

Nature parks as local and organizational frameworks for protecting the heritage and conserving the character of a region as well as enhancing innovation

The region, the location and the allocation of character, originality and nature play an important role in the approach of regional or local marketing. The nature park itself – **in this case the Great Milic Nature Park** – can be considered as a **type of product**, as it fulfills the criteria for national/international tourism products.

Within a certain region, especially regional and local products, like tourism programs, events or **handicraft products, homemade or processed food** (jam, squash, walnut, etc.) produced regionally or sold in “organic stores” can be labeled as products of the nature park, which can be a quality guarantee regarding their organic nature. This guarantee can be reinforced by using a „**Nature Park Label**” as a marketing tool (local product).



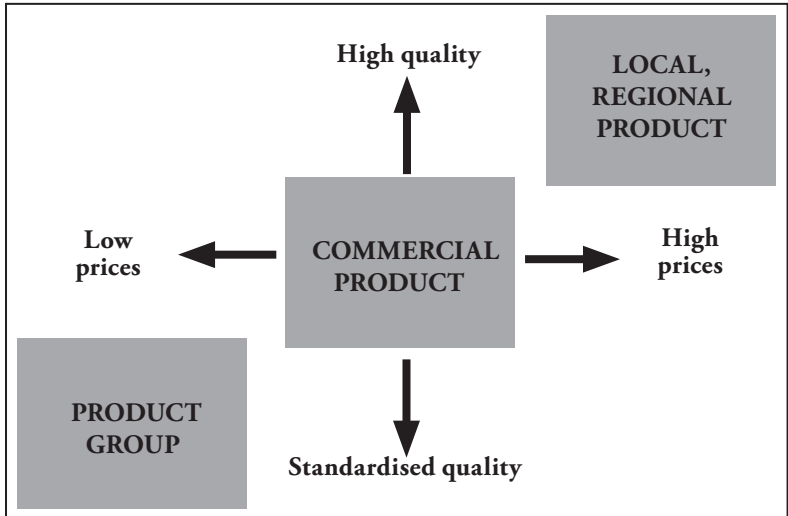
Local products (p\alinka (brandy) from the region Hegyk\oz and plum jam).

Local products in the region of Great Milic:

- **Apiary products:** honey, medovina honey wine, propolis
- **Products of animal origin:** cow milk and cottage cheese, goat milk and cheese, chicken eggs, pork bacon and lard, sausage, produce from pig killings, rabbit fur;
- **Fruit and fruit products:** apple, pear, plum, cherry, peach, walnut, blackberry, raspberry, strawberry, red currant and fruit products – plum jam, and different sorts of jam and squash;
- **Garden vegetables:** tomato, green pepper, cucumber, root vegetables, potato;
- **Grapes and wines**
- **Mushroom products:** freshly picked mushroom – porcino, boletaceae and dried mushroom
- **Woven products:** baskets and brooms made of cane
- **Handicraft woodwork products:** (e.g. handles of hand tools, wooden rakes, local furniture and their accessories);



- **Handicraft wrought-iron products:** decorations, candlesticks, bases
- **Needle-craft:** embroidery, crochet-work, homespun (it is not produced anymore but could be made as the necessary tools and machines are available);
- **Traditional dresses:** only for order;



The meaning of products (brands) in trade, (Source: MÜLLER-HAGEDORN, L. 1997).

Based on the experience of the South-German regions, the aim of establishing local product brands is to sell ***these local products in a more processed way and thus with more return.*** The brand name has to express and at the same time vouch for the special regional origin and high quality of the product.

The main condition for establishing a brand label that fulfils all these criteria is the quality management; additional important criteria are the propagation of the consumption of domestic products and the unified product design (packaging, marketing, promotion). [ECKERT et al (2000)]

Of course, this requires the support of the society from the ground up as well as a basis that relying on the social resources of the micro region establishes regional cooperation.

The active collaboration of small local communities and places – which is exemplary in this region – is an important precondition for developments

⁷ECKERT, A; POPP, D; LENZ, C; BACHMANN, J; HAGE, G. (2000): *Naturpark Südschwarzwald, Konzeption zur nachhaltigen Entwicklung des Naturparks Südschwarzwald [Southern Black Forest Nature Park, concept for the sustainable development of the Southern Black Forest Nature Park]; Schlußbericht, Landesregierung Baden-Württemberg – EU-Leader II, Südschwarzwald (in German).*

MÜLLER-HAGEDORN, L. (1997): *Trends im Handel – Analysen und Fakten zur aktuellen Situation im Handel [Trade trends – analyses and facts of the current situation of trade], Frankfurt / Main (in German).*

and the management of visitors, tourists and guests staying at accommodations. It is an empirical fact that the demand for mass produced products in post-industrial societies is not pervading in all layers of the society. **Unique products that were not made in mass production** are better marketable. The solvent demand for products could be enhanced by connecting the Great Milic Nature Park to the international ecotourism network. In the world of “preserved values”, *Jam cooking*, we believe that people who would like to relax are more receptive to the attractive natural environment, the aesthetically pleasing look of settlements and the preserved values.



Jam cooking

On the Hungarian side, the non-profit Ltd. responsible for organizing and coordinating the fulfillment of objectives represented by the Great Milic Nature Park would like to act as a generating organization. As a partnership forum, it takes on the responsibility for coordinating and harmonizing different development and sustainability priorities, the establishment of the long-term organizational framework for regional rural development, landscape maintenance and community building cooperation and thus could be the host for rural development projects supported by the European Union (LEADER).

The LEADER is a “community initiative in favor of viable rural communities”. Its objective within the European Union is to alter the attitude of local governments, entrepreneurs and that of the civil society in micro-regions based on partnerships and in form of grassroots initiatives. Experience shows that thanks to LEADER, the cooperation based on partnerships and the recognition of common interests replaces isolated, individual and sometimes overlapping

efforts, which occasionally hinder each other.

On the Hungarian side, the **Zempléni Helyi Termék és Szolgáltatás Klaszter** (Local Product and Service Cluster of Zemplén) has been established to develop products. The aim of the cluster is to produce all possible joint, individual or supplementary goods by



Porcino or penny bun (Boletus edulis).



organizing the current and future products of members into a system and to sell them under one trademark.

Planned product line:

Fruit based products: Jams containing especially high concentration of fruit with or without added sugar, juices with a 100% fruit content or nectars with a 50% fruit content (by mixing different fruit types or using only one type)

Products containing low concentration of water: desiccated and dried fruit, fruit powder mix made of fruit

Fruit cheese and jellies

Crystallized fruit puddings

Sweet spreads

Alcoholic drinks

Meat-based products

Soured and fermented dairy products

The cluster considers it important to reach the first levels of product processing and sees it as the first level of product development. An example could be the production of fruit pulp (mainly plum and apricot) that is retrieved by seeding, cleaning and deep-freezing and can be processed further.

Based on the above, the strategic goals of the Great Milic Nature Park are as follows:

- Protection of values: the conservation of a uniform cultural landscape and the protection of cultural values.
- Protection of the nature: protection of habitats and species, looking after and maintaining the landscape.
- Environmental protection: minimizing the effects that are harmful for the environment.
- Rural development: supporting the development of the society and the economy by including local initiatives.
- Forestry, land and water management (supporting traditional environmentally friendly management methods and techniques, propagation of organic farming).
- Handicraft: conservation of handicraft professions which are characteristic for the region.
- Industry: enhancing environmentally sound techniques and knowledge-based enterprises.

- Tourism: supporting ecotourism, green tourism and the tourism infrastructure serving recreational and holiday purposes.
- Urban development: renewing and revitalizing villages and their look, environmental education.
- Enhancing cooperation: supporting cooperation within the region.



Woven baskets

The aim of the Nature Park is to establish a sound basis for the economy in the region while taking the ecological basic rules of the environment into consideration.

High quality and unique products and within these categories local food products are included in the objectives of the Great Milic Nature Park as a generating organization. All this is connected to the preservation of rural-natural values and the experiences that are only characteristic for this region.

The attractions of the Great Milic Nature Park enable the establishment of special and unique (local) products and thus the enhancement of the competitiveness of the region. During the development, **sustainability must be considered as a basic requirement in all fields, but within this aspect** we should aim at **establishing complex products** that attract interest with their unique, special and globally competitive nature. We would like to turn the Great Milic Nature Park into a brand name that is known in the Carpathian Basin and also in further regions of the world.

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