professions?
- What does professionalisation head for in the observed areas?

I give a new interpretation of the process of professionalisation applying the classical (macro) and new micro-level approaches to the professions.

## **1.2 THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO THE PROFESSION**

During the process of modernization the general economic activities become differentiated into more and more specific professions, that is, the concentration of individual activities into a narrower area results in professional specialization. This process is the emergence of professions, which, though with various approaches and explanations, can be regarded as the institutionalisation of work activities. Specialized knowledge being revaluated and the economy becoming more and more complex the significance of professions and their experts have enhanced.

The significance and variability of the professions has been paid attention to in sociology – it observes the processes of professionalisation, the ways of professional organisations, and the patterns of the power and influence of the experts. Connecting professionalisation and the institutionalisation of the history of knowledge is of great importance in this area of research. Giddens considers the modification of the type of knowledge as the feature of modernism—in congruence with the expansion of the quantity of knowledge differentiation takes place; new fields of sciences, new professions, new branches of industry, specializations become distinguished. In this broader process, on the basis of once homogenous knowledge new instances of professional knowledge emerge, which results in the appearance of expert systems (Giddens, 1990). Parsons (1951) also emphasises the role of knowledge regarding it as a profession that has an independent theoretical framework. Freidson (1986, 2001) focuses on the power of knowledge – he claims that knowledge and the possession of information always results in power. He confronts formal, i.e., elite knowledge which applies scientific theories and methods to solve the technical, social, etc. problems with everyday knowledge. He considers experts as agents of formal knowledge.

The first analyses of the profession dealt with the professions of great importance which serve social functions and the community in an altruistic way for the public well-being, e.g., doctors (Carr-Saunders, 1933, Parsons, 1951, et al.). The models of criteria systems of the professions dominated the sociological approach of the profession up to the 1960s. The system of criteria set up a certain ideal-typical construction, which, on the one hand, projected the desired target condition and, on the other hand, on the basis of the presence or lack of the professional features outlined the reached grade in the process of professionalisation.

In the 60s Hughes' analysis of the professions, based on the Chicago school emerged as a novel trend (1958). This school, arguing with the former point-of-view approaches, interpreted the professions as the accomplishment of gradually reinterpreted roles rather than as a stable structure. Therefore, it attempted to seize the dynamics of the continuous change of professionalisation.

Starting in the 1970s the observation of professionalisation had a new direction – the discourse of power became the centre of attention (Johnson, 1972, Freidson, 1986, Larson, 1977, Saks, 1995). According to this, the process of professionalisation can be seen as the enforcement of interests of a narrow professional team. Following Treiman (1977), Abbott (1988) also revealed the fact of rivalry among professions; he found hierarchy among them and distinguished the so-called high-prestige and inferior professions – Etzioni called the latter semi-professions<sup>1</sup>, 1969 – among the newly emerging professions.

### **1.3 PROFESSIONALISATION IN A NEW APPROACH**

The new theories of professionalisation place the focus on the fading of the professional boundaries, the methods of professionalisation and the observation of the different levels and the persons of professionalisation (Saks, 2003, Evetts, 2003, 2006). Hanlon (1998) and Boyce (2008), observing professionalisation from a new angle, present the marketisation of professionalisation. The expert is expected to act in the interest of the client, considering the regulations of the organisation – e.g., the financial supply, quality insurance, etc. – following a sort of manager point of view. In another interpretation this expert activity should be appreciated by the public. Also,

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<sup>1</sup> Semi-professions are nurses, teachers, social workers, librarians who provide services and able to demonstrate half the required attributes.

confirms that in professionalisation the aim of the expert and collective profession is to raise the status of the profession and reach a higher professional prestige (Kuhlmann, 2004).

Further theoretical development is the fact that research into the work features of the profession and the sociological examination of the working methods apply individual rather than macro analyses (Kuhlmann, 2004, Dahle, 2008, et al). Adapting to the continuous changes of the demands and the development of management methods (Boltanski, Chiapello, 2006) the features of the work activities, the versatility or monotony of the work, autonomy, flexibility and independence, professional identity and the gender-ethnic features of the professions become the centre of attention (Kuhlmann, 2004:71). The notion of “labour force entrepreneur” introduced by Voß and Pongratz (2001) reflects on this change. The expression “labour force entrepreneur” refers to the fact that the sharp isolation of the traditional managing-executing function of Taylor peculiar to several economic branches and fields into the direction of a greater individual responsibility and flexibility. This, in many cases, results in a bigger work load and enforces the temporal and financial utilisation of the resources of the private sector (Formádi-Mayer, 2008). In the case of the “labour force entrepreneur” self-control grows and life is voluntarily rendered inferior to work and working conditions and life becomes commercialised. Employees are indirectly forced to cope in the market and inner competition by developing their work skills. The work and the tasks include a higher level of cognitive complexity – the tasks are to be handled in a complex way, information is to be structured and sorted out, employees have to adapt to the demands and team relations fast and the right means is to be selected at the right time.



## **II. STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION**

The logical structure of the dissertation is as follows: five chapters are devoted to the subject matter. Chapter 1 gives a brief presentation of the sample area of the dissertation, the sub-branches of tourism such as health tourism and conference tourism, the quantitative and qualitative features of tourism employment are analysed, outlining the currently definable jobs in tourism.

Chapter 2 is about the theoretical framework of the professions and professionalization, with the help of I define the attributes that are highlighted in the analysis. Besides the classical theoretical frames I present the new approaches to professionalisation, which emphasise the features of the work activities rather than the separation of the professions.

Chapter 3 presents the modus operandi of the dissertation, the applied methods and the steps of research.

Chapter 4 includes the findings of empirical research – the tourism jobs are determined, their qualification demands are defined, the features of work are presented, the process of professionalisation and the relationships of the persons involved are outlined. Finally, I present an ideal-typical development model which can be used for modelling the newly professionalised areas.

Chapter 5 outlines the five thesis, and shortly summarizes the research results. The dissertation ends with further research applications and ideas.

## **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

From the point of view of methodology, I use a mixed research strategy – I attempt to reach an optimal combination of various methods – a pragmatic paradigm. In order to have relevant and comprehensive findings I use quantitative and qualitative means together. By applying qualitative research methods I can separate the professions from the occupations, while the

quantitative means are appropriate to learn the features of the professions and the points of view of work activities. The ontological basis of research is built upon the theory of tourism and the classical and modern theoretical background and notions of the professions. The epistemological basis of research comprises both the objective and subjective approaches; the meaning contents related to professionalisation and work activities come from questionnaires and deep interviews.

First, as part of the quantitative research, work areas of health tourism are defined with the help of questionnaire data gained from managers responsible for the selection of employees. This included the abilities and skills related to the particular professions and the formal expectations and the observation of the features of work activities from different points of view – e.g., autonomy, independence, variability of work, etc. Second, in order to model the process of professionalisation qualitative interviews were made with the employees – exclusively with the workers who are in direct relationship with the guests on a daily basis providing health and tourism services – in order to arrive at a deep revelation of their work activities. For further supplement there is a qualitative content analysis, examining the job descriptions and the accessible data, documents and web pages of the professional organisations and educational institutions.

The research does not involve the entire sub-branch of health tourism; it focuses only on the medical and/or wellness spas which comprises its significant part. The selection of the observation units is made with quota-based non-probability sampling, on the basis of the age of the institution – they have functioned for decades or they are newly opened – and the type of establishment – exclusively health and/or wellness spas. The assessment is based on 60 spas – 11 in Hungary and 49 elsewhere in Europe – Czech, Greek, German, Italian, Austrian and Romanian – 270 questionnaires gained from jobs

in health tourism complying with the above criteria. This enables comparative analyses which reveal the differences and similarities among the countries. The quantitative analyses are supplemented with 106 deep interviews in order to get thorough knowledge about the choice of professions and the current work features. The content analyses include the observation of the activities of the professional organisations in business federation of the service providers, i.e., spas, in order to reveal the level of professionalisation in health tourism.

The other sampling area of my research – the market of event management – involved quantitative and qualitative questioning for the analyses of the above issues and further content analyses supplemented the research. In the market of event management I observe the event managers' companies and the professional organisations related to events. The survey includes 25 professional program organiser companies – 16 conference and company program organisers (PCO), 4 exhibition organisers and 5 festival organising enterprises. The size of the samples – as estimated – gives half of the market in the case of PCOs,  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the exhibition organisers and a small fraction of festival organisers. The selection of the observation units is made with non-probability sampling and with a cost-effective method. In the cases of the event management companies, the directors answer the questions as program organisers and representative of the company – the latter presents the general data of the enterprises and the expectations related to the employees, whereas the program organisers' perspective provide information about the practical work and the features of the work activities. Comprehensive surveys are made about the professional organisations related to particular areas of event management – partly questioning by mail or telephone, partly in person, followed by content analyses.

The research in the areas of health tourism and event management, considering its temporal dimensions, is a cross-section study.

For the analyses of the interviews I used Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software. One part of the codes is determined on the basis of preliminary information (*a priori*), while the dominant part of the code list contains *in vivo* (open) codes. Axial coding enables the revelation of further details and the identification and systematic observation of new categories – the reasons of professionalisation, persons concerned, on the basis of the use of resources. The quantitative data are analysed with SPSS computer program, using both one-variable and multi-variable methods. The basic distributions – frequency and marginal distributions with the help of mean value – are supplemented with cross charts and data reduction procedures.

I analysed the educational institutions, the health tourism's and event management's jobs, basic work activities and rules of operation of the professional organisations with content analyses on the basis of the accessible documentation.

#### **IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS**

##### **4.1 DEFINITION OF PROFESSIONS OF HEALTH TOURISM AND EVENT MANAGEMENT**

**Hypothesis: The separation of tourism from other spheres of economy and its internal differentiation has reached a level where the particular areas of work activity can be identified as independent professions.**

The rapid development of health tourism is proven by the expansion of professional areas in spas – on average 5-6 different jobs can already be identified. An even bigger number of health tourism jobs are found in a few spas where, owing to an enhanced specialisation 12-15 different work position in health tourism can be distinguished. Owing to the distinction of the

professional areas in health tourism – medical therapy and/or tourism background – the internal differentiation of the field has reached a level where the particular work areas are independently recognised at different systems of requirements and conditions. By the type of job and the required educational level, the following health-tourism related jobs are distinguished:

- 1) *Health consultants* includes those jobs which require higher level of education in medical care (doctors, psychologist, physiotherapists, dieticians, therapists, wellness therapeuta, wellness consultant);
- 2) *Lifestyle consultants* includes those jobs which require higher level of education in leisure and tourism-related areas (wellness and spa managers, wellness trainer, sport-recreation experts, animator);
- 3) *Health service supplier* includes those jobs which require medium level education in health-related areas (health technician, medical assistant, masseur);
- 4) *Lifestyle service supplier* includes those jobs which require medium level education in leisure and tourism-related areas (fitness-wellness assistant, wellness beautician) and
- 5) *Implementer* includes those jobs which have no special educational requirements neither in health, nor in tourism-related areas (wellness receptionist, sauna staff, bath staff).

In the case of event management the differentiation of areas and the versatility of the work activities are perceivable too, though, unlike health tourism, their theoretical frameworks are based on similar disciplines. Event management requires minimum secondary qualifications – GCSE or high-school diploma. The proportion of secondary and higher education qualifications of the people interviewed is nearly 50-50 percent. The event

management's jobs are based on the different type of events, such as conference organizer, cultural organizer, festival planner, exhibition designer, wedding planner.

#### **4.2 FEATURES OF WORK ACTIVITIES IN HEALTH TOURISM AND EVENT MANAGEMENT**

**Hypothesis: Work activities both in spas and in the market of event management are just partly considered as independent, autonomous and flexible ones.**

The research results did not prove that the examined health-tourism related jobs are featured by a high degree of independence, autonomy and flexibility. The responses reveal that 88 percent of the employees in health tourism follow a predetermined schedule and the order of the tasks is fixed. In certain areas flexibility and independence can function within a framework and limits determined by the management – e.g., open hours, morning and afternoon shifts, etc. – above these the workers are allowed to follow their own daily schedule. Due to the spatial bounds of the service activities, spatial flexibility is not possible in the case of health tourism jobs. Quantitative flexibility of employment is perceivable in summer periods; in order to satisfy greater demands apprentices, animators and sport trainers are seasonally employed. Functional flexibility in spas is not formally present; however, it is not infrequent that colleagues help one another if needed, in the case of jobs requiring similar knowledge and skills. The observed professions can be classified into the operative level, yet each worker in nearly every job is responsible for the scheduling of their work and the determining of its content, e.g., the exact content of a massage. The examined spas characterized by strong control of supervisors and clients. The autonomy and flexibility of each job is rather based on the management decisions, not dependent from the educational

level or the type of job. In this respect, market logic is rather dominant than the professional logic.

In the area of event management the autonomy is determined by the management: the workers are independent and have self-control; following a determined way of procedure they make their own daily schedule, considering the market conditions. The observable limitations concern the compliance with quality insurance which also limits the decisions of the assistants. The other aspect of autonomy is the flexibility of the working hours. This means that the work hours are mostly flexible within the limits determined by the management –with the day of the program coming there are more and more limitations concerning the daily schedule – otherwise the workers are allowed to work flexible hours. Spatial flexibility is less typical or limited for program organisation – the coordination of applications, the management of the reservations and the compilation of brochures could be made at home on a laptop or PC but the organisers do their work in the office so that the colleagues can follow the current on-going works – recent reservations, received performance materials, etc. Although the work activities differ from the ordinary during the program, they cannot be regarded flexible as the office is moved to the venue of the program. Numeric and functional flexibility can be seen too – the greater work demand is fulfilled by hostesses, apprentices and volunteers right before and during the program. Functionally, the qualifications and experience of the workers enables restructuring – they can alternate the tasks at the different programs, e.g., once someone is responsible for the registration and next time for the brochures.

**Hypothesis: In the field of health tourism and event management, the control of the professional bodies shifts towards the control of the market; the service is not determined by experts but the demands of the clients, who are capable of expressing their wishes.**

The controlling role of the professionals is definite in case of the health-related services: the formerly defined health consultant type of jobs (doctor, psychologist, physiotherapist) are rather determining, restrictive than simply suggesting (eg. medication, treatment). The health service supplier (fitness-trainer, wellness trainer) and the lifestyle service supplier's (fitness-wellness assistant, wellness trainer) professional position is weaker, more supporting, suggesting, but not restrictive. The implementing jobs (wellness receptionist, sauna staff, bath staff) have very limited control over the clients.

The sign of increasing market impact is that the service provider continually faces the necessity of development and renewal because of the constant changes and new preferences of the customers. Participation in retraining courses is of primary importance as the clients are getting more and more informed and experienced about the new methods, they have concrete expectations and the service providers must follow the latest trends, procedures as they are expected to know and apply them. The professionals cannot control and influence the client unrestrictedly, so from the Parsons-type *defenceless* and *lack of knowledge-client* turns to a *conscious consumer*, who is aware of his/her preferences and expectations. However the frame of the professional is dictated by the employer (the firm) and the insurance company.

In case of event management, the clients' demands, ideas, the program topics, venues and participants constantly change, confronting the organisers with different challenges each time. The well-informed clients can express their wishes and expectations however they have different market knowledge. Part of the problem is the lack of objective, non-promotional evaluations, information therefore this also helps to deepen the relations between the service provider and client.



### 4.3 PROCESS OF PROFESSIONALISATION

**Hypothesis: As far as the attribute-based development model of professionalisation concerned, the observed areas are on different levels of development; only a few jobs regarded as professions, but bigger portion have not reached the complete degree of professionalisation in the structural-functionalist sense; they are rather regarded as semi-professions.**

In the hierarchy of occupations and professions not only theoretical distinction could be applied, but the professional status could be based also on special knowledge, specific skill and high level of self-control, authority. Professions are from the group of health consultant, such as the physiotherapists, dieticians, doctors and psychologists. Semi-professions are found among the health service consultant (wellness therapeuta, hidro/elektro/kinoterapeuta), and among the health service suppliers (health technicians, medical assistant, masseur), and among the lifestyle consultant jobs (animator, wellness consultant, wellness and spa manager, fitness-trainer). The lifestyle service suppliers (fitness-wellness assistant, wellness beauticians) and the wellness trainer from the group of lifestyle consultant, and furthermore the implementing jobs (sauna staff, bath staff, wellness receptionist) are not considered neither profession, nor semi-profession.

Based on the professional attributes, in case of event management, professions are the conference organizers, the exhibition designers and festival/cultural organizers. Semi-professions are the party service providers, wedding planners and not (yet) professions are the community organizers and political organizers.

It must be stated that the professional attributes are constantly changing, developing, so the research shows the existing situation of

profession–semi-profession–not profession continuum. In reality the borders of professionalisation's stages have not marked off precisely as the level of autonomy, flexibility mainly depends on the management, not on the job itself, which is the indicative of strengthening market logic.

#### 4.4 AN IDEAL-TYPICAL PROFESSIONALISATION MODEL

**Hypothesis: Professionalisation in both health tourism and event management is being born internally rather than as initiated by the state—as a result of the strong role-taking of certain providers and by self-organisation of the professional associations, respectively.**

In the health tourism, professionalisation began at the initiatives of the service providers and professional associations, role-taking of the state was forced by the professionals: in the newly emerged areas of health tourism, in the fields of wellness, the system of education was set up in a couple of years. The interest of health tourism-related service is higher too, e.g., visits to spas, use of saunas, massage, participation in movement programs, which enhances the recognition and importance of the services. Promotion behind professionalisation, i.e., the economic profit of the whole process is not to be debated from the point of view of the people involved – support the theory of professionalisation of Hanlon (1998) and Boyce (2008). At the same time, professionalisation is not only the means of inspiration of the frequent use of the services but it aims at the sustainability and quality insurance of the services, which is in the interest of both service providers and consumer.

The growing recognition of the role of events as motivators for tourism and catalysts for destination competitiveness has led to a subsequent growth of event management. The number of events and the type of events are increasing continuously. However in case of event management, the process of professionalization took 15 years. The Hungarian Event Management

Association has put a lot of effort into getting event management acknowledged as a profession in its own right in the Occupational Classification System and in the Branch – based Classification System of Economic Activities. The economic advantage of professionalism is not a question.

Based on the research results, the dynamic of professionalism consists of the following steps:

*1. Developing new specialty*

The examined fields developed from other special fields due to the changing demand. One hand side, the growing demand generate new investments so new workplaces and jobs are created. On the other side, the consumers purchase the service of professionals as the tasks are too complicated or require special knowledge or just simply in order to find the best solution, to save money, time and energy. At the beginning stage, the special fields were at the hall's door of the profession, gaining the status of *pre-profession*. In this pre-profession status, the professional attributes are (theoretical background, institutionalisation, authority) lacking. Generally, pre-professions are regarded as a temporary state where the profession becomes an independent field, starting to develop the system of professional criteria.

*2. Rise of the specialty, internal differentiation of the profession*

The next stage is the rise of the profession, reaching the professional criteria. The pre-professions do not possess all the relevant professional criteria, at the beginning the client-respect and acceptance, the market demand are enough for professionals. In this changing environment, the professionals are trying to react to the new market logic and provide specialized, tailored made services to the clients, which lead to the specialization of the profession, result the internal differentiation of the professions.

If professionalisation takes a long time before its full expansion, the observed area becomes fragmented due to the changing and growing demands and becomes specialised into sub-branches, which is called *sub-profession*. These specialisations are built on the same knowledge base but it is used in different ways – the codes of ethics, the features of work activities and the organisational backgrounds may differ.

### 3. *Acceptance, the status of profession*

The professional status of sub-professions depends on the success of involving the actors, stakeholders – state, professional associations, consumers – and possessing the professional attributes. Generally, those fields reach the professional status which complete special skills, institutionalised professional attributes and possess high level of authority. These professions strengthen their resources (eg. theoretical basis, activity of professional association) from the semi-professions (eg. adapting quality schemes, professional associations' activity).

The rise of the profession depends on the communication and power relations among the actors involved, therefore the process of professionalisation is less explicit, dynamic and varyingly intense. In the process of professionalisation the roles and reactions of the actors to the others' activities have varying effectiveness – the law-making of the state responds to the demands of the market at the lowest speed, while members of the professional organisations are ready for the new challenges to form new skills and competences to provide services for the consumers and to maintain their confidence. Professions are determined by the market-oriented, management principles, so the market (the demand, the client's preferences, trends) strongly influence the progress of professionalisation.

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