

# REVIVING TOURISM, IN THE POST-PANDEMIC ERA

EDITED BY  
**EVANGELOS CHISTOU & ANESTIS FOTIADIS**

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INTERNATIONAL  
HELLENIC  
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**Evangelos Christou & Anestis Fotiadis**



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## Table of Contents

<i>Editorial.....</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Thessaloniki DMO: A Business Model Approach.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Experiential marketing of luxury hotels at the post- Pandemic period.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>How Business Excellence Methodologies (BEM) transform the wellness tourism industry .....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Livelihood Diversification of Local Communities Through Community-Based Ecotourism: A Case of Sabah, Malaysian Borneo.....</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>A study of young adults' social media usage and culturally behavior .....</i>	<i>59</i>
<i>Digital transformation for resilient tourism: Evidence from the Greek hospitality industry....</i>	<i>69</i>
<i>Province of Bataan, Philippines as Potential Food Hub Amidst Pandemic.....</i>	<i>81</i>
<i>The Evaluation of Mu Cang Chai Brand Equity from the Domestic Tourists' Perspectives.....</i>	<i>92</i>
<i>Impact of Organized Commercial Events on Local Community in Sri Lanka: Events Managers' Perspective .....</i>	<i>107</i>
<i>Developing diving tourism in Eastern Chalkidiki. Implications and prospects in a characterized mining area .....</i>	<i>123</i>
<i>Rethinking Tourism Planning and Development in a Post COVID-19 World .....</i>	<i>144</i>
<i>Tourists' safety in Cape Town Townships, South Africa .....</i>	<i>159</i>
<i>Gastronomic Tourism and New Paths .....</i>	<i>171</i>
<i>Destination Management in the Region of Central Macedonia (RCM) in Greece: Proposing a new model of DMO .....</i>	<i>183</i>
<i>COVID- 19: Challenges and Prospects for the Future in the Tourism Industry. Case Study Albania.....</i>	<i>195</i>
<i>Tourism Issues in North Macedonia in Conditions of Global Pandemic (Tour Guiding Challenges).....</i>	<i>215</i>
<i>The impact of COVID-19 on tourism education: The case of the University of Zagreb Faculty of Economics and Business, Croatia .....</i>	<i>228</i>
<i>Key performance indicators before and during/after the "COVID-19 times" in the Hungarian hotel sector .....</i>	<i>243</i>
<i>Covid19 consequences on tourism in North Macedonia –a destination perspective for domestic tourism.....</i>	<i>256</i>
<i>The potential of African religious pilgrimage as a tool for tourism development in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa .....</i>	<i>267</i>
<i>Gender Nuances in Tourism Entrepreneurship: Traditional Societal Perceptions and Access to Capital.....</i>	<i>284</i>

<i>Special interest tourism development and tourism destination growth in post-Covid 19 era</i>	302
<i>Exploring the main elements of a post Covid- 19 destination management and branding strategy for the city of Kastoria</i>	314
<i>Instagram Advertising for Museum Marketing: Testing Alternative Advertising Appeals to Attract Visitors</i>	324
<i>COVID-19 and the Behaviour of Sector-wise Employment in the Hospitality Industry of the United States: Lessons from the Shocks of Past Pandemics</i>	336
<i>Package Tour Satisfaction and Successful Holiday Experience: Outbound Package Tourists' Perspective from Sri Lanka</i>	355
<i>The impact of socio-demographics on film tourism satisfaction of local residents: The case of Muğla</i>	372
<i>Work Values in Tourism: A Comparative Study between Polish and Turkish Students</i>	383
<i>Consumer Behaviour and Experience towards FSC Airlines: A Study on International Students as Travellers</i>	394
<i>The Significance of Smart Hotels in the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic Process</i>	411
<i>Community Involvement and Participation in Sustainable Development of Cultural Heritage Tourism: A case from South Africa</i>	422
<i>The COVID-19 pandemic effect on stock prices of leading public chain hotels in Israel</i>	436
<i>Creativity and Tourism in the Pandemic Period: The Case of the rural Community Chã de Jardim – Paraíba/Brazil.</i>	446
<i>Greek students' eating habits: the effects of gastronomic tourism marketing</i>	458
<i>Cruise Tourism: An Overview of Motivations</i>	471
<i>Employer Branding in the Hospitality and Tourism Industry in Greece: Attracting Talents</i>	481
<i>Emerging trends in the literature of co-production in the economic, managerial, and social sectors: a bibliometric approach</i>	500
<i>The religious tourism as a competitive advantage of the prefecture of Pieria</i>	521
<i>Drought Tourism: Adopting Tourism for Water Scarcity</i>	531
<i>Destination and City Branding through local gastronomy: the cherry fruits in Edessa</i>	542
<i>Heritage and wine tourism for Chinese tourists: the cases of study in Priorat and Ribeira Sacra (Spain)</i>	554
<i>The Weaknesses of YouTube as a tool to promote tourism during the Covid-19</i>	564
<i>The development of a sports city as a tourist attraction</i>	578
<i>Destination Management and Development of sustainability-based Tourism in Oman</i>	592

*Home-sharing and overtourism in the eyes of residents of a tourism city – the case of Cracow, Poland.....603*

This book is dedicated to our parents Stavro and Foteíni  
Christou and Kyriakos Fotiadís.

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## Editorial

Throughout a number of decades, the tourism and hospitality industries have been sensitive to and affected by external and internal factors, such as uncertainties, challenges, crises, and pandemics. A sudden and unexpected crisis (e.g., natural, financial, or health related) could have a negative effect on tourism and worsen the performance of hospitality-related businesses. One of the most significant among these are pandemics and disease outbreaks that have played a major role in social and economic change in recent decades. Tourism and hospitality industries suffered heavy damages as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (Maditinos, Vassiliadis, Tzavlopoulos, & Vassiliadis, 2021). Worldwide, closing borders, reducing travel of tourists, and reducing visitor demand resulted in a serious decline in the tourism sector due to COVID-19. Despite the evolution of other epidemic outbreaks such as SARS, Ebola, and H1N1, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) has remained one of the deadliest outbreaks thus far (Fotiadis, Polyzos, & Huan, 2021). There is no doubt that a systemic global healthcare crisis as well as a financial crisis are all signs of an upcoming global economic downturn (Del Chiappa, Bregoli, & Fotiadis, 2021). Countries across the globe have taken drastic measures to stop the spread of COVID-19 by locking down entire countries or the most affected cities, as well as denying entry into their borders, resulting in a huge hit to the global tourism industry, especially for the travel and hospitality segment (Polyzos, Samitas, & Spyridou, 2020). In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, many tourism destinations have temporarily halted operations as travel bans, lockdown measures, and cancelled bookings result (Fotiadis, Woodside, Del Chiappa, Séraphin, & Hansen, 2021).

There has been a significant negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism sector in developing countries, as tourism plays a significant role in the economy. First of all, the pandemic has had a direct effect on the entire economy and society due to its health consequences as well as the measures taken to reduce its consequences. A second important aspect of this pandemic is that it has impacted the tourism sector in particular, which is crucial for economic growth and job creation. Third, the negative impacts of COVID-19 on the tourism sector are transmitted to many other economic sectors since tourism is interconnected with many other economic sectors. For this reason, researchers and policymakers are highly interested in these impacts. In order to counteract the negative economic impacts of COVID-19, differential information on these impacts is essential for the formulation of measures and policy decisions. It is likely that information such as this could contribute to economic growth and reduce poverty in a number of developing countries, which are susceptible to any economic shocks.

The pandemic seems to experience different phases. In phase one there was a plethora of studies that tried to investigate when the pandemic will end and what might be the impacts. Most of these studies failed to forecast the future and it was clear for the academic community that COVID-19 will change the way we operate forever. As everyone was anticipating for a solution, several pharmaceutical companies manage to produce vaccines and several countries implemented vaccination programmes which gave hope to travel and hospitality stakeholders leading to phase two. Summer 2021 was in some countries quite successful based on current conditions and big event began such as Olympic games in Tokyo, Japan and Expo 2020 in Dubai, UAE. In this second phase of the pandemic several researchers examined which factors affected tourists regarding destinations that dealt successfully with the pandemic. More of that there was a huge number of studies that focused on how social media affect perception or how face news, twites and other parameters are affecting tourists. As there is a debate lately on people who believe in vaccines, people that believe in vaccines, but they don't trust the COVID-19 vaccines, and people who doesn't believe in vaccines, there are new topics for academic discussion in phase three.

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# Thessaloniki DMO: A Business Model Approach

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## Abstract:

*The purpose of the paper is the proposal for the development of a business model for the operation of the Destination Management Organization of the Metropolitan area of Thessaloniki. It would be important to note that the development of the business plan is part of the overall tourism strategic planning of the city, which is implemented by the Service and Tourism Management (Tourlab) laboratory operating in the Department of Marketing and Tourism Organizations of the International University of Greece.*

*The development of the Business Plan of the Tourist Organization of Thessaloniki, started with the marking and recording of the points of tourist interest and the definition of the goals (more like of the vision) for the tourist future of the city. At the initial level, the bibliography that covers the theory and the cases that refer to efforts to highlight destinations with characteristics similar to those of Thessaloniki were studied. Qualitative research was then carried out - in the form of open consultations with shareholders - and in particular the establishment of focus groups, which would examine the views on the existing and potentially important features of the city, as well as the way in which utilized. Particular emphasis was given to the investigation of the interconnection relations between the participants of the tourism ecosystem (stakeholders) as these relations are crucial for the viability of the project. Following a business model approach, the organizational form of the Thessaloniki DMO according to the matrix of Reinhold, Beritelli and Grünig (2019) was examined and a canvas of the Thessaloniki DMO business model according to the model of Osterwalder and Pigneur (2009) was proposed as a means of implementing the Tourlab proposal.*

**Keywords:** DMO, Business Models, Greece

## 1. Introduction

Before any Public Interest Organization can attempt to formulate its business model, it is necessary to have convincingly resolved the issues of complexity in planning the execution of its

activities and to have secured its financial and institutional independence from the state. Otherwise, it is very difficult to find a way to achieve the necessary co-perception between the participants to carry out its activities. Destination management agencies whose administration is based on state power are likely to find it difficult to implement their programs due to funding constraints and the lack of agreement among the participants in the organization. The phenomenon is not recent nor is it observed only in Greece but also in many other countries such as USA, New Zealand, UK, Italy, Portugal (Pike, 2016). The problems of administration and management by government agencies internationally call into question the operation of DMOs (Pike, 2016).

Creating and distributing value to many different stakeholders, the Business Model of ThessDMO, as well as other Public (supranational) Interest Organizations, is necessary to be formulated taking into account that (1) the value it creates for the participating shareholders is not exclusively financial and (2) that the interests of the shareholders represented are not identical in all cases, and sometimes may even be conflicting. The above conditions lead to the formation of a Business Model of increased complexity compared to the business model presented on a "typical" canvas. Conflicts of interest lead to the need to develop mechanisms for resolving disputes, conflicts and accommodate interests of different orientations.

#### *Business models in tourism*

The business model (BM) concept has emerged as a new approach to business and entrepreneurial structures that facilitates the transition from the strategic to the tactical level (Casadesus-Masanell and Ricart, 2010). The BM concept emerged from the contributions of two disciplines whose convergence became visible in a very dynamic way at the end of the last century. Advances in information and communication technologies and the introduction of the internet, combined with changes in world trade, have significantly changed the business environment by challenging dominant forces and shareholders. These changes led to the development of the concept of BM which in an admittedly anarchic way attracted the interest of many researchers from various research fields and all kinds of business activity. This fact though a powerful lever for the development of research around the concept, creates obstacles to its structured progress as it has become difficult to use common vocabulary, since researchers from different fields use different terminology to describe the same concept or use the same term to describe slightly different situations, which have no differences for their field.

In the tourism industry a search based on the terms "business model" and "Tourism" presents us with 70,000 documents, of which 11,300 appear after 2020. Of these articles, 181 contain the two terms in their title (we refer to the period after 2000). This fact shows that the business model concept is often referred to by tourism researchers.

In the following paper we will try to list the research possibilities presented to us by the concept in the tourism industry based on two examples concerning the application of only the approaches: that of the canvas of Osterwalder and Pigneur (2003) and the more specialized proposal for the study of DMOs. by Reinhold, Beritelli, and Grünig, R. (2019). The basis for the formation of the BM of the DMO of Thessaloniki is a group of interviews which aimed to contribute to the formation of the Thessaloniki Tourism Organization.

Providing the ability to contribute the business model as a unit of analysis, the use of BM in tourism research based on the classification of Baden-Fuller and Morgan, (2010), Coombes and D.Nicholson (2013) and Jensen (2013) will be presented.

The organization of the document is as follows:

- Definition of the general framework of action of the DMO of Thessaloniki
- Conceptual definition of the business model
- An approach of the Thessaloniki Tourism Organization based on the proposal of Reinhold, Beritelli, and Grünig, R. (2019) for the classification of DMO business models.
- A presentation of the Thessaloniki Tourism Organization based on the canvas by Osterwalder and Pigneur (2003).

## **2. Background and definition of a general framework of action of the DMO of Thessaloniki**

The purpose of the DMO of Thessaloniki is not to achieve financial profit for the organization itself, but to facilitate the operation of the shareholders it represents either explicitly and overtly, or implicitly. The shareholders that fall into the first case are the shareholders and the professional associations which are institutionally represented in various organizations (which are) involved in the management of the DMO. In the second case we refer to the residents of the area and to the professionals who either due to activity or for some other reason are not represented in the administration of the organization.

The activities in which the shareholders are involved with the activity of Thessaloniki DMO are not limited to a single branch of economic activity but constitute a coherent whole which is compatible with the framework of intelligent specialization (3S-Smart Specialization Strategy). Within the framework there are similarities and common interests which are the points on which every effort of intelligent specialization focuses. However, there are also differences which, at the stage of specialization of the procedures, can highlight significant obstacles in their common path towards implementation. Having activities with different and sometimes conflicting interests, render unanimous decision-making not always easy to achieve. Decisions for the use of land inside and outside the central urban complex or in areas of great interest in general face significant problems before their implementation. A typical example of this situation is the dialogue for the transfer of the space of the International Exhibition of the city, a dialogue that has been going on for more than twenty years. There are many other issues for which the concept of consensus and understanding are absent, which is an obstacle in any attempt to utilize the assets of the city. This fact is anything but indifferent to the formation of a functional business model of the organization. The way the concepts of value and management of any benefits that may arise from the operation of the Thessaloniki DMO are perceived will influence the formation of the BM. Contrary to what happens with the formulation of strategic visions, business models require the clarification of activities. In the first case, strategic decision-makers make these decisions taking into account their impact on the other participants who are seen as environmental variables and not as co-decision makers. Agreement (or at least consensus), is a requirement for the successful implementation of the above strategic decisions. It has been shown, for example, in practice that no strategically important development project can proceed without the consent of all the local shareholders whose activity is linked to the project. The co-perception of the shareholders that take part in the shaping of the business model is a necessary condition not only for the shaping of the business model of the organization, but, in essence, for its activation.

### **3. Defining the Value of Shared Resources.**

It is a rule in the formulation of business models that the concept of value refers exclusively to economic value and more commonly to exchange value. According to popular definitions of the business model concept, the purpose of the business model is to create value for some customers and capture a part of it in the form of profit. In the definitions that include the environmental and social dimension of the business activity (Business Models of Sustainable Development) the purpose of the business model is expanded to include the above dimensions. These approaches are clearly more appropriate for shaping business models that are designed to support the utilization of shared resources and the development of shared activities. However, it should be noted that DMO as a resource should be considered taking all three dimensions of sustainable development into account. Its characteristics are likely to be evaluated as more or less important, depending on the point of view with which they are approached.

### **4. The business model concept**

The business model concept emerged at the end of the last century initially as a need to formulate the business ideas of start-ups that were looking for funding and required somewhat detailed descriptions of their dominant logic (Shafer, Smith, & Linder, 2005). Today, most companies of all types and industries use the BM concept, including many of the large, listed companies as reported in their annual reports. At the same time, while in 1990 only one article used the term "business model" three or more times in its content, in the following decade, more than 500 articles fell into this category. Twenty years later, 15,500 publications use the term in their title and 800,000 in their content. Specifically in the tourism sector, the corresponding numbers are 105 references in the title of the publication and 62,200 in their content.

Richard Arend (2013) initiating the dialogue of arranging the research for business models in the strategic organization formulated some positions which probably reflect the views of a large part of the researchers of the BM concept. Summarizing these positions, Eckhardt, (2013) states that:

- I. The business model is a concept that describes a richer relationship between inputs and outputs than what can be described by enterprise-level production operations.

- II. The potential of multilevel analysis that accompanies many analyses of business models as a field for additional research is likely to offer many benefits.

- III. Nonprofit executives and scholars that study non profit organizations are likely to benefit from thinking about how business models can relate to nonprofit organizations. In line with this position, we can mention the important part of the research for business models that is directed to the use of the approach in sustainable development (Nosratabadi et al., 2019), the circular economy (Geissdoerfer et al., 2020) and the sector of the economy involving non-profit organizations and is sometimes referred to as the fourth sector of the economy.

The disorder - identified by many researchers - in the business model research has led some to attempt to bring order to the field of the BM concept through bibliographic reviews (Demil and Lecocq, 2010; Osterwalder, Pigneur, Tucci, 2005; Shafer, Smith & Linder, 2005, Teece, 2010, Zott, Amit, & Massa, 2011). Most of the above reviews present thousands of references and are therefore considered valid. It is a common finding that there is no consensus on the interpretation and terminology of the BM. The same conclusion is made by Baden-Fuller and

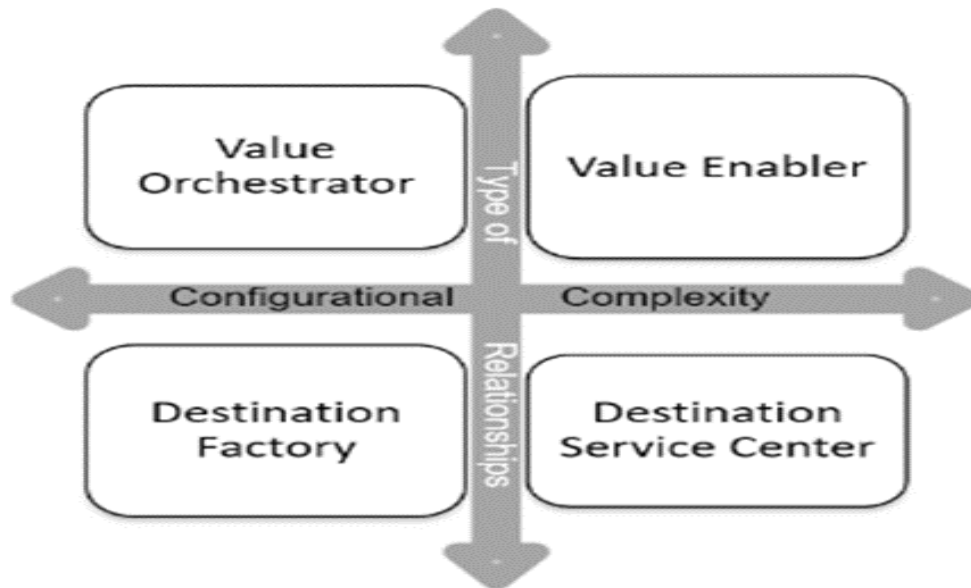


Morgan (2010) and Jensen (2014) but from a different point of view which we adopt and try to expand in this paper. Baden-Fuller and Morgan present the usefulness and the many ways the BM concept can be utilized research wise by analyzing its possible uses from various research perspectives. Their approach begins with a description of the different ways in which the term "model" is used in classifications and typologies and the ways in which modeling is used in mathematics and biology. The existence of different approaches does not create confusion, but offers knowledge, content. Provided that the different approaches to the BM concept are accompanied by their conceptual definition, they will create a benefit for the study of BM.

### 5. Tourism and Business Models

Our proposal begins with the adaptation of the data we collected to the ideotypes proposed by Reinhold, Beritelli, and Grünig (2019). This paper was chosen because it addresses the issue we are looking at and uses an BM-based approach.

The BM of DMO is based on the ideotypes of Reinhold, Beritelli, and Grünig who, analyzing the usefulness of the BM concept and after an extensive literature review combining research on the organizational and operational problems of DMOs in the BM, suggest four BM ideotypes for DMOs. The classification into one of the four types is based on the criteria of the levels of organizational complexity and the levels of perceived control.



**Figure 1: The Tourism Business Model Types. Source: Adopted by Reinhold, Bertelli, Gruning (2019)**

*Type of member-organization relationship:*

The first dimension of classification refers to whether a business model is based on establishing a direct relationship between the DMO and a customer who pays for the products and services received (unilateral) or if the company establishes a variety of internal / direct relationships with and between different groups of customers who may or may not pay for (multi-faceted) for products and services (Baden - Fuller and Mangematin, 2013). Well-known multi-faceted business models operate with booking platforms that create a link between destination visitors

and hosting companies. While guests do not pay the platform operator (eg Booking or HRS), hotels and other accommodation are charged a fee for booking services. The complexity of multi-faceted business models stems from the relationships between customers that need to be considered as well as from the interdependence in revenue mechanisms (Rumble and Mangematin, 2015). The second aspect concerns which "business unit" a particular business model configuration focuses on. Product-centric business models focus on creating specific, predefined objects (e.g., billboards) and services (e.g., representation at a trade show). In contrast, value-focused business models focus on the value they provide to specific customers, solving specific problems they face (e.g., developing the ground for a new flow of visitors) - regardless of the form this value takes as a product or service. Although this dichotomy between product-centric and value-centric models is related to the work of Baden-Fuller and Mangematin's (2013) which is contrasted with scale-based dichotomy in small and large units, if the preliminary concepts of products and services define its unit business ("in-out") or if the value proposition starts with the customer's problem ("out-in") (Day, 2011). This observation is important because it introduces the involvement of the RBV approach in the dialogue from the outset. Considering the customized concept and external focus, value-focused business models are conceptually more complex than product-focused ones (Rumble and Mangematin, 2015).

*Perceived control:*

The second key dimension in determining the ideal type of DMO business models is control. Approaches to both destination governance and practice differ in the degree of control DMOs grant to destination management as a production system and determine its success (Beritelli et al., 2015b). The perceived level of control that decision makers attribute to DMOs, compared to other target shareholders, is of great importance for the selection and shaping of the DMO business model. This argument is consistent with the behavioral assumption that cognitive patterns shape the decision-making of individual and collective strategic shareholders (Gary and Wood, 2011; Porac et al., 2002). Based on the above matrix, a DMO can belong to one of the four ideotypes that the authors call Value Orchestrator, Destination Factory, Destination Service Center, and Value Catalyst

*Value Orchestrator:* The Value Orchestrator represents a highly complex business model configuration that requires the DMO to have high perceived control over the destination. The Value Orchestrator designs the value proposition starting from the specific challenges of the destination stakeholders. Relationships with the destination of strategic and operational processes are considered to be hierarchically controlled by the DMO. In essence, it forms a multitude of binary relationships rather than a real network. The value of the Value Orchestrator is based on the financing of the general budget and on mandatory contributions. It also seeks to capitalize on coordinated partnership initiatives and revenue from deliberate, DMO-mediated cooperation between destination and destination agencies and tourists (advertising, procurement, etc.).

*Destination Factory:* "Destination Factory" describes a low-complexity business model configuration that requires a DMO of high perceived control over the destination. DMO operates a one-sided business model focusing on the tourism product. The value proposition for tourism

businesses is based on the products and services of the activity profile described in the "traditional" business model of the DMO. The DMO is considered to have substantial control over all strategic and operational processes related to the destination. The DMO develops a destination strategy, designs and develops tourism infrastructure and new products, promotes the destination, manages key accounts, provides information to visitors, etc. As a control-focused organization, the DMO relies on financing the general budget through mandatory contributions (eg overnight and tourism taxes) and pays little attention to how the interactions between various stakeholders relate to its revenue streams.

*Destination Service Center:* The Destination Service Center also refers to a low-complexity business model configuration that involves a DMO with limited control over the destination. The DMO operates as a one-sided business model with a focus on the product and an emphasis on supporting various business relationships with standard product solutions and services. Like a service center for the destinations concerned, it supports specific marketing and product activities. For example, a DMO may raise marketing funds to coordinate advertising. However, this type of DMO is unlikely to develop new products or lead to strategic processes. Moreover, unlike the destination factory, the second business model configuration does not require legality and access to resources. The destination service center must negotiate and be accountable. The DMO revenue type benefits from fewer public grants and mandatory contributions and more funding must be negotiated based on projects from partnership initiatives and platforms. While the networked nature of the destination is recognized in terms of the activity profile, the latter type does not take into account the relationships between shareholders as far as interdependent revenue streams and funding arrangements are concerned.

*Value Catalyst:* Finally, the fourth type characterizes a business model of high complexity configuration. It assumes that a DMO has limited control over the destination as a production system. This fourth type works as a multi-faceted business model that focuses on value creation by the destination shareholders. The DMO determines its value proposition based on the relevant challenges of these shareholders with an emphasis on creating and maintaining value-creating relationships between participants. Given this role, we call this dimension a value catalyst. Like the second type, it is required to negotiate legality and access to resources. However, funding and revenue streams are based more on the activities and projects it implements. It is financed by tourism companies for the creation and development (without controlling) of new tourist flows based on the developments and the needs of the destination.

The second dimension of the DMO's BM proposal is based on the distinction between two theoretical levels of perceived control. Stakeholders who assign a high degree of control to the DMO perceive destinations as a set of hierarchical relationships. The DMO is considered as the organization responsible for strategic leadership and mediates the relationships between shareholders inside and outside the destination. This extreme form of control is more likely to take place in corporate-type small-destination configurations as well as in community-type configurations (Flagestad and Hope, 2001). It can, however, be useful in designing business model configurations as the dominant logic among decision makers (Pralhad and Bettis, 1986). At the other end of the spectrum, when stakeholders delivering low levels of DMO control perceive the destination as a set of networked relationships. The DMO is considered an

integrated organization (Beritelli et al., 2007) that seeks to support the production system with limited resources and influence on the level of the system (Pike, 2016; Serra et al., 2016).

## **6. Research method**

The main research question concerns the form, type and expected effectiveness of DMO Tourism Thessaloniki. With this question, qualitative research was carried out in the city of Thessaloniki, in two stages. During the first stage, many informal discussions took place with tourists, employees, and stakeholders in order to:

-Identify what motivates people to travel and how they make decisions about the destinations they should visit.

· Define their perceptions - both positive and negative - about Thessaloniki,

· Understand the way in which they perceive Thessaloniki in relation to its competitors and determine its competitive position in their thinking.

In the second phase, 25 in-depth interviews were conducted with various shareholder groups, using a semi-structured questionnaire developed by the research team, using the DELPHI methodology. More specifically, in-depth meetings were held between the interested parties and the members of the board of DMO Thessaloniki, the president of DMO, the president of the tourist guides of Thessaloniki, the hotel managers, the representatives of Helexpo, the innovation centers, the archaeological council of Thessaloniki, transport companies, local tourist police, festival organizers and many other stakeholders seeking:

-To understand how those stakeholders perceive the potential of Thessaloniki

-To understand how the local DMO perceives the motivations, trends and preferences of tourists (eg destination items and experiences they seek when on holiday)

The survey was conducted between January 2019 and June 2021. From March 11 onwards, the interviews were conducted through online platforms

## **7. Discussion**

If we want to offer a sense of perspective, given the DMOs challenges in creating and capturing value, it is crucial to develop a comprehensive understanding of their business modeling options. Existing studies focus on the challenges, activities, and functions pursued by this type of organization (Pearce, 2015), but most studies are limited to the picture of how DMOs can cope with the perceived decline in activities and the funding reduction.

We tried to provide structure to this discussion and open a new, integrated perspective. Our main claim is that the viability of creating DMOs and capturing value can be discussed based on the business idea. This is in line with the call for more research on business models in tourism as presented in a recent evaluation paper (Reinhold et al., 2017). To extend the existing work, we have developed a typology based on the complexity of DMO business models as well as the perceived DMO's control of the destination. Our framework introduces four configurations of ideotypes that allow future research to place real-life cases along the two dimensions highlighted. In short, the typology contributes to the destination management literature by providing information on the combination options and interdependencies of DMO business models. Extensive research has focused on a limited set of aspects of value creation, but it is crucial to understand the interdependencies of design choices employing a holistic perspective.

Theoretically, organizational complexity and perceived control as key dimensions in which DMO business models vary, provide a starting point for exploring DMOs' efforts to validate their raison d'être challenged by other authors (Pike, 2016). Our framework suggests that in order to understand the viability and structure of DMOs as a basis for creating and capturing value for stakeholders and the organization, we need to understand what form the business model takes in terms of perceived control of destination relationships, interactions between stakeholders integrated into the business model and focus on value or products. This opens up future research opportunities to reflect on with regard to the completion of research into DMO business models, the strategic capabilities in destination settings, and the destination leadership (Hristov and Ramkissoon, 2016; Hristov and Zehrer, 2015; Reinhold et al., 2017) .

Thessaloniki DMO Business Model Canvas (Example)				
Key Partners & Suppliers	Key Activities (Example)	Value Propositions (Example)	Customer Relationships	Customer Segments
Tourism operators Tourism associations Municipalities Public transport operators Private transport operators Travel services providers & affiliates, Travel agencies & affiliates Food delivery platforms, General search engines, Technology partners, Tourism bodies, Media outlets, Airports	Develop, partner with platforms that have network effect enhancing value propositions (Restaurants, Attractions, In-location exploration, Vacation rentals, etc.) Enhance the value proposition, via specialization Generate demand through customized promotions/ notifications to customers Improve the websites and the app based on the captured data and evolving technology, trends and feedback Optimize conversion rates Monitor industry landscape for new entrants as well as adjacent industries Monitor the moves of the known direct competitors <b>Key Resources</b> Physical, Intellectual (brand, royalties) Human, Financial	Increase the visibility of Thessaloniki as Destination Increase the number of visitors Increase the attractiveness of Thessaloniki and its services through the use of smart tools like web portals. Increase the accessibility of POIs/places Make available the tourism services in the internet and in the mobile services at no (or a competitive cost). Increase and promote the sustainable mobility for tourism Make the public/collective transport services attractive also for tourism purposes Provide a decision support tool for finding solutions as alternative route planning and trip cost evaluation, both for tourism and non-tourism purposes Put forward a specific solution for people who do not like using the private car or, in general, non-sustainable modes and who want to maintain their habits also for tourism purposes	Website Social media Co-creation of content         <b>Channels</b> iTunes App Store, Google Play Store, etc for their app eMails for direct communication with their customers YouTube channel YouTube advertising & other display and retargeting ads Social media sites, Facebook, Instagram, etc Blog with interesting articles & useful content...	City break traveler Tourist service providers Local Tourist professionals Creative Industries' nomads
<b>Cost Structure</b> Maintenance of the server/system Activities for updating & maintaining the system		<b>Revenue Streams</b> Free use of the application (widgets) by tourists Subscriptions, Lending/Renting/Leasing, Licensing, Brokerage fees, Advertising DYNAMIC PRICING: Negotiation (bargaining), Yield Management		

**Figure 2: Thessaloniki DMO Business Model**

According to the findings of our research, the appropriate type of organization for Thessaloniki DMO is the “Destination Factory Type”. Complex relationships require highly controlled organizational types and a solid clear mechanism for income generating. The actual BM for the Thessaloniki DMO will emerge, after the selection of the type of the organization that the shareholders want to create. Based on the selection of customer segments, the activities that the DMO will choose to perform, the methodology, the participants in the execution of these activities, the organizational structure and the pricing of the activities, the BM that Thessaloniki

DMO will implement. Then, the implementation plan for the above decisions can be drawn. For the EM to become operational, it is absolutely recommended, to discuss with shareholders the key issues that will shape the actual EM of the organization to be implemented. An indicative agenda for dialogue between them may contain the following questions.

- Who do we serve and what type of value do we offer to each segment of our customers?
- How can we serve our customers according to their needs?
- How do we provide our services to our customers?
- What is the nature of the relationship we have with those we serve?
- How do these previous components translate into revenue for our organization and our shareholders?
- What are the main activities that create the value that we provide?
- What are the key resources we need to create the value that we provide?
- Who are the key partners that help us create the services we provide to the customers we serve?
- How do key partners, resources and activities translate into our institution's cost model?

Based on the answers to the above questions, it is possible to form a suitable BM of Thessaloniki DMO based on a “standard” BM form such as the popular canvas of Osterwilder et al. (2005) (e.g. Pucihar et. al, 2015). However, what is important for the formation of the actual BM, is the co-perception that should be achieved when each of the shareholders asks the above questions, not only during the Thessaloniki DMO negotiations.

The process of answering questions and reconciling the answers throughout the community (in part and in its entirety) is at least as important, if not more important than, the answers themselves. Why? Because the answers will probably change a lot in the coming years influenced by technological and environmental conditions. The key activity for keeping the Thessaloniki DMO BM sustainable, will be the ability of the community to participate in asking these questions and then implementing the answers. From that perspective, the ability of The DMO’s to maintain the above dialogue among the members of the organization alive and productive is more important than the position that each member may have. As the reader can observe on the above figure (3) , the answers that are placed in every BM’s element, will determine the others.

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# Experiential marketing of luxury hotels at the post- Pandemic period

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## Abstract

*The objective of the current research is the attribution of the influence of COVID19 Pandemic to the consuming behaviour of travellers. At the same time, the creation of unique experiences is the best marketing policy for luxury hotels. As the pandemic is still ongoing, it is self-explanatory there is no availability of bibliographic references because facts will change soon due to vaccination. Therefore, the applied methodology is based on the comparison between the opinions of hospitality experts through built-in interview questions and the answers of visitors through questionnaires. Pre-caution measures relate to satisfaction of hotel luxury services. This fact underlines the important parameters of the consumption model in luxury hotels for the next years: the combination of a full vacation package with an enticing price, health & safety protocols, and cancellation policy. Meanwhile, travellers evaluate the internet as a reliable informative channel. Thus, professional experts prefer Tour Operators strongly opposing that vacation package is duly explained to visitors following agreed contracts to avoid their utopian expectations. The most necessary suggestion for further research is to investigate the additional cost for hoteliers in correlation with quality requirements against COVID19 and the relevant certificates.*

**Keywords:** Health and Safety, Post – Pandemic Period, Experiential Marketing, Luxury Hotel

## 1. Introduction

The global tourism industry sometimes suffers serious losses as a result of several important international events but also due to the magnitude of the negative consequences created by disasters. This disaster management by hotel companies is a very important topic of discussion for a viable industry worldwide. Risk management in the context of hotel marketing refers to the planning and implementation of procedures aimed at managing the adverse effects of crises and disasters that may occur in the hotel business. The viability of a tourist destination and therefore the host units based on it is significantly affected by its ability to adapt to changing market conditions, the efficient use of resources, and the implementation of innovative planning and development strategies related to risk management. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the key elements of crises and disasters as well as their effects on hotel units and to provide background on the hotel marketing applied by these units to manage these crises in the best possible way.

Luxury tourism is one of the strongest trends in the tourism sector and is defined by quality and price, although it does not always balance the best possible combination of them.



Understandably, some elements are essential ingredients for luxury. It is about the excellent service, the high quality, and the exclusivity.

In recent years there has been a rapid increase in luxury tourism, as recorded by the World Tourism Organization luxury tourists make up one-third of all tourists and the money they spend corresponds to 25% of the money circulating in tourism companies. It is therefore impressive that they spend eight times more daily than tourists of other kinds. Luxury hotels so far show the highest occupancy at 75.5% which is associated with their promotion through marketing but also with the general market trends. According to the Luxury Travel Trends Report, luxury tourists are the most popular type of tourist in the world.

According to the key features of Luxury Travelers about how the trend in luxury tourism is moving, it is worth turning our attention to the research of the International Luxury Travel Market ILTM (2011) according to which the findings of luxury tourists know exactly their wishes. More specifically, the main features that luxury tourists ask for in each of their trips are:

1. Privacy: quiet and discreet
2. The personalized service: the adaptation of the service and the benefits to the needs of the tourist
3. Simplicity and perfection: the service must be impeccable but not sophisticated
4. Authenticity: it is a trend to look for different types of lifestyles and to harmonize with them.
5. Comfort and safety: despite the changes in their desires, tourists never stop looking for these basic elements.

In response to the above-mentioned demands of the tourists, the most effective tool for Experiential marketing in high-service hospitality is the structured strategy of luxury hotels to effectively promote their full travel package through the method share – experience through verbal or digital reviews, videos, and photographs. In detail, this strategy is based on the satisfaction of the visitor at the five "moments of truth": a) the arrival and the room division (if they are offered anything that they were promised according to the location of the hotel, the common and open areas, a room with a view – sea, garden, city), b) the food taste of all the included meals in their vacation package, c) the kind, helpful and properly trained staff, and the provided services for all the categories of visitors (especially family hotels shall provide facilities also for the children) the proper transportation and e) the offered price for the vacation package to evaluate this as a good value for money. Additionally, the sector of Health and Safety is a new "moment of truth" in the post-Covid period since this is translated to the efficacy of the luxury hotel according to the information to the visitor before they travel, according to the hygiene protocols and the adopted precaution methods.

Taking into consideration the above remarks, the current research is a first effort to create a model to determine the following six questions as statistically significant variables:

V1: Which are the most important experiential motivations for the traveler at the post – Pandemic period?

V2: Which are the most important elements of influence for the consuming behavior of travelers?

V3: Which are the trustworthy channels that travelers trust for their information about the upcoming experience (including all the hygiene practices of the hospitality venues)?

V4: Which are the most preferable services for the ideal experiential package of hospitality after the covid19 pandemic?

V5: Which are the trends of travelers' decision-making about their personal safety during the post-covid period?

1. V6: Which is the most effective health & safety policy for a luxury hotel to create a competitive advantage and achieve more reservations?

## **2.Literature Review:**

The orientation in marketing determines the business philosophy applied by the respective company, which is widely known in the business field with the term marketing concept (Kotler, 2003). According to Kohli and Jaworski (1990), the pillars of this term are the focus of the company's interest in customer satisfaction, the coordination, and the organization of the company concerning all promotional activities in the sector. of marketing and the profitability of the company which at the same time implies the achievement of its goals.

Specifically, this business philosophy is based on the principle of satisfaction of the customer's needs from the products produced or the services provided and the proper service offered to him. Therefore, it becomes clear that an effective marketing strategy does not aim at selling products that unilaterally meet the needs of the business (Kerin and Peterson, 2012). Instead, Kerin and Peterson (2012) state that all elements of the buying behavior of the target audience of marketing policy should be counted, but also that all available tools should be used for the innovative application of the business philosophy to achieve complete satisfaction. of consumers, with particular emphasis on the most important parameter for our time, e-marketing. As mentioned by Kotler, the marketing concept is defined as the process of planning and coordinating all business actions that has as its main goal the satisfaction of the customer's needs. In this way, this well-structured process has the desired results in terms of maintaining competitive advantage, effective planning of promotions, and penetrating advertising, as well as for the realization of the goals set by each company over time (Kotler, 2003).

The primary goal is to delimit the business culture which includes first the company philosophy (thoughts) and second its behavior (actions). At times, there have been various assessments by scientists around the world regarding the most comprehensive performance of marketing orientation, while maintaining the aforementioned axes. According to Apostolou (2013) rendering of the integrated view by Huber and Hermann (2001), a firm with a defined orientation is characterized by a constant commitment to understanding the wishes of its customers to formulate effective strategies and develop innovative solutions aimed at an upgraded value of the produced good / service for the customer himself.

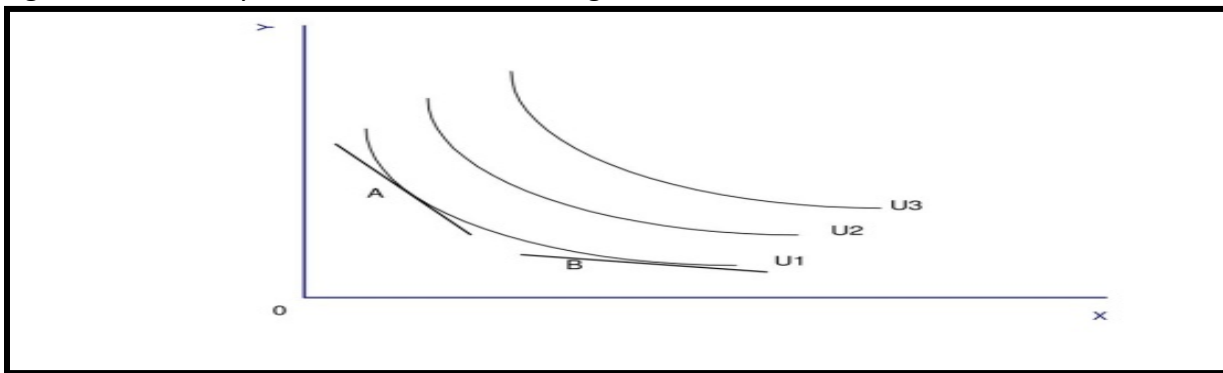
According to Van Boven and Gilovich (2013), experiential markets are the most modern object of study of consumer behaviour, since the notion that experiences tend to provide greater and more lasting satisfaction, appears to be extremely pervasive in different consumer groups. They typically cite relevant research showing participants being asked to think about an experiential market that cost over \$ 100 and then evaluate how much enjoyment they eventually gained from it. Participants reported 67.35% that they became happier with their purchases, despite any subsequent problems in managing their monthly obligations.

At the same time, Van Dijk & Pieters (2002) report the greater value of enjoyment that people gain from their experiential markets is reflected in the most common expression of their sadness,

presenting these markets as a redemptive way out of unpleasant experiences. In addition, Rosenzweig & Gilovich (2012) state on this issue that some eventually regret materials they bought from an inner impulse as a need to escape a psychological impasse, while others regret not buying something they could have (inaction). Finally, they show that, as a rule, consumers tend to express more regret to fin action as the opposite of experiential experience.

Towards a more complete rendering of the parameters of experiential consumption, it is worth noting that the majority of consumers are more willing to sacrifice their favourite market for a less desirable one but could talk to others about it (Kumar & Gilovich, 2011 ). Following this buying logic, the experience caused by it could be identified as the "value" of a market rather than the material goods themselves. This subconscious tendency is attributed to the fact that consumers feel obliged to talk about the experiences they gain from their shopping in their social environment as this discussion is observed to create more social benefits, satisfying specific social stereotypes (Van Boven, Campbell, & Gilovich, 2010).

Figure 1: The utility derived from two tourist goods



Source: Lew & McKercher, 2016

An important attempt to record the basic characteristics of tourism consumption is made by Prebensen (2017), who sets as the main assumption of her study that the expectation created to tourists by the projection of destinations significantly affects their consumer behaviour. In addition, Chen & Tsai (2009) in their research found that the image of a destination affects intentional behaviour in two ways: directly and indirectly.

The desire to repeat the visit of a destination and the willingness of tourists to recommend it to others determines the immediate success of the development of a tourist destination as visitors remember both the natural environment and the experiences gained from the visit, what they kept in photos and what they filmed, but mainly recall their experiences, the crises they formed, the feelings they felt and their interest in everything they saw and knew (Cunnell & Prentice, 2000).

The parameter of the indirect effect of the image of the destination on the consumer model concerns the dissemination of experiences either through interpersonal contacts or through the transfer of relevant comments to tour operators and relevant interactive electronic platforms, such as Tripadvisor, Lonelyplanet, Booking, Expedia, Airbnb and Homeaway (Prebensen, 2017).

It is worth noting that the indirect effect of the tourist consumption pattern is based on the focus of interest, which tourists prefer to visit which place, so the destinations can not only better

define the existing attractions but design new ones and promote them more effectively. Finally, knowledge of the area and nodes can also be used to develop the destination image (Lew & McKercher, 2016).

The parameter of the consumer/tourist as a value co-creator through experiential experience is for the first time researched by Lusch and Vargo (2006) and continues to be explored through new technologies and tools for dissemination of experiences (Mathis, 2013 and Prebensen, 2017). Through the concept of co-formation of value, tourist destinations can offer unique and personalized services, provided that they treat each tourist/consumer as an individual case, with different needs and desires.

In addition, the awareness of the important role of the tourist/consumer as a co-shaper of the value of the tourist product is the key guide for the development of new, innovative products and services. According to Mathis (2013), the focus on the active role of visitors/tourists in the process of designing tourism products/services aims to adapt the services offered by hosting companies to the respective tourism demand to enhance the uniqueness of their experiential experience.

Following this methodology proposed by Mathis (2013), the problematic relationship between marketing and tourism services is achieved through the projection of experiential experience. According to Charta (2015), experiential marketing as a holistic strategy of tourism businesses, as it is shaped by the new and volatile business environment, is the most important component of successful implementation of the structured development plan for the tourist promotion of a destination.

In the context of recording the means of promotion and advertising of tourism businesses, Bowie & Buttle (2012) delimit travel agents and travel agencies, conference and event organizers, search engines, web portals and online travel agencies, global distribution systems, and online platforms for the evaluation and dissemination of experiential experiences, as the main intermediaries for informing tourists about the experiential experiences of previous visitors of tourism businesses (restaurants, hotels, places to stay and hosting units in general).

Reid and Bojanic (2006) classify the print media (tourist magazines and newspapers, travel brochures of agencies and tourist guides of the Hellenic Tourism Organization, posters in public places, and public transport in the sub-category of conventional media. ), audio and visual messages (radio and television advertising), personal sales (where the travel agent's contact with the prospective visitor), public relations (contact with local businesses and agencies to generate positive publicity for the business and enhance its recognition), and corporate social responsibility programs (green regeneration programs of the tourist destination, allocation of stock of supplies to utilities).

Respectively, the sub-category of non-conventional media includes (McCabe, 2009) internet advertising (on various popular tourist interest websites, online social media), direct promotion via e-mail, direct online sales through private business location, sales and promotion in online travel agencies, resellers and interactive information and promotion sites (booking.com, Tripadvisor, HomeAway, Airbnb, Expedia, Lonely planet). Also, Hudson (2008), adds travel blogs/forums and advertising on booking websites, ferry and airline companies, but also the official websites of the place of travel (EOT, municipalities), through the form of an advertising banner. Finally, Middleton (2011) adds in this category, search engine marketing (search engine marketing).

The experiential marketing - mix (marketing mix) of each examined company is a cornerstone of the theoretical approach of the key parameters for the research that will be carried out in the context of this dissertation. Specifically, the application of the experiential marketing strategy shows that the various elements that make it up to interact (Igoumenakis and Kravaritis, 2004). In particular, the marketing manager of the hotel unit should know that when an element of the marketing-mix changes, it also affects its other variables. According to Armstrong and Kotler (2009), the basic elements of experiential marketing - mix, whose appropriate combination and harmonization creates the integrated strategy of tourism marketing, are:

- The tourist product, which in this case study is the luxury hotel units (four and five stars), where the tourist gains the experiential experience
- The price of the tourist product, depending on the package of services provided to the visitor that fully determines his experiential experience
- Advertising through selected distribution networks that creates in the traveler the expectation of an experiential experience before arrival at the accommodation, with this requirement to be confirmed in real-time and place of the tourist experience (moments of truth)
- The satisfactory supply of the luxury unit with quality supplies and suitably qualified staff, to meet the high demands of the visitors it seeks to attract and the upgraded services it advertises that it can provide
- Appropriate public relations with travel agencies that have access to the desired consumer public, ie visitors with a corresponding economic and social background to seek enhanced tourism experiences.

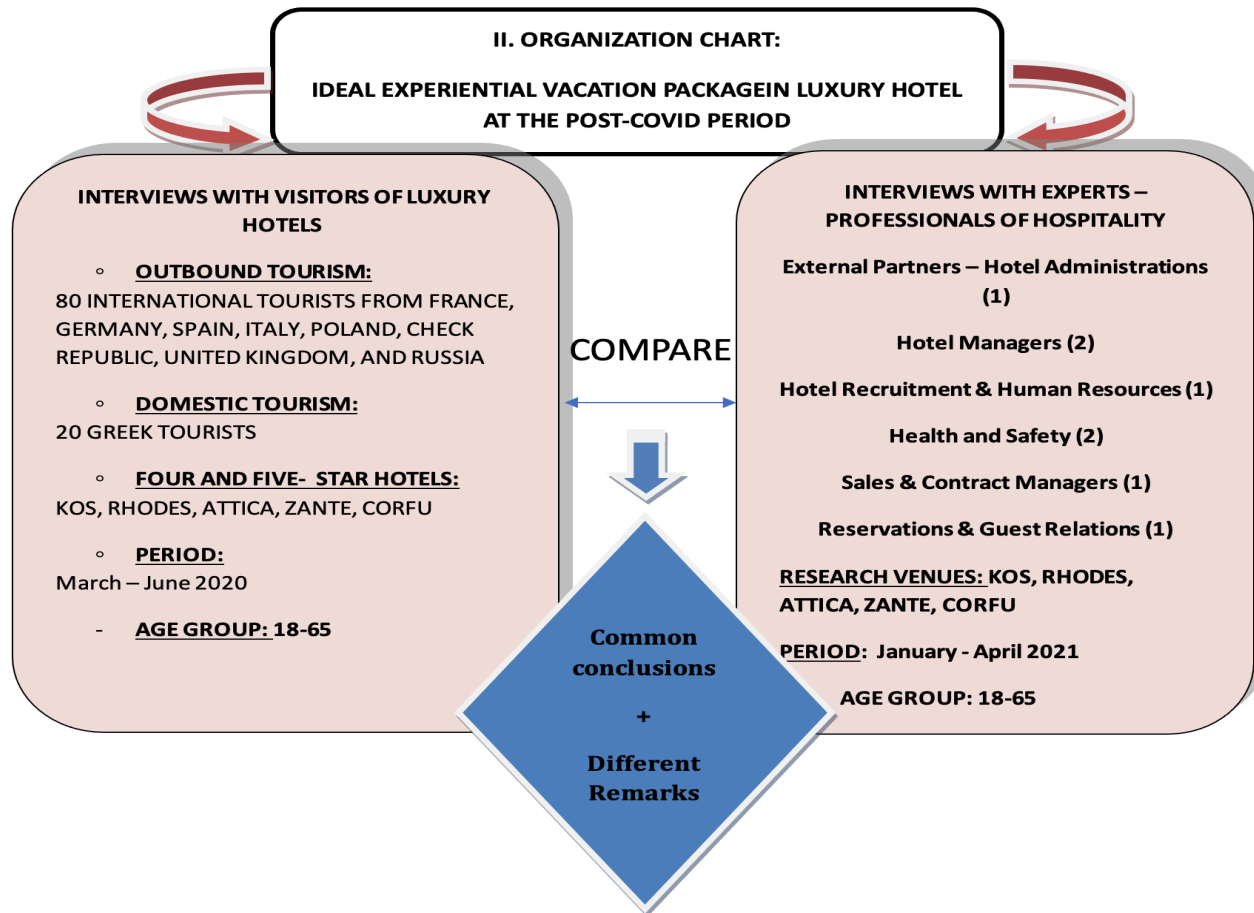
### **3. Research Methodology:**

The first component represents the exogenous factors studied and quantified by the respective researchers. In this case, the exogenous factors make up: gender, age, country of origin, and educational level. It is worth noting that special importance is given when examining the answers in the field in which the person answering the questionnaire is professionally active, as it is found that there is an inextricable influence of the profession and the experiential experiences that the visitor seeks to gain from each trip. In particular, a person working in the arts pays different attention to visiting attractions and events than someone who has a completely different field of work, such as someone working in the sciences.

At the same time, the age group to which the traveller belongs is estimated to influence the desire for new experiential experiences, depending on the already acquired travel experiences.

The second component includes all the endogenous factors that directly affect the choices of the respondent. Combining travel with motivation (business, leisure), duration, and total cost (travel, accommodation, food) is the method used by each traveller to arrive at the vacation package that will determine the hotel that will which significantly limits the experiential experience sought with this trip (especially if the desired experience is related to the provision of high-quality services such as four- and five-star hotels).

Figure 2. Organizational Chart



Source: Papanagiotou A., Dionysopoulou P., Kasimati, E (202): An approach for Experiential Marketing of Luxury Hotels, Hellenic Open University.

The other factors that determine the answers of the respondent are the means of transport he will choose to and from the place of destination, the choice to travel alone / with friends / with a partner/family, as well as the possible interests he has and which are often related by choosing the most specialized forms of experiential experiences (such as mountaineering, diving, walking, wine tourism). All of the above factors lead the decision-maker to a specific choice, which results in the final choice of a luxury hotel as an ideal place to stay and have fun to gain a unique experiential experience.

The field of research of the present effort includes both the Greek area (Attica, Kos, Rhodes, Corfu, Zakynthos) and travellers from 8 other European countries (France, Germany, United Kingdom, Spain, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Czech Republic) as an object is the highlight of the trends prevailing in the Greek and international tourism market. The range of the sample reached 90 questionnaires from international tourists who have visited our country during the past three years so that their travel experience is recent. At the same time, structured interviews were conducted based on the same questionnaire with 8 people with intense professional activity in the tourism industry (especially from marketing departments), not exclusively from the

hotel sector to form a broader perception of the hotel experience, avoiding being limited to professionals. design corresponding hotel marketing strategies.

The period of the research is determined in the period April - July 2020 and January- April 2021 for the interviews with experts of hospitality, while the promotion method used is the personal visits, which was considered as the most approved research for the possibility of on-site clarifications in case of questions. In some cases, the clarifications and the contact continued from the telephone and the internet (skype-Viber), at the respective choice of the participant.

Regarding the interviews with the experts, the procedure of personal interviews was also adopted. The method followed is the Delphi Method of decisions, which is based on "partial" anonymity that serves the purposes of our work. In other words, the interviewees are in the second phase status. This serves the emphasis we want to give to each participant's work section. Experts from the following sectors of the tourism industry participated in the research: Manager of a five-star Resort hotel, Manager of a city hotel Boutique, employee of a cruise shipping company, an employee of the Digital Marketing department, and Hotel Pros of the Hotel Management company, employee of a well-known platform marketing department. international hotel chain luxury hotel booking clerk, airline company marketing department clerk, and contract manager at Greek-owned international Tour Operator office.

#### 4. Findings and Analysis:

Starting the data analysis of our sample, it is necessary to mention that the model we use is that of multiple linear regression. The equation described by this model is:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \dots + \beta_nX_n$$

Table 1. The most preferable services for the ideal experiential package of hospitality

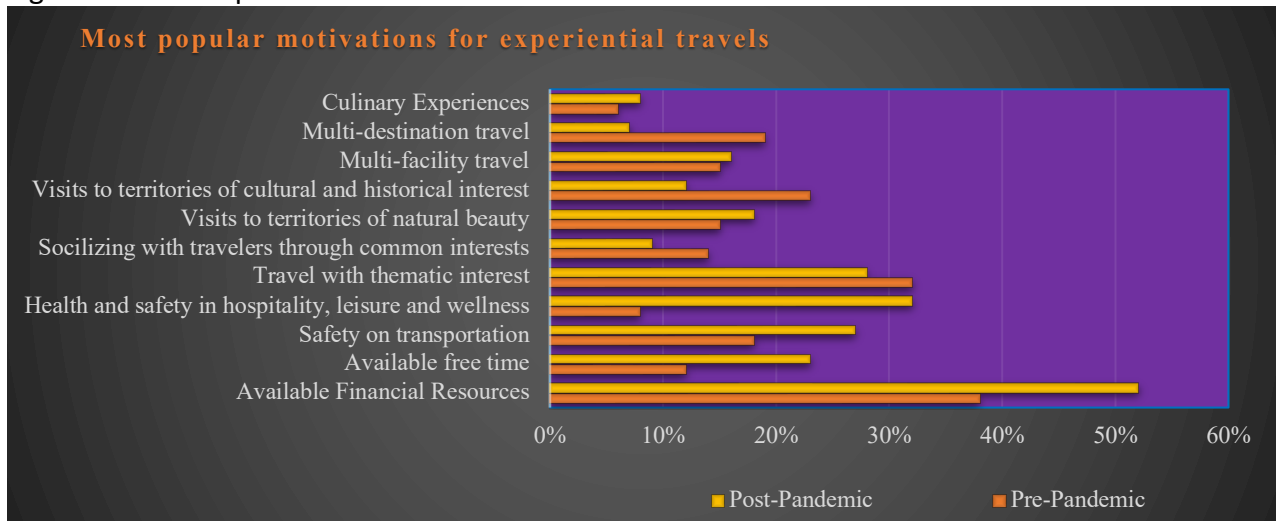
The most preferable services for the ideal experiential package of hospitality		
VARIABLE	TOURISTS	EXPERTS
COST FOR PACKAGE	1 - YES	1 - YES
ACCOMMODATION	1 - YES	1 - YES
FOOD AND BEVERAGE	0 - NO	1 - YES
HEALTH AND SAFETY	1 - YES	0 - NO
STAFF	1 - YES	1 - YES
SERVICES	1 - YES	0 - NO
TRANSFER	0 - NO	0 - NO

Source: Papanagiotou A., Dionysopoulou P., Kasimati, E (2020): An approach for Experiential Marketing of Luxury Hotels, Hellenic Open University.

The dependent variable Y is the ideal experiential marketing strategy that emerges after the use of the respective technological and/or traditional means. Independent variables will be considered for all external factors, ie age, gender, educational level, origin, and previous travel experience of the participant. Specifically, they will be converted to dummy variables to determine how they affect the regression model.

In addition, all the factors which influence the formulation of a marketing strategy in the framework of the tourist experience are in correlation with the elements of creating familiarity. At this point, it is worth mentioning to quantify them and include them in the model, package costs, choice of means of transport, human health and safety, accommodation, food, staff, and services such as entertainment, wellness, and relaxation.

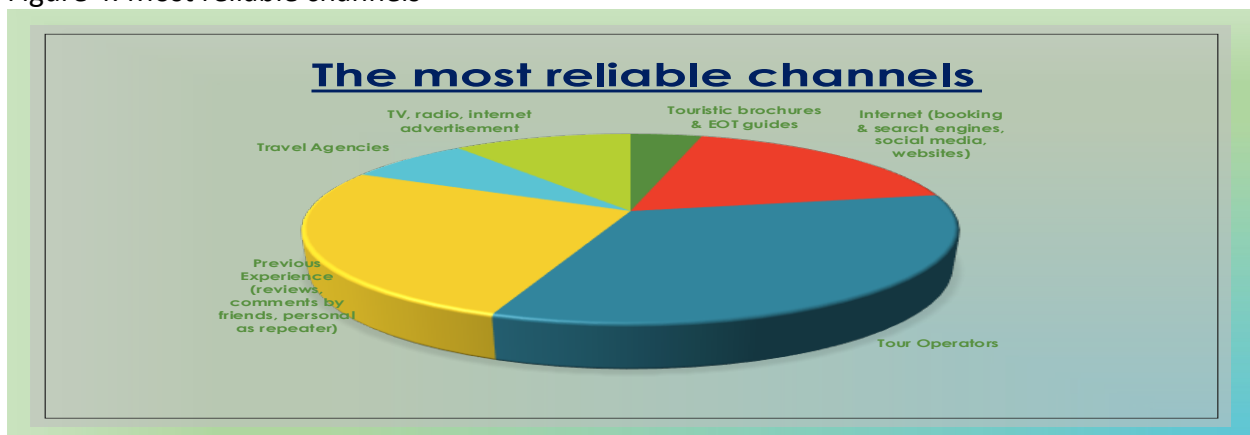
Figure 3. Most Popular Motivations



Source: Own Research

According to the above graph, the most important motivation or demotivation for experiential travels is the same for both pre-Pandemic and post-pandemic periods is the available financial resources. Thus, the percentage of tourists and professionals who evaluate this motivation as the most important for experiential traveling is higher at the period after COVID19. At the same time, it is remarkable that the percentages of motivations connected to safety parameters are much higher at the post-Pandemic period (Health and safety in Hospitality, leisure, and tourism & safety on transportation).

Figure 4. Most reliable channels

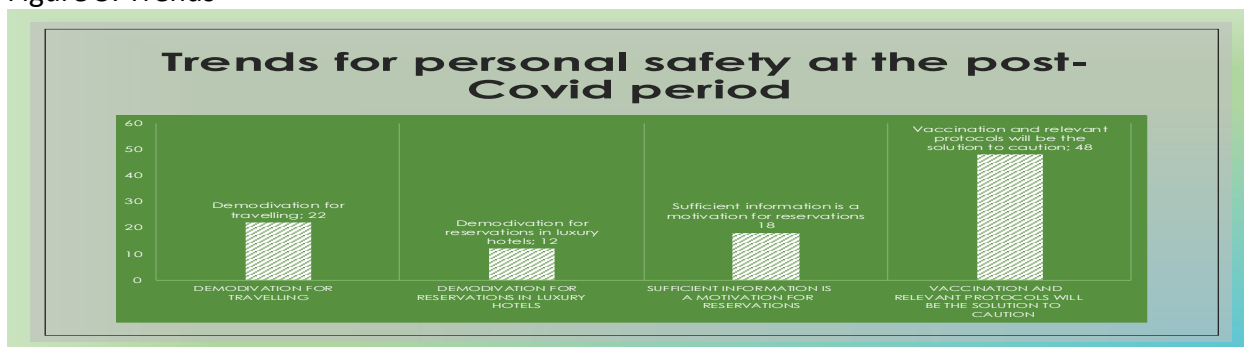


Source: Own Research



A very important variable of the model is the reliability of the channels for information and promotion (this is connected with the communication before the travel according to the precaution methods at the post-Pandemic period. The relevant graph presents the Tour Operators as the most reliable channel and the repeaters as the second most efficient channel. It is worth underlining that the professionals disagree with the third place since they evaluate the digital channels as not trustworthy since the digital reviews and pictures used by the sales representatives create great expectations to the visitors and reality seems disappointing so that the experiential marketing does not work as a successful tool.

Figure 5. Trends



Source: Own Research

The table above presents that the tourists (both international and domestic) are under fear and the intention to travel is debatable for the moment but this tense will be rapidly improved in the next 3 years since the vaccination and the relevant protocols will be the final solution for this phenomenon.

## 5. Discussion

The hotel industry is one of the most diverse and dynamic industries in the world. For a business to be able to understand which are the preferences of the customers want, it is necessary to divide the entire market into subsets.

"Market segmentation is the process of dividing the overall market perception into subsets, where each of the potential customers has common characteristics, which lead to similar demand needs for a product or service."

Since the main reason behind marketing is to find a way to meet customer needs in a new or better way, splitting the market into different segments will allow the hotel to focus on a specific segment that provides the best opportunity. for its products and services. Successful hotels recognize that the tastes, preferences, needs, lifestyle, family size, and composition of guests differ and can pursue a policy that increases market demand for their products by focusing on marketing efforts to a subset of customers.

Today, many consumers have access to luxury products and services. The concept of luxury is multidimensional as it can be interpreted differently by each person taking into account the perceptions and preferences which are constantly changing. Choosing a luxurious lifestyle to

evolve on a social scale, as the consumption of luxury products and participation in such experiences is directly linked to social status for both the individual and the social groups to which he belongs. This not only presents new business opportunities but also poses great challenges in terms of finding effective strategies to maximize performance through customer satisfaction as the more a company knows about its core customer the more it will be able to create value that meets their needs and implement the marketing efforts needed to influence these customers' purchasing decisions.

Experiential marketing is a comprehensive business philosophy or started as a result of financial and business pressure for the company to focus on adopting a series of management measures to meet the needs of its customers. The evolution of marketing in the hotel industry is similar to any other industry. The main reason for the existence of marketing in the four- and five-star hotel business is due to the increase in the number of guests who need accommodation as well as the increase in competition from accommodation service providers. In addition, the luxury hotel industry is becoming an increasingly mature market, where competition is growing worldwide and gaining more and more loyal customers is a growing problem for hotel businesses. Therefore, there is a huge change in luxury marketing.

## **6. Conclusions:**

Taking into consideration all the mentioned parameters, we conclude that the tourists evaluate Health and Safety as an important element of their experience, but the experts adopt a different approach. In detail, they think that the travellers need to be sufficiently informed for hygiene affairs before the visit but Health & Safety matters are not a part of their consumer behaviour to propose a hospitality venue as ideal through the share-experience method.

Moreover, hygiene parameters will be a mandatory part of the contract with the Tour Operators, and experiential marketing appears to be effective to face the Pandemic fear of the travellers.

Last but not least, protocols and official certificates will be the adopted policy will have as result the increase of the relevant controls. On the other hand, it is very important to take into attention the eliminations of the current research such as the limited hypotheses by experts because the post – Pandemic period includes only a few months that the Pandemic was still ongoing. At the same time, we have examined only certain nationalities, venues, periods. The most serious elimination is that it is not possible to determine the influence of vaccination at this specific period.

Therefore, it is worth mentioning as items for further research the collection of more structured interviews with experts and the collection of opinions by travellers and experts on different times, countries, periods. Last but not least, it will be useful to approach in future research the financial impact of the Health & Safety precaution measures and control, the influence of vaccination, and the role of flexibility and cancellation policy for the experiential marketing

## **Acknowledgment**

I would like to express my warm gratitude to my beloved uncle, Konstantinos Papanagiotou, whose loss (during this research) has honestly marked me. He was the first employer of a hotel group that had honoured me with his trust. Most of all, he always listened and discussed my

concerns for academic research, supporting me realize my particular interest in leisure and tourism and my love for the hotel industry.

At the same time, he was the person who encouraged me to creatively manage the stressful period when the tourism industry was locked due to the pandemic and to deal with the development of my research.

I miss him every day that he is not here to advise and strictly evaluate me but his passion; agility and stubbornness for professional and mainly personal development will always be a source of inspiration for me. You are engraved in my heart and you will accompany me in every step of this path.

"No battle is lost from the beginning. It always depends on you if you encounter yourself as a player or a pawn "

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# How Business Excellence Methodologies (BEM) transform the wellness tourism industry

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## Abstract

*The present study aims at addressing issues related to business excellence methodologies and practices, applied in the wellness tourism industry. It highlights contemporary methodologies of quality and productivity of wellness operation and the implications for competitiveness, and discusses practices used to attain customer-oriented continuous improvement. For the purpose of this study, a systematic review of literature of peer reviewed journal articles in wellness tourism industry and business excellence methodologies was conducted. The researchers identified articles on business excellence methodologies and practices and detected how these excellence methodologies could improve the performance of wellness businesses. A number of business excellence methodologies and practices have been proposed for the wellness tourism to enhance its overall business performance and create quality services that meet and potentially exceed customer needs and expectations. If managers and researchers understand and implement business excellence methodologies and practices, the wellness tourism industry will achieve more profits and a stable customer base. The paper places emphasis to the need to implement effective business excellence methodologies in the wellness tourism businesses in order to develop a customer-oriented continuous improvement strategy.*

**Keywords:** *Wellness tourism, Business excellence, Total quality management, Lean six sigma, Customer-oriented continuous improvement*

## 1. Introduction

The concept of health tourism became known in the 1980's. The general idea implies that the motivation for the health-care tourists is the improvement of their overall health (Hui et al., 2012). The term "wellness" was formulated by Dunn (1959), who put together the words "well-being" and "fitness". The ultimate purpose of wellness is the achievement of harmony in physical, mental and social level (Chen et al., 2013). Wellness tourism is a part of health tourism; a subcategory. Wellness tourists are people who aim at maintaining or improving their health; they do not pursue the improvement of their health through medication but making healthier choices while visiting wellness resorts, hotels, spas, etc. They enjoy services such as healthy diet, exercise, meditation, psychological support, beauty treatments, body treatments (e.g. spring baths), and guidance on making healthier choices (Hui et al., 2012).

Nowadays, more and more people are becoming conscious about themselves in terms of health and mentality. Some are dealing with anxiety and stress emanating from the work environment, while others are aging and need to take a break from their everyday life in a more health-efficient way (Hui et al., 2012). Health-care tourists expect customized services to satisfy their needs for health care along with relaxation. These people can be seen as a tourism market segment with high profit potentials (Global Wellness Institute, 2018).

The purpose of this study is twofold: (a) to present the wellness tourism industry and its financial potential (profits, market share, trends), (b) to provide readers with the definitions, principles, and benefits of the Business Excellence Methodologies (BEM) and their tools and techniques, and to identify the BEM that wellness tourism businesses could implement to improve their overall performance and effectiveness.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Wellness Tourism Industry Analysis**

Wellness tourism combines vacations with outdoor activities, entertainment, fitness (Heung et al., 2012), meditation, healthcare, beauty treatments, such as spa and massage, and rejuvenation (Global Spa Summit LLC, 2011). According to Kaspar (1996, as cited in Chen et al., 2013), wellness tourism addresses people who travel to places, even overseas, in order to maintain and improve their physical condition, mental health, and social life.

Kaufmann (1999) considers wellness tourism as a type of tourism that aims at maintaining and improving the health of the people, through prevention. Prevention encompasses three elements: (a) body, (b) mind, and (c) spirit, all to be well treated and enhanced through wellness services. Unlike health-tourists, who search for therapies, wellness tourists are healthy people who wish to preserve and ameliorate their health and mentality (Hui et al., 2012).

Recently people have begun to pay more attention to health and overall well-being, hence, they consider very important to promote their health and improve their appearance, as well (Lee & Kim, 2015). Traveling overseas to find themselves and relax seems, nowadays, imperative, due the fact that modern people's everyday life has changed radically throughout the years, since stress, anxiety and competition has, now, become a main element of the working environment (Heung et al., 2012).

Wellness tourists pay attention to the overall quality of their travel. In particular, they are expecting to explore new places, cultures, landscapes, get social and they also anticipate visiting facilities of high quality standards, in terms of services, staff's attitude, cleanliness of the facilities, and security (Chen et al., 2013). It is a fact that older tourists prefer to be part of a well-organized schedule, and they also appreciate visiting places, where rules must be followed, creating a sense of security and safety (Trachsel & Backhaus, 2011).

### **2.2 Wellness tourists' profile**

The profile of the wellness tourism travelers includes: retirees, people who work in stressful environments, and tourists with high salaries (Chen et al., 2013). In their survey on wellness hotels in Switzerland, Mueller and Kaufmann (2001, as cited in Hui et al., 2012) categorized the wellness hotel customers into four types, regarding their preferences on the hotel's services, facilities, and infrastructures:

- Demanding guests

In this category, customers appreciate, significantly, all the services they receive from the wellness hotel, including the staff qualifications and the hotel facilities, as well as, its treatments and guidance towards healthier life choices.

- Undemanding guests

Undemanding guests do not consider imperative any of the services or staff's professional capabilities; nevertheless, they enjoy the simpler benefits of the hotel, and in particular, the swimming pool.

- Independent infrastructure users

These customers appreciate, significantly, the hotel's wellness facilities, including sauna, Jacuzzi, and swimming pool, while, they are not interested in treatments, informative sessions and staff's skills.

- Care-Intensive

This type seems to highly appreciate the medical treatments and the recommendations on healthcare, but it shows low interest in the hotel's wellness facilities, as the swimming pool and sauna.

### *2.3 Expected benefits for the customers*

Chen et al. (2013), in their study, reported the following wellness tourism expectations and the possible motivation- the expected benefits- for wellness tourists, according to the relevant literature:

- Experience of something new (Nimrod & Rotem, 2010; Jang et al., 2009)
- Recreation (Nimrod & Rotem, 2010)
- Leisure
- Relaxation (Nimrod & Rotem, 2010)
- Sense of Community (Nimrod & Rotem, 2010)
- Communing with nature
- Testing of physical limits and capabilities
- Alternative ways of maintaining and promoting well-being (Nimrod & Rotem, 2010; Chen et al., 2008).

### *2.4 Wellness tourism industry in numbers*

Geographically, Europe is the number one destination for wellness tourism trips, while, North America is the leader in wellness tourism expenditures, since the average costs per trip is higher than it is in Europe. At this point, it should be mentioned that Asia shows a high growth rate in terms of wellness tourism, over the past five years, being a considerable competitor in the global wellness tourism market (Global Wellness Institute, 2018).

As presented in Figure 1, there are five categories of business operation in the wellness tourism industry, namely: (a) Hotels/ Motels, Resorts, Camps, (b) Restaurants, Bars, Snack Shops, (c) In-Country Transport, (d) Museums, Tours/ Theaters, (e) Souvenirs/ Gifts, Clothing/ Art, and (f) Other Services (Global Wellness Institute, 2018).

Hotels/ Motels, Resorts, Camps category includes: health resorts, ashrams, spas and retreats; it reaches 130.5 billion dollars.

Restaurants, Bars, Snack Shops category encompasses: healthy cuisine, organic cuisine and spa cuisine; it counts 111.5 billion dollars.

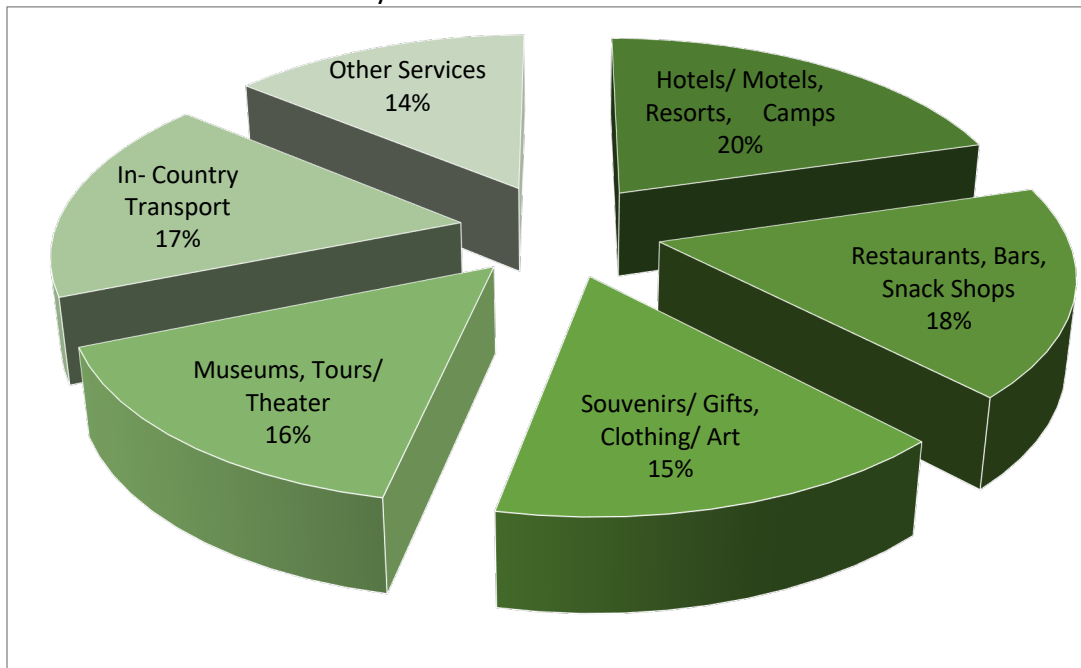
In- Country Transport includes services as: airlines, trains, taxis, public transportation, and rental cars, while its dynamic comes up to 109.9 billion dollars.

Museums, Tours/ Theater category consists of: spas, fitness, meditation/ life coaching and thermal baths; it rises up to 99.7 billion dollars.

Souvenirs/ Gifts, Clothing/ Art category comprises of sport clothing, spa products, dietary supplements and healthy foods; it counts 98.3 billion dollars.

Finally, Other Services include: travel agencies/ agents, insurance, telecommunication and concierge, and also reaches 89.5 billion dollars. The amount of money refers to the expenditures of wellness tourists in 2017 for each business category, respectively, based on the Global Wellness Institute survey (2018).

Figure 1: Wellness Tourism industry 2017



Source: Global Wellness Institute, 2018, edited by the authors

The dynamic of wellness tourism has spread out to \$639.4 billion in 2017, noting a 6.5% annual growth rate from 2015 to 2017, around the globe. Comparing the growth rate of wellness tourism and general tourism, there is a clear lead of the first over the latter- 6.5% and 3.2%, respectively- which shows that wellness tourism, is a rising force in the global economy. It seems that wellness tourism industry has a dynamic and can combine high profits with customer satisfaction (Global Wellness Institute, 2018).

Since this business field has not been yet, extensively explored in terms of BEM implemented, it raises the interest of the authors to identify and transfer the existing BEM -implemented in other industries-to wellness tourism businesses in order to enhance their effectiveness and profitability.



### 3. Business Excellence Methodologies, Tools & Techniques

Quality is a means to evaluate and compare products and services' value, from a customer perspective (Hanson & Eriksson, 2002) and a means to achieve and maintain a competitive advantage from a business (product/ service provider) perspective (Sainis et al., 2016b; Kriemadis, 2019; Kriemadis et al., 2017). It can be implemented in processes regarding a product or a service. It was the manufacturing sector that first implemented quality in its processes, while the service sector adopted quality later (Kriemadis, 2001; Kriemadis et al., 2019; Sainis et al., 2019; Sainis et al., 2017).

#### 3.1 ISO 9001

International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standard for quality management systems is considered as the first step toward the quality journey and adoption of a total quality management system. It ensures elimination of variation in the business processes and alignment of the organization's outcomes with ISO requirements (Magd & Curry, 2003).

The implementation of ISO 9001 provides organizations with significant benefits such as: maintenance and increase of customers, increase of the market share, attainment and maintenance of the competitive advantage, reduced costs, improved operations, increased performance, and improved product or service quality (Djofack & Camacho, 2017).

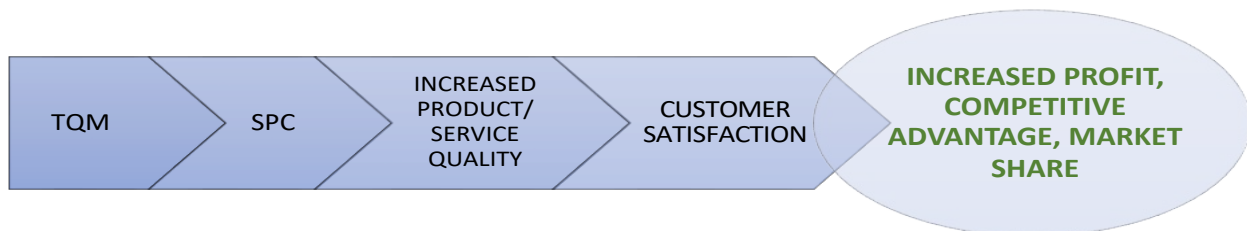
#### Statistical process control

Statistical process control (SPC) is also a technique that is used by organizations with quality management orientation. It deploys statistical methods and tools to monitor and manage a process in order to improve the product/ service quality for the customer (Mason & Antony, 2000).

Organizations applying SPC, to their processes, gain significant benefits such as: (a) improved process/ product/ service, (b) less waste, labor and costs, (c) better information system, (d) communication among departments and employees, (e) decrease of process/ product/ service variation, (f) maintenance or increase of market share and competitive advantage, (g) time saving, and (h) improved performance both internally and externally (Mason & Antony, 2000).

Mason and Antony (2000) presented, in their study, the relation between TQM and SPC in organizations:

Figure 2: TQM and SPC relation



Source: Mason & Antony, 2000, edited by the authors

#### 3.2 Total Quality Management

Total Quality Management (TQM) system is different from the traditional management methods, since it pursues to improve the process itself rather than, solely, check the final outcome of the

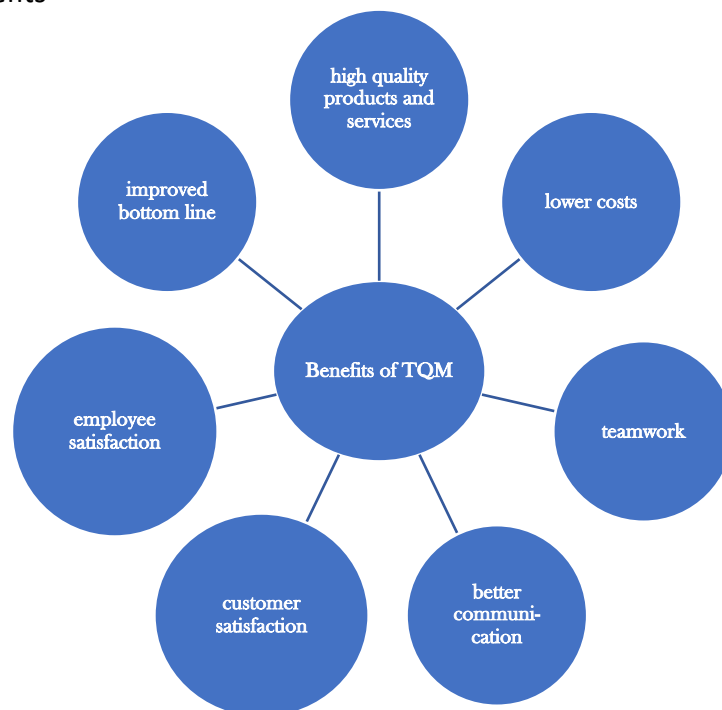
process. It improves the overall performance of the organization and renders a competitive advantage (Oakland, 1993).

TQM refers to the ability of the organization to adapt to the changes that take place in its internal and external environment, making the best out of the new technologies, in order to satisfy the customer needs and expectations, whilst maintaining low costs (Kriemadis, 2001). It is the human resources' well coordinated effort to provide the customers with such products and services that fully satisfy their demands, while, ceaselessly, maintain and improve the overall quality (Imai, 1986).

Businesses creating and implementing a TQM plan make crucial changes that improve their quality, effectiveness and efficiency. Through the continuous improvement of processes and operations, organizations become reliable to their customers- and the potential new customers- and also increase productivity and profitability. TQM continuously promotes the learning process within the organizations, which in turn enhances the adaptability to new conditions and the management system's responsiveness to various requirements (Sutcliffe et al., 2000).

### Benefits of TQM

Figure 3: TQM benefits



Source: Chandler & McEvoy, 2000, edited by the authors

KAIZEN (KAI: change ZEN: good → KAIZEN: improvement)

The meaning of KAIZEN is: the change to something better, in other words, improvement. KAIZEN method of continuous improvement constitutes an internationally acknowledged competitive strategy. Organizations that adopt the KAIZEN principles improve their financial, customer and operational results. KAIZEN method, as formulated by Imai (1986), consists of six principles (Kaizen Institute):

- correct processes lead to positive results

- personal supervision of the situation
- use of data and information & management through actions
- radical solution of the problems
- teamwork
- continuous improvement is everyone's responsibility, and it is very crucial.

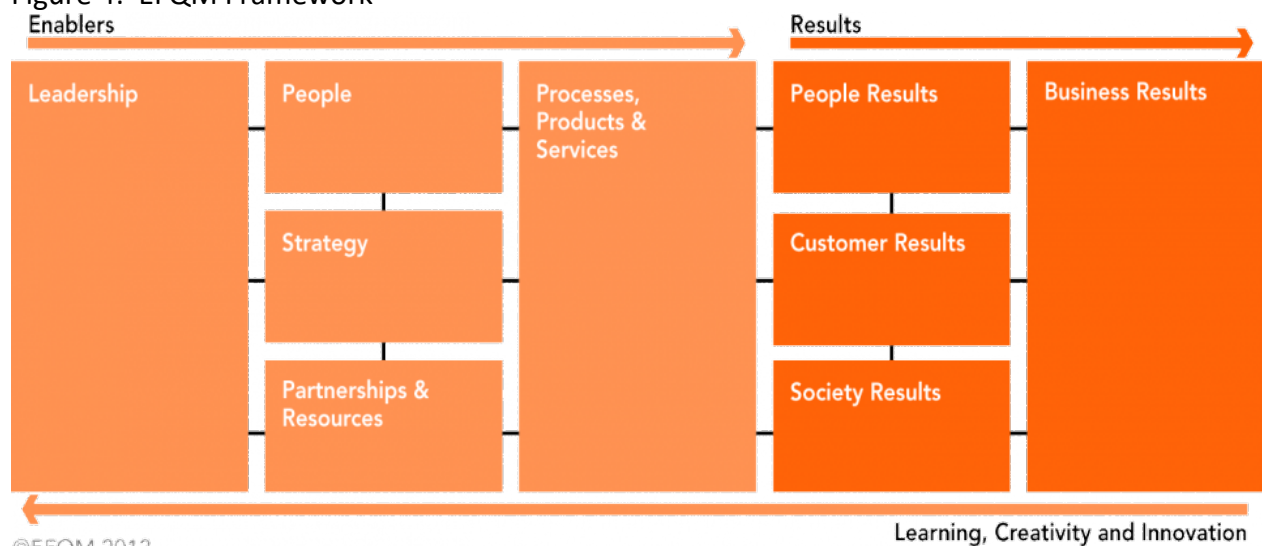
TQM is implemented in business processes, through its tools and standards. TQM quality awards have been developed to ensure the application of TQM in organizations. Such prizes are: (a) European Quality Award, which addresses the organizations operating in the European Union, (b) Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award refers to USA organizations, and (c) Deming Prize for organizations in Japan (Fonseca, 2015).

### European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM)

The mission of European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), which was founded in 1988, is to stimulate the organizations' interest towards business excellence. It requires the involvement of leadership in developing the organization's values for quality and continuous improvement, learning, and innovation. The core values of EFQM are: commitment to quality, honesty, trust, collaboration and active involvement, while respecting people's diversity and beliefs (European Foundation for Quality Management, 2013).

The EFQM framework includes the EFQM nine criteria, which consist of enablers and results, as presented in Figure 4:

Figure 4: EFQM Framework

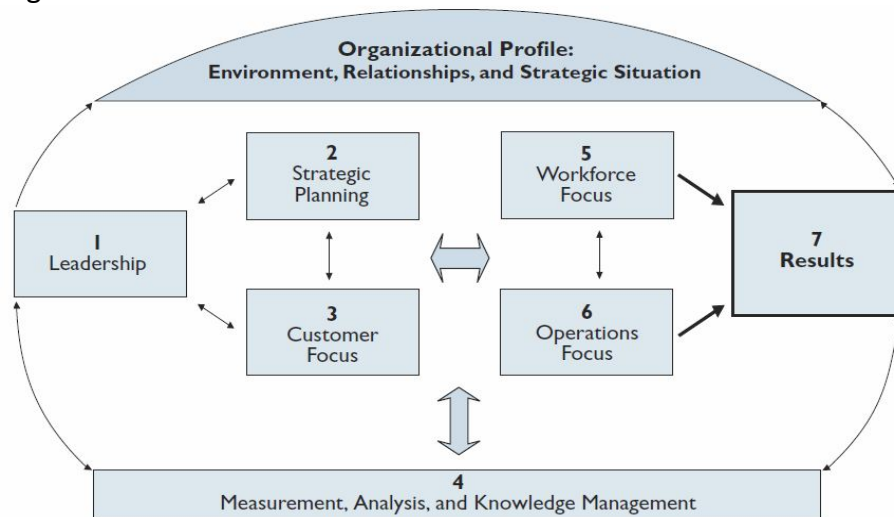


Source: <http://www.efqm.org/efqm-model/model-criteria>

Enablers encompass the factors that will lead to the improved results for people, customers, society and for the business itself. More specifically, enablers include: leadership, people, strategy, partnerships and resources, and processes, products and services (European Foundation for Quality Management, 2013).

## Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA)

Figure 5: Baldrige Framework



Source: [http://www.baldrige21.com/Baldrige\\_Framework.html](http://www.baldrige21.com/Baldrige_Framework.html)

The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) was founded in 1987 to promote the competitiveness of American organizations. As depicted in Figure 5, the elements of the Baldrige framework are: leadership, strategic planning, customer focus, measurement, analysis and knowledge management, workforce focus, operations focus and results. The organizations who achieve high performance in all these elements increase the customer satisfaction, become more competitive and profitable, and gain the MBNQA (Kriemadis & Kartakoullis, 2011).

### 3.3 Deming's Management Method

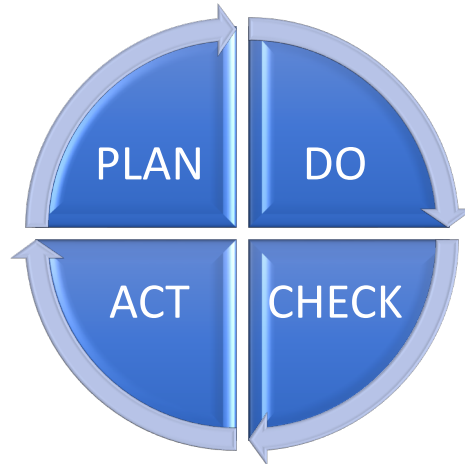
Deming was one of the first instigators of TQM. His approach to quality management known as Deming's Management Method focuses on 14 points which aim at systemically improving the organization (Vinzant & Vinzant, 1999 ; Rungtusanatham et al., 2003):

- (1) Create a constancy of purpose
- (2) Adopt a new philosophy of quality improvement
- (3) Cease dependence on mass inspection
- (4) Stop awarding business on the basis of cost alone and establish a long term relationship with suppliers
- (5) Improve, continuously and forever all systems
- (6) Establish training at work
- (7) Highlight the active involvement of the leadership
- (8) Release the organization from fear and build trust
- (9) Break down barriers between departments
- (10) Eliminate slogans, targets and exhortations for employees
- (11) Replace numerical quotas with leadership guidance and stop management-by-objective as it is practiced now
- (12) Remove barriers to pride of workmanship
- (13) Institute a dynamic program of education and self- growth

(14) Engage everyone in the transformation of the organization

The contribution of Deming to quality improvement is concentrated into the PDCA cycle, which refers to a continuing process of planning, doing, checking, and acting, as Figure 6 presents (Vinzant & Vinzant, 1999; Rungtusanatham et al., 2003):

Figure 6: Deming's PDCA cycle



### 3.4 Lean

Lean is considered as an operational practice that eliminates waste and costs, by maintaining, solely, the activities that bring value to the consumer (Holweg, 2007). The Japanese automobile manufacturer Toyota applied first lean principles and tools to its operations and became an example of the benefits emanating from Lean Management (LM) implementation. Many companies adopted the lean concept, following the example of Toyota, especially in the United States (Zhou, 2012).

Since the lean concept considers human resources as a crucial factor of its implementation, it should be transmitted among all the organization's departments and employees. Employees of all levels of the organization should be an integral part of the LM application (Womack et al., 1990; Stanton et al., 2014).

The main features of LM implementation are: leadership and management, economics, skills and know-how, and empowering organizational culture regarding leadership and human resources (Achanga et al., 2006, as cited in Zhou, 2012). The principles of LM are: (a) identify the value of each respective product or service, (b) spot the value flow for each respective product or service, (c) create a ceaseless value stream-value stream includes all the actions that turn raw materials into final product or service and deliver it to the end customer; it comprises both value adding and non value adding actions, and (d) eliminate the borders between producer and customer, so that the latter can benefit (in terms of value), as directly as possible, from the former (BR et al., 2016).

Employees play an essential role in customer service and customer satisfaction, thus organizations should improve employees' capabilities and productivity. LM creates an organizational culture that promotes employees' satisfaction and growth, through teamwork, involvement in the decision making process, training and continuous improvement of the working environment and organizational processes (Zhou, 2012).

### 3.5 Six Sigma

It was Motorola company that first introduced the improvement methodology known as Six Sigma (SS), in order to reduce the quality variation of its products (Stanton et al., 2014).

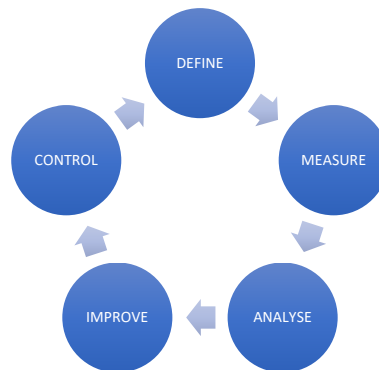
The approach of Six Sigma is process-oriented, and aims at improving one particular process at a time, per project, until the project is completed. The outcome of each process is crucial, since it shows whether it meets the customers' expectations or not (Stanton et al., 2014).

The Six Sigma method can be seen as a: (a) management system, (b) methodology, and (c) metric (McCarty et al., 2004, as cited in Stanton et al., 2014).

As a *management system* it refers to the involvement of leadership in the application of Six Sigma system (Watson, 2004).

As a *methodology* it encompasses the methods, tools, and techniques needed such as the DMAIC (Define-Measure-Analyze-Improve-Control) and DFSS (Design For Six Sigma), which are the two approaches, based on Deming's PDCA cycle (see Figure 6) that serve the above mentioned purpose. They consist of the same steps but the first method refers to the improvement of an existing product or process, while the second method refers to a new product development (Sreeram & Thondiyath, 2015).

Figure 7: DMAIC cycle



Source: <https://transforming.com/2020/04/22/what-is-dmaic/>, edited by the authors

As a *metric* it represents the statistical measurements of the defective processes and products. In particular, SS uses statistical tools to define and eliminate the variation of processes and products, since it pursues almost perfect processes and outcomes (Stanton et al., 2014).

### 3.6 Lean Six Sigma (LSS)

The term Lean Six Sigma (LSS) made its first appearance in 2000 (Sheridan, 2000) and it became widely adopted by businesses around the globe. The merging of Lean thinking and Six Sigma methodology create a business improvement methodology that pursues the stakeholders' satisfaction, by increasing the value they acquire from the organization. This methodology, acts in four directions, which are namely: quality, fast delivery, low costs, customer satisfaction. To effectively perform in all the above mentioned directions, organizations should also take into consideration their intellectual capital.

LSS is a method that aims at improving the quality of a product or service by advancing existing processes, eliminating problematic processes and introducing new processes to an organization, while reducing waste and costs (Juliani & Oliveira, 2019).

The implementation of LSS requires a radical shift of the organizational culture toward sustainability, competitiveness and effectiveness (Juliani & Oliveira, 2019). The LSS improvement method combines the concept of lean thinking and Six Sigma (Sunder et al., 2018) for the betterment of processes towards sustainability and efficiency, regarding the customer satisfaction.

LSS is a better method than Lean Management or Six Sigma, when implemented exclusively, and the main reason for that is the consideration of the stakeholder satisfaction (Sunder et al., 2018). “While Lean is all about speed and efficiency, Six Sigma is concerned with precision and accuracy: Lean ensures resources are working on the right activities, while Six Sigma ensures things are done right the first time” (Laureani & Antony, 2017: 54).

#### Principles and practices of LSS

Each principle encompasses different tools and practices to be incorporated in the management of the organization (Juliani & Oliveira, 2019):

- analyzing processes and results
  - ✓ mixed working groups
  - ✓ specification of the process
  - ✓ identification of waste in their basis
- long-term planning
  - ✓ transformation of the existing culture
  - ✓ strategic planning
  - ✓ perpetual actions
- managing projects
  - ✓ classification of projects, based on higher to lower priority
  - ✓ leadership’s active involvement
  - ✓ consideration of stakeholders requirements and demands
- managing professionals
  - ✓ human resources’ continuous training (all the levels of the business hierarchy)
  - ✓ managers’ and employees’ commitment to the organization
- managing information
  - ✓ use of information systems
  - ✓ identification of the information stream
  - ✓ transmission of information through communication
- managing suppliers
  - ✓ collaboration with suppliers
  - ✓ awareness of the suppliers’ aptitude
- managing resources
  - ✓ human capital
  - ✓ financial capital
- managing and controlling processes and results
  - ✓ planning and standardization of operations
  - ✓ performance auditing
- improving processes and results
  - ✓ implementation of LSS tools and techniques (pertinent for each process)
  - ✓ waste reduction

- ✓ process sorting by maintaining the efficient processes and eliminating the complex and problematic ones
- ✓ focus on customer satisfaction

The benefits of Lean Six Sigma are summarized as follows: (a) product/service that meets the customers' expectations, (b) elimination of non-adding value processes, (c) waste reduction, (d) cost reduction, (e) elimination of second-rate products/services, (f) just- in- time delivery of the products/ services, (g) increased product/ service quality (Laureani & Antony, 2017).

### *3.7 Quality Function Deployment*

Quality Function Deployment (QFD) is a methodology that refers to a new product development, and it is a part of the TQM concept. It was first introduced in Japan in 1970, and later, it became widely adopted as a decision- making tool by Western countries (Jiang, et al., 2007).

The characteristics of QFD are (Zare Mehrjerdi, 2010):

- awareness of customer needs and expectations,
- continuous focus on quality,
- enhanced value of products ameliorating the quality and customer satisfaction,
- creation of an inclusive quality system focused on customer satisfaction, and
- implementation of strategies towards the achievement and maintenance of the competitive advantage.

The organizations' benefits deriving from QFD application are (Zare Mehrjerdi, 2010):

- alignment of organizations' production capacity with customer requirements
- increased collaboration among employees and departments
- enhanced customer satisfaction, responding effectively to their demands and requirements
- in-time availability of product to the market
- establishment of an information management system designed for internal processes

### *3.8 Just- In- Time*

The Japanese concept Just-In-Time (JIT) refers to the timely production and delivery of the final product/ service to the customer. JIT is a "materials-in-motion strategy" (Presutti, 1988: 27) that requires all the actions to be completed in time, avoiding material wastes, inventory and carrying costs, extra human effort and other costs emanating from delays. The timely detection of deficiencies provides a fast feedback to the system that monitors the processes and hence, the necessary proactive and correcting actions take place, saving time and money. Through the implementation of JIT strategy, organizations increase their productivity, and provide higher quality products/ services in a lower price to the customers (Presutti, 1988; Keller & Kazazi, 1993; Svensson, 2001).

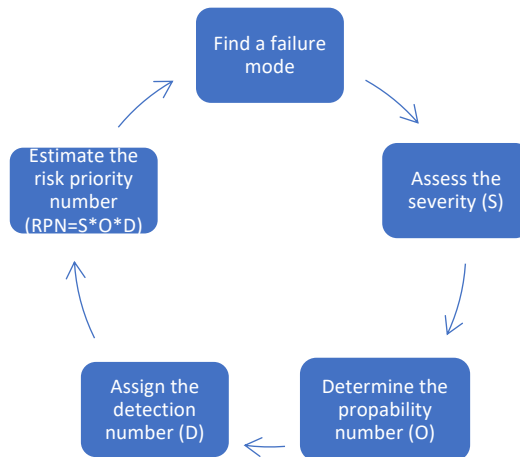
### *3.9 Failure Modes Effect Analysis*

Failure Modes Effect Analysis (FMEA) is a quality management technique used from organizations that operate under the umbrella of TQM. It is used for the detection of existing or possible failure modes in the organization's processes, products/ services and systems, and thus it enables the organization to act proactively to avoid their appearance (Claxton et al., 2017).

FMEA consists of four phases, as presented in Figure 8:



Figure 8: Four Phases of FMEA



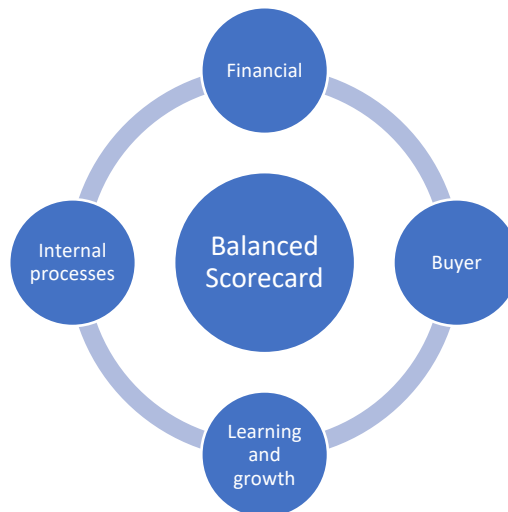
Source: <https://www.slideshare.net/MohammedHamedAhmedSo/failure-mode-and-effect-analysis-fmea>, edited by the authors

The risk priority number (RPN) shows the need to proceed to corrective actions. The value of RPN defines when it is crucial to rectify the failure mode (Shaker et al., 2019).

### 3.10 Balanced Scorecard

Balanced Scorecard is a strategic management system that offers a systemic sight of the business, using performance measures to depict the organizational mission and strategy (Kaplan and Norton, 1996). The main purposes of Balanced Scorecard are: to define and convert vision and strategy; to integrate strategic objectives with measures; to plan, set goals and coordinate actions, relevantly; to increase the strategic feedback while learning (Kaplan & Norton, 1996, as cited in Hladchenko, 2015).

Figure 9: Four aspects of Balanced Scorecard



Source: <https://maaw.info/BalScoreSum.htm>, edited by the authors

#### **4. Research Methodology**

The main purpose of this review was to identify the critical Business Excellence methodologies for the wellness tourism businesses and to propose further customer-oriented continuous improvement methods.

For the purpose of this study, a systematic review of literature of peer reviewed journal articles in wellness tourism industry and business excellence methodologies was conducted. The researchers identified articles on business excellence methodologies and practices and detected how these excellence methodologies could improve the performance of wellness businesses. The titles of publications and abstracts were reviewed by the authors for inclusion in the present study.

The preliminary quest required that the papers included in the literature review were those papers that: (a) were published in the English language, (b) were published in peer-reviewed journals, (c) discuss business excellence methodologies in the title or abstract theory either qualitatively or quantitatively, and finally, (d) were related to the wellness tourism industry in a certain time period from each database. Papers that did not meet the above-mentioned inclusion criteria in the abstract, purpose, results, or discussion sections, were excluded.

A total of 17 papers published in 15 journals and during 1988 – 2019 were collected from two major business literature publishers, namely, Emerald and Taylor and Francis, in order to understand the concept of business excellence methodologies and their implementation status in service organizations.

#### **5. Discussion**

People interact with their environment and they receive positive and negative feedback every day. As a result, their mental and physical condition is very much, depended on the environment (social, economic, natural), creating the need for space and relax. Consequently, wellness tourism is an escape from stressful situations and wellness tourism businesses are providers of relaxation and welfare (Lee & Kim, 2015).

Wellness tourists are expecting high quality services and products; therefore, they choose destinations and accommodations that will be suitable to their expectations. This is an opportunity for businesses operating in the wellness tourism industry to adopt a quality oriented culture and implement Business Excellence Methodologies, since these methodologies have significant positive relationship with customer satisfaction, competitiveness, profitability and stakeholder satisfaction.

Lean Management (LM) practices increase employees' productivity through training and empowerment and transmission of know-how and information. Employees, being active part of the organization's core processes, become more confident to deal with various situations and also effective in terms of customer service (Torella et al., 2012). LM implementation is a key factor for organizations' high performance, achievement and maintenance of the competitive advantage (Zhou, 2012). Wellness businesses will witness speed efficiency, quality and accuracy, resulting in pleased stakeholders and increased profits (Sunder et al., 2018).

In the area of supply chain management, Lean Six Sigma can contribute to the efficiency of the organizations, through cost reduction. The cost reduction results from the decrease of operations, processes and activities that do not add value to the organization. Lean strategies, implemented

in the supply chain will save time, effort, inventory, equipment and will decrease the waste, providing an eco- friendly character to the organizations. Consequently, reducing the costs will lead to increased profits for lean organizations (BR et al., 2016).

All the business excellence methodologies (ISO 9000, TQM, Deming Management Method, Kaizen, Lean Six Sigma, QFD, FMEA, JIT, BSC), analyzed in the “theoretical framework”, come under the concept of Total Quality Management (TQM) since it includes all the elements of the aforementioned BEM. Therefore, organizations operating in the wellness tourism industry can adopt a quality philosophy and implement the most appropriate BEM along with their tools, regarding their business activity and objectives, in order to become more, productive, effective and attain a corporate reputation that will attract new customers and maintain the already existing (Djofack & Camacho, 2017; Kriemadis, 2001; Kriemadis, 2019).

A success factor, according to the literature, is stakeholder satisfaction, which encompass-beside customers- employees, suppliers, partners and the society in general. BEM such as TQM and Lean Six Sigma place stakeholder satisfaction in a high priority. As a result, organizations that implement BEM, receive a positive feedback from their employees, supplies, partners and improve their corporate reputation.

It is a fact that empowered employees are more productive and effective, in terms of customer satisfaction, while wellness tourists consider the staff’s politeness and serviceableness important factors of their well fare, as long as they are staying in the accommodation. Human resource practices applied in quality organizations are inspired by the organization’s quality culture and consider values such as collaboration, communication, knowledge sharing, continuous learning, skill improvement, empowerment and group work (Oakland, 1993; BR et al., 2016; Kriemadis, 2019).

The customer – employee relationship can be positively enhanced through BEM tools and techniques, improving the overall performance of the wellness business. It is the organizations’ responsibility to become quality adopters and implement BEM in order to increase their profitability, productivity, effectiveness, market share and competitiveness.

## **6. Conclusions**

Business Excellence Methodologies (BEM) have a strong relationship with transformation and quality-oriented programs. BEM are improving processes both incremental and transformational in the wellness businesses. The quest for business excellence is essentially a search for competitive advantage in the wellness businesses. The overall performance of the businesses operating in the wellness tourism industry will improve with the application of the aforementioned methodologies (Torella et al., 2012; Zhou, 2012). The benefits for the wellness tourism industry include: (a) increased customer satisfaction and loyalty, (b) improved efficiency and productivity, (c) enhanced accuracy in operations (food delivery, cleaning all areas), (d) standardization and continuous improvement of all operations, (e) greater service quality, and (f) increased profitability and sustainable competitive advantage (BR et al., 2016; Djofack & Camacho, 2017; Kriemadis, 2001; Kriemadis, 2019). The wellness tourism industry businesses that implement BEM are expected to achieve world-class performance and results.

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# Livelihood Diversification of Local Communities Through Community-Based Ecotourism: A Case of Sabah, Malaysian Borneo

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## Abstract

*The main research question raised in this research was, to what extent CBE can be acknowledged as livelihood diversification strategy by the local community in Sabah, Malaysia. In order to enrich the current body of knowledge on livelihood diversification in CBE development, this study investigates the host community's perceptions regarding the current livelihood diversification through CBE and their motivations to participate in ecotourism in Sukau, a pioneering ecotourism destination in Sabah, Malaysian Borneo. By adopting the constructivist research paradigm as the researcher's world view, this study employed the qualitative research design to investigate the host community's perceptions towards CBE as a livelihood diversification strategy and their motivations for participation. All the data gathered in this study were analysed using content analysis techniques. The key findings from the study unveils interesting insights based on two themes: (1) perceptions of the host community towards CBE as a livelihood diversification strategy and (2) motivations of participation in CBE by the host community.*

**Keywords:** Livelihood diversification, Community participation, SDGs

## 1. Introduction

Over the last few decades, ecotourism has been a contested topic among academics and industry practitioners as a tourism segment that contributes to sustainable development (Hunt et al., 2015; Wondirad, 2019). It has always been acknowledged by academics as alternative tourism to mass tourism. Due to adverse impacts imposed by mass tourism on the world's environment, many environmentalists, and governments in both developed and developing nations adopted ecotourism as a developmental mechanism to enhance the local economy and social development (Hunt et al., 2015; Masud et al., 2017). Due to the recognition of ecotourism as one of the national agendas in many developing countries, the sustainable development paradigm has emphasized the inclusion of tourism by the government of developing countries. As a result, sustainable development goals (SDGs) were embedded by researchers in their tourism-related studies to embrace the importance of such goals to the natural ecosystem and local community livelihoods (Kunjuraman, 2020). To ensure the ecotourism benefits shower abundantly, local community participation or approach was recommended (Murphy, 1985) in the form of community-based ecotourism (CBE). CBE is a popular tourism activity in rural areas of developing nations like Malaysia since the 1990s which managed by the local communities (Hussin, 2006) as well as suggested to introduce it in urban contexts (Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2020).



Realising the potential of ecotourism, it has become famous in many developing countries including Malaysia due to its potential as a development tool and included in national tourism policies (National Tourism Policy 2020-2030 and National Ecotourism Plan 2016-2025). The policies have been introduced to promote Malaysia as a famous ecotourism destination to the outside world. On the other hand, diversification of new nature-based products is urged by the policies to attract more tourists to visit Malaysia. Consequently, new ecotourism products based on nature involving local communities continued to be introduced by the Malaysian government. For instance, Sarawak, the largest state in Malaysia has introduced the 'Tagang programme' [the practice of preserving riverine fish species in the restricted area] as ecotourism activity involving local communities (Keling et al., 2021) to enhance their livelihoods. This programme was introduced to overcome the threats of riverine fish resulted from irresponsible human actions as well as a platform to increase the awareness of nature and conservation. Thus, the local communities are chosen to be the main actors to protect the environment in their respective areas. Specifically, this type of CBE activity may provide an opportunity to the local communities to diversify their livelihood activities rather than depend fully on fishing and subsistence farming which were common economic activities in rural destinations of Malaysia (Hussin, 2006). Sustainable tourism in the context of ecotourism aims to enhance the destination communities' livelihoods as well as protect existing natural resources (Dass & Chatterjee, 2015). However, several studies have reported that the coastal communities may not be able to perform their daily activities to survive due to limited local resources (Ghosh, 2012; Hussin et al., 2015) especially in fishing and mariculture (Carter & Garaway, 2014; Su et al., 2016). Thus, livelihood diversification through community-based ecotourism (CBE) has been identified as a sustainable livelihood strategy for the rural coastal communities in many developing countries including Malaysia. Several studies reported that livelihood diversification through CBE may be alternative to the fishing communities in rural areas (Hussin et al., 2015; Swain & Batabyal, 2016). Incorporating CBE in existing livelihood activities such as fishing, mariculture and farming may be useful to provide benefits to the communities to enhance their livelihood portfolios. Such transformation processes among the rural communities are diversified into ecotourism as their economic portfolios could reduce the pressure caused by declining fish resources (Carter & Gateway, 2014) and reduce the risks and uncertainty of fishing to provide employment opportunities and extra income which has become an endemic among the communities (Porter et al., 2015). To enrich the current body of knowledge on livelihood diversification in CBE development, this study explores the host community's motivation factors regarding the current livelihood diversification through CBE projects in Sukau, a pioneering ecotourism destination in Sabah, Malaysian Borneo.

## **2. Theoretical Background**

### *2.1 Sustainable tourism and SGDs*

The sustainable development paradigm was introduced in tourism in the 1970s as criticism for identifying the impacts brought by tourism from the environmental perspective (Scheyvens, 2002). Since then, the paradigm was extensively applied in tourism academia and was known as 'sustainable tourism development'. During the early years, the term 'sustainable tourism' was explored comprehensively from its basic concepts, approaches, and frameworks to its

applications in tourism studies. Zolfani et al., (2015) noted that in the first decade, the term ‘sustainable tourism’ was studied in terms of basic frameworks from different contexts such as tourism, environment, and economics. The second decade primarily focused on reconceptualization, and a series of critiques were made (Sharpley 2000; Gossling, 2002; Liu, 2003; Saarinen, 2006; Lane, 2009). Since tourism development often leads to unsustainable development impacts on society, culture and environment, the idea of sustainable tourism was seen as a solution to create positive changes. Sustainable tourism has played an important role in identifying the positive changes in tourism development when appropriate approaches in regulations and development control take place (Bramwell & Lane, 2012).

In the context of sustainable development, ecotourism may contribute to the global agenda known as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) involving seventeen priority goals (see Figure 1). It was observed that many goals are relevant to tourism development. For instance, ecotourism sector, large numbers of international tourists contribute to the economic development of countries that use ecotourism as a development tool, including Malaysia. Thus, it is evident that ecotourism’s contributions to the economic and social development of countries are undeniable and have the potential to grow at a great pace. In this study, the SDGs are relevant to be adopted and shreds of evidence from this study could contribute to the global development agenda from a developing country context (Kunjuraman, 2020). However, without the engagement of relevant stakeholders in sustainable tourism development, it is impossible to realise the objectives of SDGs.

Figure 1: The 17 SDGs



Source: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>

## 2.2 CBE as an alternative livelihood diversification strategy

What is livelihood? The concept of livelihood is often considered the most debated concept by scholars in tourism and development studies. For instance, Scoones (2009) described the term livelihood itself as mobile and flexible for application in development enquiry and practice combining several aspects such as locales, occupations, social difference, directions dynamic patterns and many more. On the other hand, the concept of livelihood refers to the capabilities, assets, and activities required for making a living and the sustainable livelihoods approach advances understanding of the livelihoods of the underprivileged communities (Serrat, 2017). In

other words, it can be defined as the methods or approach utilised by the rural communities to make a living for survival. Rural communities in many developing countries rely on traditional livelihood economic activities such as fishing, forestry, agriculture, livestock rearing, and making handicrafts. Nevertheless, to achieve sustainable livelihood goals, it requires diverse livelihood portfolios that are recurrently observed as a determinant component of household economies in developing nations (Cinner & Bodin, 2010 as cited in Bires & Raj, 2020). Bires and Raj (2020, p. 1), recently advocated that “enhancing the livelihoods of unprivileged people requires various livelihood strategies that enable people to engage in various practices that would make life better which resembles the concept of livelihood diversification”. As a result, rural communities are using multiple livelihood strategies in the form of economic activities to cope up with vulnerabilities or shocks and crises. Similarly, Ellis, (1998) defined livelihood diversification as “the process by which rural families construct a diverse portfolio of activities and social support capabilities in their struggle for survival and to improve their standards of living”. Thus, it can be concluded that livelihood diversification is a process of identification of appropriate livelihood strategies seeks by the rural communities to progress their standard of living.

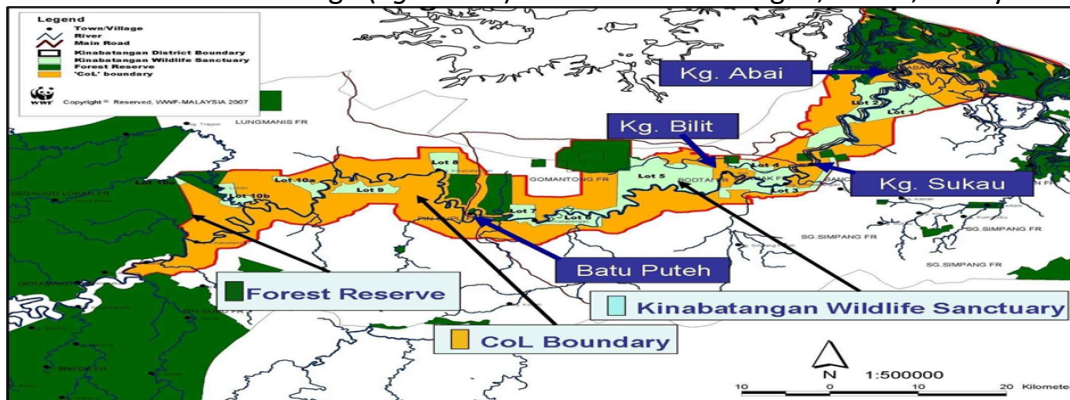
In the context of tourism, the concept of livelihood diversification still suffers from appropriate meaning due to the scarcity of research. However, several tourism studies were attempted to apply the concept of livelihood diversification and test its applicability. For instance, recent studies by Avila-Foucat and Rodriguez-Robayo (2018) and Bires and Raj (2020) have studied communities’ livelihood diversification strategies through tourism. Several interesting findings were discovered in these studies where tourism was successfully established as livelihood diversification by the communities in Oaxaca, Mexico and Ethiopia. Bires and Raj (2020) reported that the contribution of tourism to enhanced diversified livelihood and help to reduce the poverty rate in both rural and urban areas in Ethiopian biosphere reserves. Meanwhile, Avila-Foucat and Rodriguez-Robayo (2018) identified average household age, environmental consciousness, membership or participation in an organisation, characteristics of the land and government transfers are determinants of a household’s diversification into wildlife tourism. However, the above studies did not comprehensively elucidate the motivation factors host community to diversify their livelihoods through tourism. Thus, a case of CBE projects in Sabah, Malaysia was chosen to explore the motivation factors of the local community to acknowledge CBE as a livelihood diversification strategy. This study will be further contributing to the current body of knowledge by having a case study from a developing country like Malaysia.

### **3. Methodology**

The study responds to an argument that many qualitative studies in tourism often fail to justify the research paradigm (Kunjuraman & Hussin, 2007b; Rajaratnam, 2018). This is something crucial element in academic discourse, thus, this study adopted the constructivist research paradigm, which is also known as the interpretivist research paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Neuman, 2006; Jennings, 2010) in literature aiming at capturing the subjective norms and realities of the informants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). A qualitative research study using in-depth interviews and field observation was performed to get the primary data required for this study. A male researcher from Kota Kinabalu, Sabah embarked on this research as part of his doctoral dissertation.

His position as tourism sociologist enabled him to understand the underlying issues of community motivation factors on livelihood diversification strategies through CBE projects and has been actively involved since the early 1990s. For this purpose, Sukau village in lower Kinabatangan has been chosen as a research site due to its position as a pioneer ecotourism destination with an abundance of flora and fauna in Sabah, Malaysia (See Figure 2). In addition, it was the first village to implement the idea of ecotourism by the NGO (WWF) and managed by the local community with support from the government and NGOs. The primary data was collected between 2017 and 2019 and several fieldworks were performed by the researcher. He stayed as a paying guest in a local homestay in Sukau for months to collect data. As a result, the prolonged involvement enabled the researcher to build rapport and conduct close observation on the local community participation in CBE projects as well as their motivation factors to diversify their livelihood strategies rather than depend fully on fishing and subsistence farming for decades. The key informants were chosen purposely among locals who have been involved in CBE projects both homestay programmes and locally-owned Bed and Breakfasts (B&Bs). A total of fourteen (10 CBE project members, 2 local government officials, 1 NGO director and 1 local leader) informants were invited to participate in this study to provide primary data (see Table 1). A series of interviews with these informants were conducted in their homes and offices. The interview questions were based on study research questions and objectives developed by the researcher which mainly focus on motivation factors of the local community to involve in CBE as to diversify their livelihood activities.

Figure 2: Location of Sukau village (*Kg. Sukau*) in Lower Kinabatangan, Sabah, Malaysia



Source: Fieldwork, 2018

**Table 1: Summary of key informants**

Informant No.	Role category	Total interviews
1-10	Local community	10
11, 12	Local government officials	2
13	NGO director	1
14	local leader	1
Total		14

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

In addition, the interviews were conducted with informants using both the national language of Malaysia (*Bahasa Malaysia*) and English. All the interview questions were translated in *Bahasa Malaysia* to ease the informants especially the CBE project members to understand the gist of questions and freely provide their opinions. The government officials and NGO director were preferred to communicate in English with the researcher and provide useful information. Before the interviews, consent to participate in this research was sought and documented. Each interview was audio-recorded and lasted approximately an hour. On the other hand, the researcher prepared some field notes and took photos during the fieldwork as a form of observation data to strengthen the data. The photos are mainly about the landscape of the village, homestay programmes and B&Bs. At the end of the fieldwork, all of the interview data were transcribed verbatim in English and were checked by the English language editor and this was followed by the next step, which is thematic analysis. It was manually done by the researcher to protect the authenticity of the data. The themes were developed based on research objectives and were guided by previous similar studies about the topic. Six stages of thematic analysis were followed: familiarising with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing of themes, defining and naming of themes, and producing the report: all of which were used in a similar ecotourism study by Kunjuraman & Hussin, 2017; Pawson et al., 2017; Sood et al., 2017). As a final note, the study has adopted four criteria for qualitative inquiry to ensure the reliability and validity are established as presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Four criteria for qualitative inquiry adopted in this study**

Types of trustworthiness	Adopted by the researcher
Credibility	Credibility was established by the researcher using techniques of prolonged engagement, continuous observation and member checks. The researcher is a local Malaysian who has been engaged in ecotourism, conservation and community development projects for more than five years in the study sites. The interview and observation data were viewed by the study informants as a form of the researcher's interpretation on data collected.
Transferability	Transferability was enhanced in this study through the purposive sampling used.
Dependability	Dependability was accounted in this study through the development of details research plan, which includes the research process, audit trails of the transcripts and discussion of the project over time between two researchers.
Confirmability	Confirmability was enhanced through the research audit process. In this process, the researcher was aware of the variety of explanations used in discussing the phenomenon being studied.

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

## 4. Findings

The thematic analysis technique employed in this study reveals several main themes in the transcripts. The presentation of the findings was categorised into several themes which focus on motivation factors of the local community to diversify their livelihood strategies through CBE projects in Sukau village.

### *4.1 Main theme one-social networks and ecotourism awareness*

The study findings indicated that the social network between individuals or groups inside or outside of the village had been identified as one of the motivation factors to the informants to venture into ecotourism to diversify their livelihoods where previously fishing and subsistence farming were the main economic activities. Before their engagement in ecotourism, the community was only connected with fellow locals and outside exposure was lacking. Ecotourism paved the way to strengthen the social network with outside people which may provide new information about the development, particularly to ecotourism thus given an opportunity to the informants to try new livelihood activities. One of the informants claimed that:

“In 1990s Sukau has been promoted as one of the ecotourism destinations by the outsiders [not the locals] and proboscis monkey became the main ecotourism product. I observed this which made me aware of the importance of ecotourism and I became involved to date to try new economic activity.” (Inf. No. 7, owner of B&B at Sukau)

It was unveiled through the observation data that the idea of ecotourism did not come from the locals of the village; they had no knowledge about the importance of ecotourism in the village even though the village had resources to be promoted. Lack of outside exposure made the locals passive in developing new ideas which could improve the socio-economic status of the households. The idea of ecotourism in the village originally came from WWF when they realised the potential of ecotourism to the state and the development of households. The social network from WWF was received well by the local community in Sukau to engage in ecotourism through homestay programmes, B&Bs and conservation activities. It is fortunate to say that the local community realised and welcomed the noble initiative taken by WWF to introduce ecotourism in Sukau in the 1990s. The role of social network with the outsiders particularly WWF was nicely explained by the community leader as follows:

“The introduction of ecotourism in Sukau was introduced by WWF and our network played a vital role to realise these noble initiatives. Initially, WWF had conducted wildlife research in Kinabatangan and saw the potential of Kinabatangan as an ecotourism destination. With the strong network between us and WWF in the early 1990s, the first ecotourism project was introduced in Sukau through the homestay programme.” (Inf. No. 14, a community leader at Sukau)

It is evident that the strong social network owned by the community in Sukau contributed to the establishment of ecotourism development, through CBE projects, thus diversified the livelihood activities. Without a strong social network, it would be difficult for any local community to stand alone to embark on any ecotourism project because ecotourism involves multiple stakeholders.

#### *4.2 Main theme two-generation of side income and business venture*

The study indicates that CBE projects in Sukau have given an opportunity to the informants to engage in new economic livelihood activities to generate side income. It was observed that the income from the other livelihood activities such as fishing, boatman, and subsistence farming delivered insufficient income to lead a better life. Involvement in CBE projects by the informants reflected by the economic reason became a motivation factor which is finding ways to diversify the livelihood activity to receive additional side income. For instance, several homestay operators and locally-owned B&B owner in Sukau shared their motivation factors to diversify their livelihood activities through CBE:

“My main economic activities in Sukau are fishing and providing boat service to the locals who work at the nearby plantation company. On the other hand, homestay programme is my secondary economic activity since 2002 and we are the pioneer homestay operator in Sukau.” (Inf. No. 1, homestay operator at Sukau)

“Fishing is my main economic activity in Sukau and at the same times I also provide boat service to the locals who work at the nearby palm oil plantation. I was involved in the homestay programme since early 2002 with the hope that my household socio-economic status can be upgraded. Ecotourism provided me with alternative jobs in Sukau even though I still practise fishing.” (Inf. No. 2, homestay operator at Sukau)

“I used to be a fisherman before I joined the ecotourism business. The main objective was I wanted to upgrade the socio-economic status of my household.” (Inf. No. 5, owner of B&B at Sukau)

In addition, side-income generation through CBE projects motivated the informants to engage actively over years. Most importantly, ecotourism was established as a business activity in Sukau and several natives had successfully operated their ecotourism projects and received economic benefits. Several informants elaborated on these matters:

“I received MYR1,000 from the homestay programme every month and it is highly dependent on the volume of tourists to the village. Being a boatman and fisherman, ecotourism through the homestay programme provided me additional side income.” (Inf. No. 1, homestay operator at Sukau)

“Through the homestay programme, I received MYR200-RM400 every month and it is not static and depends on the season. But, side income from the homestay programme is much appreciated.” (Inf. No. 3, homestay operator at Sukau)

“With the continuous engagement in business (B&B) now I can earn MYR100k per month and approximately my B&B received 200-300 tourists each month. My income is significantly increased from RM1,000 per month 2 decades ago to MYR100k now”. (Inf. No. 7, owner of B&B at Sukau)

“Previously, the maximum income that I earned from fishing and subsistence farming was MYR1000. After being involved in ecotourism and establishing my B&B business, now I can earn MYR7000 per month. Ecotourism has helped me to get side income despite relying on traditional jobs (fishing and subsistence farming)”. (Inf. No. 5, owner of B&B at Sukau)

The findings of this study suggest that the CBE projects in Sukau have helped the local community to receive side income and transformed their economic activities. Nevertheless, it was observed that the income received by homestay operators is less compared to the locally-owned B&Bs owners. The homestay operators are optimistic to upgrade their facilities, services and promotional activities at par with local B&Bs to attract more tourists in the future.

#### *4.3 Main theme three-biodiversity conservation for ecotourism development*

The findings revealed that ecotourism in Sukau promotes awareness among the informants on biodiversity conservation since it is a major ecotourism product in the region. Before ecotourism was introduced in LK, logging was a popular economic activity where the environment faced major threats. The importance of the environment to the local people and the state was not fully understood by the local communities in the early 1970s. This was because the local communities were not aware of how to promote the environment and its resources for tourism purposes. Almost all the informants in this study mentioned the need to be made aware of the potential of LK as an ecotourism destination in the world. Moreover, the beauty of nature was highlighted by the informants to motivate them to engage in ecotourism as well as a mechanism to diversify their livelihoods. For instance, an informant indicates:

“The interest to engage in ecotourism came from the environment surrounding in my village where it is famous for proboscis monkeys and Sukau has been named as a ‘green village’ by the villagers here. The green scenario in Sukau is still conserved and a lot of animals available here are not available in other countries. For instance, proboscis monkeys and its population is higher in our village. On the other hand, ‘sungai menaggul’ became the first spot where a lot of proboscis monkeys can be seen and commercialised.” (Inf. No. 7, owner of B&B at Sukau)

Another informant from HUTAN (NGO) provided some basic motivations on why Sukau became a spot for conservation activities, especially for orangutans. Her brief response about this matter was as follows:

“...the problem in Sabah is that almost all the forests are already logged and there are still orangutans living there. So, they were wondering whether or not the orangutans will survive. That was how it all started; with the idea of doing scientific ecological research on orangutans. We moved here in 1998 to start the project, build a small house in Sukau and



hire a few of our neighbours in the village to find us research sites which we found about ten minutes down the river from Sukau in Lot 2 of the wildlife sanctuary. Since then, we have been studying the local resident population of orangutans there.” (Inf. No. 13, NGO Director at Sukau)

The study also observed that the wildlife animals such as orangutans, Borneo pygmy elephants and proboscis monkeys are great products for ecotourism in Sukau and there is a need to protect and conserve such animals. HUTAN acknowledges the contribution of ecotourism as a platform for the local community in Sukau to understand the importance of biodiversity conservation. Accordingly, the informants are claimed that the natural beauty of LK and the abundance of wildlife animals are motivated them to engage in CBE as well as diversified their livelihood activities.

## **5. Discussion of Findings**

The study explores the motivation factors of the local community to diversify their livelihood activities through CBE projects in pioneer ecotourism destination in Sabah, Malaysia. Several novel findings were identified such as social network and ecotourism awareness, generation of side income and a business venture, and biodiversity conservation for ecotourism development as motivation factors to the local community to venture into ecotourism and acknowledged ecotourism as a sustainable livelihood diversification strategy while practicing the existing other livelihood activities. Findings in the present study are consistent with the findings of Tao and Wall (2009) and Su et al., (2016) which suggest that tourism (in this context ecotourism) should be integrated into the existing mix of livelihood strategies to diversify rather than displace. Another study by Pasanchay and Schott (2021) also claimed that diverse livelihood activities mainly farm and non-farm-based activities are included in addition to operating homestays in Laos. The current study also highlights an important issue emerging from these findings as the motivation factor of the local community to engage in CBE projects to diversify their livelihood activities which were neglected issue in the previous literature. Most studies are interested to identify communities' livelihood diversification strategies through tourism (Avila-Foucat & Rodriguez-Robayo 2018; Bires & Raj 2020) without emphasizing the main motivation factors of local communities to diversify their livelihood activities through tourism. Such as issue is crucial to be understood first because it ensures the long-term sustainability of the CBE projects and their support for future ecotourism development in rural destinations.

It is well-acknowledged in this study that ecotourism has encouraged the local community to cultivate a myriad new skill to access new opportunities (Lasso & Dahles, 2018) especially involvement in the ecotourism business. Social network as one of the motivation factors for the local community in rural areas to diversify their livelihoods through ecotourism is evident in this study. Similarly, Pasanchay and Schott (2021) reported that homestay programme development in Laos was established due to the strong networks own by the homestay operators with community insiders as well as outsiders. For instance, friends and family members support each other in daily livelihood activities meanwhile government staff provided support and advice for operational issues. Thus, a social network in the development of CBE has been an important source for the rural community to diversify their distribution channels to connect the tourism market (Schott & Nhem, 2018).

The livelihood diversification strategy through CBE development by the local community in Sukau was motivated by the economic benefits which are the generation of side-income and ecotourism business opportunity. It is evident that ecotourism has become a new venture to the local community in developing countries as a new employment and income generation opportunities (Kunjuraman, 2020). Tourism entrepreneurship is often promoted as a livelihood strategy among the indigenous community (Leu, 2019) and this study is evident. It is worth highlighting that native people are motivated to venture into ecotourism accommodation services such as homestay and B&Bs to enhance their standard of living. It is a timely opportunity that the local community in Sukau aware of the importance of business activity with regards to ecotourism. However, the study observed that still many ecotourism accommodation services are dominated by the foreign and non-native in Sukau which may hinder the local community to control their local resources. These foreign investors are often regarded as outsiders by the traditional communities due to cultural differences (Zielinski et al., 2020) however in this study most of the ecotourism accommodation providers are Malaysians (non-native) with the same cultural background. This study emphasis that more local community members should grab the opportunity to venture into ecotourism business to become entrepreneurs.

Ecotourism has been promoted as a form of a sustainable nature-based tourism with emphasis given to cultural elements (Cater & Cater, 2015). The study acknowledged that natural attractions have been the main ecotourism attractions for the visitors and are often shared by both homestay operators and B&Bs' owners. The participation of the local community in nature conservation and ecotourism activities is elaborated in this study are in congruence with Keling et al., (2021), revealing the importance of the natural environment for ecotourism development in Sarawak, Malaysia. The environment in Sukau and lower Kinabatangan riverine areas are protected by the state government and local community as the main stakeholders for the ecotourism development. However, the sustainability of the ecotourism in Sukau is still questionable if the relevant stakeholders are failing to play their roles as 'environment protectors' which is the 'heart' for ecotourism development.

## **6. Conclusion and Implications**

The study's findings provide empirical evidence to the body of knowledge on livelihood diversification and CBE literature to explore the motivation factors of the local community to diversify their livelihoods through CBE projects in pioneer ecotourism destination in Sabah, Malaysian Borneo. The study contributes to the body of knowledge on community's motivation factors on livelihood diversification strategy through CBE in the context of a developing country which was overlooked by the previous scholars. The motivation factors which lead to livelihood diversification by the local community are diverse and focus on both socio-economic and environmental elements. The study furthered echoed by studies of Tao and Wall (2009) and Su et al., (2016) recommending to integrate tourism into existing livelihood activities practice by the local communities in rural areas which were evident in this study.

On the other hand, the study has managed to shed light on CBE's true capacity to advance SDGs as presented in Table 3 which was the concern for adoption in empirical studies in tourism (Kunjuraman, 2020; Pasanchay & Schott 2021). Such adoption of SDGs is required in tourism studies to contribute to the global contribution. The current study recognises the efforts taken by the Malaysian government to promote Malaysia as an ecotourism destination to the world.

Furthermore, the findings of the study may provide some insights into the future revision of National Tourism Policy 2020-2030 and National Ecotourism Plan 2016-2025 to highlight the importance of community livelihood strategy through ecotourism in rural destinations in Malaysia. Several incentives and capacity-building programmes are recommended in this study to provide awareness and motivation to the local community in similar ecotourism destinations in Malaysia.

**Table 3: SDGs application in Sukau CBE projects**

SDGs points	Application of the agenda in Sukau village
SDG1-End poverty in all its forms	CBE as a source of local community development, and capable to provide new job opportunities and income generation
SDG4-Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all	Education and trainings concerning environmental awareness through capacity building by stakeholders (NGOs), and government agencies provided to the villagers in the beginning of CBE development
SDG2-Zero hunger	A decent livelihood gained by local community by active participation and income generation through homestay programme and B&Bs
SDG 16-Promote peaceful and inclusive societies, provide access to justice for all and build inclusive institutions	Promotion of tolerance and multicultural understanding as a result of interaction between local community and tourists

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

It was discovered in this study that homestay hosts received less side income from ecotourism activities compared to the locally-owned B&Bs in Sukau village, thus capital incentives and relevant hospitality training programmes are needed to sustain their support and motivation to get involve in ecotourism projects for the long run. It is worth noting that, several capacity-building programmes were organised by both the NGOs and government agencies at the beginning of the ecotourism establishment in Sukau village but they were largely ad-hoc in nature and less effective. As a result, the homestay operators doubt the seriousness of the government as a development agency to assist the local community to break the poverty line among the households. This is due to the fact that little coordination takes place and there is poor monitoring by the government agencies to check the progress of CBE projects in the village. A similar problem is also evident in other CBE homestay programmes in the LK region (Kunjuraman & Hussin, 2017). The government agencies involved with CBE projects need to ensure there are systems in place to solve the problems faced by the local communities or they may face the risk of losing the trust of the communities which will, in turn, affect the sustainability of the ecotourism projects.

The study has some limitations. It was only conducted in Sukau village, lower Kinabatangan area of Sabah where other similar ecotourism destinations in lower Kinabatangan were not included to explore the motivation factors of the local community to diversify their livelihoods through ecotourism. Moreover, the study did not include the other community members who do not participate in ecotourism development in the village and their non-participation reasons (Sood et al., 2007). Future studies may consider the above limitations to provide empirical shreds of evidence in different contexts, thus contributes to the current body of knowledge.

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# A study of young adults' social media usage and culturally behavior

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## Abstract

*Social media platforms and social networking sites have dramatically changed the way young adults behave. The purpose of this study is to examine how cyber bullying impacts the emotional, behavioral, and cognitive facets of a young adult's behavior, and how it determines their psychological well-being. Additionally, the research addresses the changing paradigm of interpersonal interactions due to social media and how social media triggers self-interested and impulsive interaction among young adults. Studying how social media impacts young adults' changing behavior and temperament will provide direction for future research studies.*

**Keywords:** Social media, Cultural behavior, Greece

## 1. Introduction

Young adults' fervent engagement on social media is an indicator of social media adoption and usage in the 21st century. A large number of young adults are establishing online interpersonal connections, communications, and networks as a result of rapid advances in social technologies and applications. There is noteworthy proliferation of social networking sites e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and MySpace, and consequent usage of these sites have captured researchers' and authorities' attention. Young adults are by most accounts, regular users of social networks, with most of them most active on Facebook (79%); followed by 28% on Twitter and 32% on Instagram . The underlying purpose of adults' overarching engagement with social media is building a sense of online identity; also marked by their engagement in sexual activities and propensity toward pornographic content. The insatiable urge to surf online trends and explore the social networking environment leads to compromises in personal privacy and security (Fotiadis & Stylos, 2017).

As well, these platforms are associated with similar social ills, such as cyberbullying, sexual harassment, drug abuse, offensive outlooks, pro-social behavior, and even cyber-suicides, making them more controversial. We intend to conduct research on Cyberbullying in order to understand how it triggers a wide range of potentially dangerous consequences. Technology and social media convergence have facilitated the adoption of innovative methods of harassing (Spyridou, 2019b). Cyberbullying can be defined as intimidating and harassing someone through technological medium, for example through threatening text messages, emails, posting confidential information on a public forum, or uploading embarrassing content/images or video to damage someone's reputation. Consequently, cyberbullying is accompanied by culturally deviant consequences, including suicide, which are triggered by constant harassment digitally (Stylos, Fotiadis, Shin, & Huan, 2021). Additionally, there is a need to assess and predict

cyberbullying behavior across cultures through theoretical and practical frameworks. In addition to feeling insult; developing a fear of social media; and becoming socially phobic, cyberbullying victims can also exhibit aggressive behavior.

With this backdrop, the focus of this research is on studying the negative outcomes of cyberbullying through viral videos, passive-aggressive Facebook posts or tweets, and even internet abuse across different cultures. Cultures differ in how they interpret social media content and posts, and social media has emerged as a potential medium for communication across cultures.

Social media is increasingly influencing people's behavior, personal and professional development to a greater extent (Chatzigeorgiou, 2017; Tham, Mair, & Croy, 2020). It appears that adult social connection sites provide a way for adults to connect with friends, family, classmates and acquaintances. But alongside individuals are exposed to significant risk of negative and transgressive content.

Specifically, this study analyzes the negative consequences of misperceptions and miscommunications produced by the content and postings in different cultural perspectives and the way communication medium is changing, from face-to-face, interpersonal interactions to just social forums. In this way, a future public relations campaign can be designed that will help authorities model behaviors and form better strategies for utilizing social media as a communication platform across cultures in the future.

It is imperative to address the current hype and trend of cyberbullying, abusive content and posts, and subsequent aggressive behaviors on social media. A cultural deviance related to these types of events is, in most cases, leading to more acts of hate, discrimination, and deteriorating interpersonal relationships and communication. On this issue, there is a growing understanding that social media can serve as an open forum for a continuum of deviant behavior including online harassment and cyber-insults, as well as culturally inappropriate interactions among other activities. It is important to note that ease of access and perpetuating the trend of posting unwanted content take away the ability to choose what information is being sought (Adler and Adler, 2008) thus, social media is breeding fertile fields for adults to adopt negative behaviors, and these negative proclivities are damaging their interpersonal interactions and reinforcing culturally inappropriate trends.

In this study, we aim to assess the impact of social media on young adults' behavior, particularly, cyberbullying that deviates from social norms and cultural values.

This study investigates the impact of social media in inciting culturally deviant behaviors, and it does so through an analysis of prevailing cyberbullying. A consequence of negative and derogatory posts online is the consequent aggressive behavior that deteriorates interpersonal interactions and leads to misperceptions and misinterpretations that lead to negative consequences and inappropriate behavior. In addition to using social media as a replacement for traditional interactions (face to face), the research will examine whether this leads to misperceptions online caused by lack of emotions in online ads. Therefore, the underlying research aims to accomplish the following objectives:

- To determine how the proliferation of culturally deviant behavior (aggression, offensive, and abusive attitudes) in young adults is affecting them through the use of social media.



- To discuss how inappropriate social media content (illegal or offensive content) that is prohibited in certain cultures but accepted in others can lead to misperceptions and other negative consequences in young adults.
- To evaluate whether social media is replacing conventional interpersonal interactions and whether inappropriate online behaviors are undermining online communication.

## **2. Literature Review:**

Social media refers to variety of electronic communication platforms including websites that facilitates user's networking. Moreover, social media allows users to share information online through interactive community building, ideas, exchanging personal messages and other interactive content (Images, Videos etc.). Likewise, a relevant term called Social networking sites (SNS) that is an interconnected forum for user to communicate and where (1) user personal profiles allow them to have personal online identifications, personal created content , post content from other participants online and share either publically visible or semi-public profiles within defined domains online; (2) Communicative connections are facilitated that is visible to others and is reciprocated by others and (3) user –generated content and information is endorsed, interacted and streamlined to expand more connections online (Shin, Rasul, & Fotiadis, 2021). Moreover, SNS like social media allows users to extend interactions in versatile ways by communicating with people online with similar interests, demographics and communities. Besides, this and to the interest of this research, SNS and social media are found to have significantly negative use e.g. triggering harassment online, abusing and victimizing others, promoting sexual content and pornography, video game violence, aggression and youth radicalization and aggression (Shin, Fotiadis, & Yu, 2019).

The massive endorsement of users mainly generation Y (adults and youth) on social media is of utmost concern . The increasing and prolonged exposure to social media is becoming more of a menace to different cultures. The persistent engagement of young adults online in different activities is found to have potential and addictive impact on their daily schedule.

The significant enthusiasm and propensity of young adults towards social media usage have fueled internet addiction. Different temperaments of social media addictions were identified including online gaming addiction, information surfing addiction, net compulsions (associated with online shopping) and cyber relationship addiction. The exacerbating negative connotations with social media content have raised concerns not only limited to realms of sexual deviance but also radicalization of youth, solicitation and cybercrimes too.

Prolonged exposure and usage of social media by adults leads to psychological disturbances reporting dispositional anxiety and negative self-evaluation. In an effort to accomplish increased self- identity online, contemporary adults endorse in social media activities and negative feedback by others is usually consequent of social isolation and other unwanted behaviors. This is further highlighted by adults exhibiting reassurance needs from others, reduced tolerance and reduced self-certainty.

### 3. Social Media Triggering Deviant and Inappropriate Behavior

The triggering cyberspace hype and technological leaps have set forth podiums and unique opportunities for inappropriate behaviors in adults (Korol & Fotiadis, 2016). The technological intertwining is replacing the conventional face to face meetings and interactions and limiting everyone to cyberspace. In consequence to this trend, deviance in form of trolling, cyber-harassment, hacking data and privacy concerns, virtual piracy and prevalent pornographic activities; and being victim of o these actions have serious consequences too including suicidal attempts or at times certainly losing life tragically. The analysis of prior scientific studies have revealed three prominent categories of culturally inappropriate behaviors including sexual deviance; social groups that triggers negative behaviors and hate groups.

Social media is itself facilitator of deviance by creation of hoaxes of cyber-terrorism, virtual harassments and other self-destructive behaviors and adding to this, claimed that easing the access to unwanted content, unbridled information availability have triggered the crime rate, violence and hostility. In addition, socially and culturally counter behaviors are also on hype. The use of these social media sites mainly in young adult is increasing drugs abuse, special pages and groups on social media dedicated are fostering this dilemma for this, and that partake in motivating use of drugs (Jimenez-Rubio & Hernandez-Quevedo, 2010).

Prior researches have revealed that online platforms specifically social media sites are revealing violent cases among youth, gang activities that are manifested in illegal actions being undertaken at uncontrolled rate (Spyridou, 2019a). Due to lack of consensus and variety of behavioral variations, prior studies and scholars have not agreed on a single definitional construct of inappropriate or deviant behavior. Prior researches have recognized that social media is found to perpetuate violence among young adults and this is revealed in their online behavior i.e. violence reflected towards peers, bullying, threatening, elevated dating aggression, self-harming actions and most notably cyber-suicides and other cyber-crimes too. A positive correlation have been reported by the previous reaseches over the course of time between social media content, prolonged exposure and aggression cum violence in adults.

The impact of social media video games interactivity and connoting to this, the general aggression model have revealed that constantly using social media applications for games have elevated the symptoms of 'short-term physiological arousal', aggressive effects on thoughts, aggressive temperament and long-run symptoms of hostility.

The fact that social media is a crucial medium for radicalization; numerous sites operated and promoted by extremists and controversial personnel attracts adults, promise them returns through friendship and then fulfill their purpose. The targeted adults unaware of the underlying notion of these groups end up choosing the controversial radical paths. Facebook and Twitter are endorsed as potential medium to promote social or political changes; likewise blogs are another potential medium to enable individual's voice their opinions. Prior researchers have countered significant challenges to assess and estimate the harm social media has imparted to individual's behaviors. A mutual denominator identified by prior studies is the distress that social media is a critical medium to breed deviance and thus rationalization of culturally unacceptable behavior; likewise, a causal relationship ids also identified in prolonged online activities and deviant behavior in individuals relative to those who are not engaged (Fotiadis & Spyridou, 2020; Samitas, Kampouris, Polyzos, & Spyridou, 2020).

#### **4. Cyber-Bullying and Offensive Behavior:**

The prominent social media sites including Facebook, Twitter, MySpace have facilitated platform that is unrestrained and unrestricted thus leading young adults to have constant exposure to illegal and unacceptable activities. Moreover, the virtual interactions are unbridled having no authenticity and is said to trigger hostility in individuals in interpersonal interactions. In social media context, the definitional construct of cyber-bullying is same as traditional bullying and it entails three aspects of bullying including reiteration, careful intent of harming and power imbalance. The interconnection between cyber bullying and offensive behaviors also interpolated as cyber-bullying reflects the harassment and embarrassment originating from sending email or text messages to threaten the individual. In workplace context the cyber-bullying to peers have gained much recognition and acknowledgement from scholars and political critics too; and relative to this adult's cyber-bullying relative to relationship is a novel issue to scholars. The extent of fear and danger that is exhibited due to cyber-bullying behavior and these behaviors entails falsifying identity, lying, ID faking, defaming someone, abusing and propagating confidential content or images of someone. The necessity to promote awareness and rehabilitation programs to diminish this prevailing trend of cyber-bullying and consequent violent and abusive behavior in individuals. Prevention of these trending hoaxes from social media should be treated accordingly as well as recognition of factors and underlying forces that promote cyber-bullying, victimization and triggering offensive behavior.

#### **5. Inappropriate Social Media Contents and Deviant Behavior**

The social media users engaged through different social media apps confronts messages, videos, and posts and are always vulnerable to unwanted or profaned content. The derogative language used online and the online pornographic content has increased the frequency of internet usage in young adults with the greater percentage of men exposed to violent, unwanted and even pornographic content and consequent adult content consumption leads to inappropriate behaviors that go deviant to a culture.

Another significant dimension prevailing on social media of a particular group they highlighted as "bad girls and boys of cyberspace" and their social media interaction manifest online trolling, and other moderate to potential disruptions, including offensive/abusive language, hacking and other substantial social issues. Thus, pointing towards the fact that social media platform eases the interactions without any significant meditation to filter and keep track of any unwanted content that may harm the reputation or psychological well-being of an individual.

The range of unwanted and offensive social media content that need to be regulated through appropriate detection programs. The highly unstructured, informal and misspelled format for interacting online has enhanced the potentiality of users to post offensive and abusive content and this further includes unwanted words or images to intimidate someone, defaming or criticizing someone, content posted to discriminate someone, making a fake profile to harm the reputation and posting illegal content too.

Thus, the freedom offered by social media to young adults to avail the opportunity of posting any content is influencing cultural and social well-being of societies. For an appropriate cultural structure, it is imperative to sustain the civility of communities and have a positive user experience and to combat negative behaviors proliferating online. The regulators of social media

need to generate automated classifiers to detect offensive and abusive content and to address the hurtful content, images and posts shared online that triggers negative behaviors in young adults.

Social media facilitate users especially young adults to avail the opportunity of posting whatever they feel like. So, in the end its user's choice to post content that is socially and culturally acceptable. Social media structure encourages anonymity, triggers self-interested behaviors and alleviate empathy that harms social and cultural values ; reinforces unwanted behaviors specially insensitivity, violence and deindividuation in young generation(Vassiliadis, Mombeuil, & Fotiadis, 2021).

The assessment of literature review has revealed that freedom of speech, lack of regulation and prolonged exposure to unwanted and unsolicited content on social media has triggered ambiguity and inappropriate behavior in young adults. The unlimited access to social media has triggered frustration, lack of self-control and more impulsive behavior either as result of cyberbullying or being exposed to violent/offensive content. The replacement of social interactions/face to face talks by these social applications has diminished the quality of interaction and communication (Cabezudo, Izquierdo, & Pinto, 2013; Zhang, Tang, & Leung, 2011).

## **6. Discussion:**

The extensive literature of view and research findings has revealed that social media usage by young adult is permeating through different aspects of their daily routine and life. Different social media activities influence their behavior and propensity of developing inappropriate behavior is higher in young adults due to prolonged exposure to harmful and unwanted content, abusive/offensive images/posts and experiencing cyberbullying too. The changing temperament of relationships due to changing communication landscape prompted by social media is also raising concerns in adults in terms of diminishing empathy in interactions, lack of sensitivity to emotions but there is proclivity attached to having social media communication i.e. having more profound social identities and groups that support their behaviors as highlighted in aforementioned responses and findings (Tsao et al., 2021).

Research has identified growing evidence regarding potential opportunities social media offer for deviant behavior in young adults With the prime focus of research on cyber-bullying, td emotional, social and psychological impacts on behavior of victim when prolonged harassment is experienced by them online. The unbridled and unregulated social media platform has proliferated culturally deviant activities where Females are found to be more potential victim of harassment, threatened for publishing their obscene images for sexual or financial gains).

This calls for promoting stringent actions against cyberbullying to prevent antisocial and cultural behaviors and potential regulations to help support the victims to overcome disturbing consequences. The toxic cyberbullying trend is traumatizing young adults and harms their health, interpersonal relationships and academic well-being too.

Social media incites the young adult to adopt anti-cultural activities and patterns where they find it 'cool' and 'up to date' to indulge in explicit activities whether is intimate relationships, substance abuse (prompted by social media content) and violent behaviors (Gao et al., 2020). The contrary viewpoint in this perspective is stressing the fact that exposure to explicit content help release aggression, depression and anxiety in some cases but several researchers opposes

this view addressing that these results cannot be generalized in every situation as such content is found to aggravate aggression and violence in some adults

The viewpoint and findings regarding the communication perspective and interpersonal relationships influenced by social media usage posited two perspectives. The contradicting viewpoint revealed that communication patterns through social media platform are desensitizing emotions and empathy in young adults . Whereas, the favoring perspective reveals that communication and interpersonal communication through social media is proliferating young adults to express their impulsive emotions much better way reach out to potential audience to voice their opinions but others criticizes that in doing so they develop attention seeking attitude with the intent of getting more likes, comments and shares, self-interested behavior and least proclivity for feelings of other. Poor emotional regulation, diminishing empathy provokes more self -interested behavior on social media communication. Another communication deviance occurring as consequent of social media communication is anonymity that promotes more harmful norms, insensitivity for other’s emotions and disengaging from moral constraints.

## **7. Suggestions**

### *7.1 Tackling cyberbullying*

In connotation to research findings, the proclivity of female cyberbullying is found to be higher relative to males and Females reveal more psychological, social and emotional behaviors when harassed or intimidated online. So, in this regard, anti-cyberbullying blogging should be promoted where females should be motivated to share their personal experiences and they should be encouraged to voice their opinion to tackle such torment.

To fight back the deteriorating self-image and self-esteem after being exposed to cyber bullying should be encouraged to ‘speak up’ and ‘beat the bully’ campaign should be promoted. Where specifically females in Emirati culture should be trained, educated and given awareness on tackling such heinous acts. Moreover, strict adherence to law and informing regulatory authorities can inhibit the problem from prevailing further. Moreover, to alleviate the exacerbation of this social menace, computational empathy should be promoted.

In addition to this, cyberbullying for young adults can be tackled firstly by preventing the risk, 1combating (confronting the bully, ignoring or through technical solutions e.g Blocking the bully) and then buffering the negative impacts (through emotional support and coping strategies). Furthermore, the prevention approaches should entail awareness proliferating initiatives where authorities should promote the facilitation of trust, followed by communicating them about relevant policies to raise their voice in time of need. There should social and academic programs to help motivate young adults to take action against prolonged cyberbullying. Vigilance and law enforcement authorities should design culturally friendly prosecution, obligatory deportation and penalizing actions against tormentors.

### *7.2 Addressing inappropriateness of social media content and deviant behavior*

In order to avoid moral decadence proliferating from online obscene content and derogatory language, sexually explicit content the social media regulatory authorities should execute peculiar filters that refrain the access and exposure to such content. Friendly apps should be designed that promote ethical and socially acceptable content by users rather than inciting them towards more vulnerable trends of social media. In order to refrain the cultural shift, social media

blogs designed in light of social values and behavioral norms should be promoted. This is how the penetrating trends of explicitness, pornography and sexual obscenity of social media can be alleviated through promotion of moral values for young adults. there should be appropriate restriction on sharing of mature content (explicit in terms of sexuality and substance abuse).The young adults should be trained for much potential use of social media and should be harnessed for positive behavioral changes through promotion of appropriate public reporting

### *7.3 Addressing Deviant Behavior*

In order to promote and facilitate empathic communication through social media, young adults should be trained on identifying their personal responsibility and adopting healthy behavior for interaction on social media. In addition to this, they should be trained in a way that they communicate the negative aspects of any unwanted and harmful content on social apps and use communication as mean of eradicating the heinous impacts and culturally deviant influences of social media. The young adults should be reinforced in such a way that they become socially responsible and culturally committed towards violation experienced in terms of cyberbullying, harmful content posts and violence. They should work responsibly to cultivate better avenues to report any unwanted influence of social media aspects. The over sharing of explicit content should be limited by promoting awareness of their problematic consequences. In order to endorse young adult in constructive paradigm, they should be trained for personal accountabilities towards their social media actions. Rather than becoming obsessed with self-interest and impulsive adults should be empowered with critical thinking skills and engaging them in socially productive content to be posted on social media.

The issue of low emotional propensity and empathy should be addressed through stressing the mutual norms and impacts of social media on interpersonal relationships. Reinforcement of helping behaviors should be promoted through social media campaigns. Moreover, the need to be impulsive online through posts, comments, likes and shares should be controlled and replaced with face to face gatherings where emotional interactions will help cope with obsessive temperament adults reveal online.

### **8. Conclusion:**

The underlying intent of the research has been potentially addressed by exploring significant dimensions of social media usage by young adults. The research have substantially addressed how culturally deviant behaviors are provoked and prompted by prolonged exposure to explicit social media content and how young adults are provoking aggressive, offensive and unwanted behavior. Moreover, the research has assessed the cultural perspective too, on how the different cultural background takes in to account the cyberbullying experiences, how reactions and consequent behavior in one culture vary in another. Likewise, the deviant behavior assessed in connotation to individual's exposure to explicit and unwanted content reveals that such behavior should be modified by promoting positive, socially responsible and ethically sound actions by young adult. The research has potentially assessed how social media is replacing conventional interactions (face to face) leading to lack of emotions and empathy in online message or content but also assessed the positive dimensions of having online interactions. This research has laid the foundation for future researches explore more contributing factors to culturally deviant

behavior in young adults. The findings have also identified some positive dimensions to each perspective explored specifically in terms of interpersonal interactions and communication.

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# Digital transformation for resilient tourism: Evidence from the Greek hospitality industry

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## Abstract

*This research aims at mapping the current adoption levels of digital initiatives by the Greek hospitality industry. The research relates the degree of digital implementation with hotels' ability to resist the Covid crisis and see the next day beyond that. Overall, the study is motivated by the need to investigate the value of digital implementation towards assuring sustainability and resilience to crisis in the hospitality sector. An online questionnaire was distributed to all members of the Hellenic Chamber of Hotels during September-November 2020. Approximately 5.800 hotels of all Greek regions were targeted, while 502 of them responded to the survey. The Greek hospitality industry is in its initial stages of deploying digital solutions. The great majority (60%) of respondents have updated their website with Covid-19 specific information (e.g. cancellation policies, Covid precaution measures, and so on), whilst half of them (50%) respondents have employed social media for interacting with their customers. It should be noted that only 8% and 15% of respondents have expressed their disinterest in adopting the aforementioned digital solutions.*

**Keywords:** Digital transformation, hospitality, covid-19, survey

## 1. Introduction

The outbreak of coronavirus disease-2019 has resulted in a global health crisis that caused extreme alterations on social and economic fabric. The vast majority of countries all over the world have imposed restricted mobility and social distancing measures, including extended school and business closures, travel restrictions and border control measures in order to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus (Gu et al., 2020; Haug et al., 2020). Greek government immediately after the first confirmed case on the Greek territory on February 26, 2020, adopted

a range of strict measures by developing an emergency response plan that is still active and regularly updated. Although the long-term consequences still remain uncertain, the impact on the tourism sector is unprecedented. The pandemic is posing significant short- and long-term challenges in all aspects of the and tourism and hospitality industry.

Accommodation businesses are in the spotlight as there are many invitations they must immediately respond (Bonfati et al., 2020; Rivera, 2020; Gursoy and Chi, 2020). Their recovery and resilience are on the table and there is a growing research interest in this topic (Melian-Alzola et al, 2020). Researchers suggest various models for resilience, in which technology plays an important role through the possibilities it can provide (Bonfati et al, 2020; Melian-Alzola et al,2020; Sigala, 2020; Jiang, 2019). Additionally, digital transformation could also constitute an answer to the current situation of the accommodation businesses, although it is mainly in the manufacturing and industrial sector (Hausberg et al., 2019) and much less in small service businesses (Kutzner, 2018). Nevertheless, small businesses have less capabilities such as restricted access to funding programs and they are characterized by weak managerial skills and lack of technology capabilities that restrains of their growth (Wang, 2016). Consequently, governments policy makers should help small service businesses to increase their competitive advantage, improve business performance and achieve sustainability and business growth (Chen, 2021), which seems to be a groundbreaking solution to the current crisis in the hospitality industry.

Based on the above, the present study was set up to investigate the current adoption levels of digital initiatives by Greek hospitality industry, as well as the relation between the digital transformation levels of Greek accommodation businesses and their resilience degree. The following sections include a literature review on organizational resilience and digital transformation. Then, the research methodology is introduced providing important information about the used research tool, the sample and the measurements. Finally, the findings, the implications and the main conclusions are presented.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Digital Transformation*

In recent years, digital transformation has emerged as an important phenomenon in businesses (Vial, 2019). The pandemic gave the opportunity to the hotel industry to embrace the capabilities offered by technology and accelerate the digital transformation (Sigala, 2020). Digital transformation amidst the pandemic seems to promote business recovery and resilience; however, an important factor towards this technological shift depends on the implementation and evaluation of its usage and acceptability (Soto-Acosta, 2020). As the escalating crises of the global pandemic and economic turbulence continue apace, hotels are expected to become more “tech-forward” (Lau, 2020). In recent years, digital transformation has emerged as one of the key strategies to promote business growth being an actively discussed topic. It refers to all the possible ways that hospitality organizations restructure themselves to empower technology-driven innovations. A more detailed definition is provided by Vial (2019) in his recent review, according to which digital transformation is “a process that aims to improve an entity by triggering significant changes to its properties through combinations of information, computing, communication, and connectivity technologies” (p.9).

Review on the existing research signifies both the role of technology and actor, which in the hotel industry mainly relates to the owners/manager, as the two aggregate dimensions of the transformation process (Nadkarni, & Prügl, 2021). Hoteliers have the central role in the promotion of digital transformation, since except for the digitization of assets and the use of technology, the process involves cultural and operational changes as well (Hess et al., 2016). According to Verhoef et al. (2021) digital transformation incorporates three phases: digitization (i.e. encoding data into a digital format), digitalization (i.e. application of digital technologies to optimize business) and digital transformation (i.e. implementation of new business logic to create and capture value).

The integration of new technologies is expected to make hotels more efficient, experiential and guest-centric. By leveraging new digital technologies hotels can improve operational efficiencies, address the increasing demands of consumers, keep up with competition, accelerate decision making, and increase employee efficiency (Alrawadieh et al., 2021). Yet, for the hotel industry digital transformation is probably no longer an option but a necessity. Digital has become central to every interaction, forcing organizations to further up the adoption curve almost overnight (Papadopoulos et al, 2020). On the occasion of the above, it is extremely interesting to examine how digital solutions are used in times of pandemic by hotel companies in order to inform and facilitate the arrival and accommodation of their customers whose requirements are quite high under the shadow of covid-19.

**Research Question 1:** *Which are the current adoption levels of digital technologies by the Greek hospitality industry?*

## *2.2 Organizational Resilience*

Organizational resilience can be interpreted in different ways. It can be perceived as dealing with external obstacles (eg natural disasters, pandemics, etc.) and the return to the previous operation of organizations but also as the reopening of the business with more and better resources that improve significantly its operation level (Melian Alzola et al., 2020). Although the literature lags behind in research on accommodation and generally tourism organizations resilience and on the means by which this can be achieved, the use of technological solutions holds a prominent place in the existing research background.

Focusing on the covid-19 crisis, which is still affecting tourism industry, researchers are proposing solutions for recovery. Bonfati et al. (2020) are in favor of a total change of Customers Experience in accommodation businesses, highlighting the need of hygiene measures, reorganization of internal work, servisescape and customer wait time, staff training, updating communication and last but not least investments in technology and digital innovations. Technology solutions were appeared to be adopted by some businesses to an extent before covid-19 crisis (on-line check in, QR codes for several menus), but after the pandemic's outbreak, there is a tendency to choose more innovative technological means (check in via mobile app, self-service key totem for printing privately their keys) (Bonfati et al., 2020).

Melian-Alzola et al. (2020) examining the variety of changes that tourism sector has to face from time to time, proposed a holistic model for organizational resilience measurement. Their model includes four stages; 1. The context of resilience which is identified as a number of changes that can occur (competitors, customers, intermediaries, suppliers, other partners, economy, politics-laws, technology, environment). 2. The predictors of resilience that are related to the strategy

and the change of an organization, 3. the resilience itself seen through the goals that should be achieved, 4. and, finally, the organization performance. Accommodation businesses should include the use of new technologies in their operational management and strategic and booster it with constant updating on technological progress (Melian-Alzola et al., 2020). The use of technological solutions could also make the businesses innovative and competitive in order to cope with critical situations.

Sigala (2020) proposes research fields for future work in tourism's resilience and distinguishes three stages; respond stage, recovery stage, restart, reform and reset stage. It is certainly pointed out that the use of technological solutions like robots, mobile apps, in-room technologies for shopping and entertainment is necessary for social distancing and enhances the sense of consumer safety (Sigala, 2020). Jiang et al. (2019) support that technology resources contribute to the increase of the competitiveness of the company as well as to the dynamic confrontation of difficulties that ultimately promote its development. Although all the above studies suggest digital solutions as a factor that contributes to the organizational resilience the fact that they are at an early stage, as there is not yet a large body of relevant studies, arouses a great interest in how the digital transformation is practically enhancing organizational resilience. Thus, having the above research background, an attempt is made towards investigating the relationship between organizational resilience and businesses' firms' digital adoption levels.

**Research Question 2:** *Is there a relationship between the digital transformation levels of Greek hospitality businesses and their resilience degree?*

### **3. Research Methodology**

The present survey was conducted under the auspices of the Greek Ministry of Tourism. It is an online survey as part of an ongoing COVID-19 research project targeting the impact of the pandemic on the Greek tourism and hospitality sector. The questionnaire was administered to hotel owners/managers using the online survey portal "Google forms" during September and November, 2020. All members of the Hellenic Chamber of Hotels were invited to join the study. Participation was completely voluntary and anonymous. The survey addressed both seasonal and full-year hotels including responses from all Greek regions. The final sample consisted of 502 hotels in Greece out of 5800 hotels. The response rate is around 10%. The vast majority were Small and Medium-sized and Micro Enterprises [SMEs] (< 2 mil euros turnover; < 200 rooms). The survey form was structured and divided into sections. The questionnaire consisted of a set of questions exploring the demographic characteristics of the respondent hotels and close-ended questions regarding hotels' digital readiness/willingness to adopt digital transformation as well as their attitudes towards the future of Greece's tourism and its sustainability in the post-pandemic era. For the statistical analysis IBM SPSS was used.

### **4. Findings and Analysis**

#### *Sample demographics*

The vast majority of the businesses are hotels that operate independently (86%) with around half of the participants to be the owners (see table 1). Concerning the region of the hotels; the islands

Ionian, Aegean together with the Crete are 35% of the sample. The outcome is not surprising as Greek islands are well known for their hospitality facilities.

**Table 1**  
Demographic characteristics of the sample

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Respondent Position</b>		
Owner	278	55.4
Manager	134	26.7
Senior Executive	58	11.6
Other	32	6.4
<b>Type of Hotel</b>		
Independent hotel	430	85.7
Member of a large hotel chain	20	4.0
Member of a small hotel chain	52	10.4
<b>Geographic Region</b>		
Thrace	4	0.8
Macedonia	75	14.9
Thessaly	34	6.8
Epirus	22	4.4
Stereia Ellada	42	8.4
Peloponnese	50	10.0
Crete	70	13.9
Ionian Islands	102	20.3
Aegean Islands	103	20.5
<b>Star Category</b>		
1 star	18	3.6
2 stars	101	20.1
3 stars	177	35.3
4 stars	133	26.5
5 stars	73	14.5
<b>No. of Employees</b>		
1-10	245	48.8
11-50	171	34.1
51-250	73	14.5
>250	13	2.6
<b>No. of Rooms</b>		
Less than 200	452	90.0
200-399	35	7.0
400-699	10	2.0
700 or more	5	1.0
<b>Annual Turnover</b>		

< 2 m euro	398	79.3
2-10 m euro	76	15.1
11-50 m euro	23	4.6
> 50 m euro	5	1.0
<b>Operating Period</b>		
Full year hotel	200	39.8
Seasonal hotel	302	60.2

More than 60% are 3- and 4-star hotels that operate seasonally. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the sample. Specifically, respondents in the survey primarily consist of SMEs; 90% of hotels with less than 200 rooms, 80% of the sample operates with less than 50 employees and 80% with annual turnover less than 2 million euros.

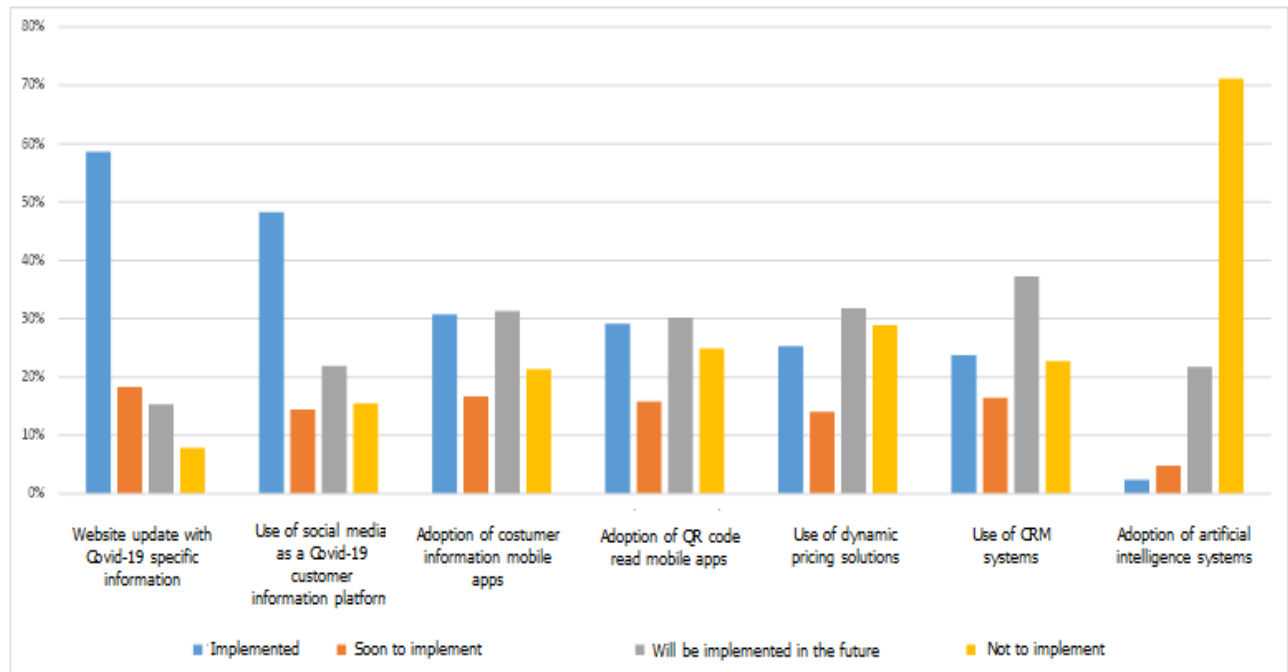
#### *Digital technologies adoption of the Greek hospitality industry*

Greek hotels are at the early phase of their digital transformation (see Figure 1). Specifically, the pandemic seems to have accelerated the pace of adoption of digital technologies by Greek hotels. Indeed, six out of ten companies (59%) already use their website as the primary platform for informing visitors about their Covid-19 related practices (e.g. prevention program, cancellation policy, frequently asked questions about how to deal with possible cases etc.) Moreover, approximately five out of ten companies (48%) have adopted social networking platforms as an alternative mechanism for informing the potential guests of the hotel about the company's policy for dealing with Covid -19 cases.

As Figure 1 presents, there is gradual adoption of innovative digital solutions by Greek hotel companies. In particular, three out of ten (30%) companies have developed digital customer service applications on mobile and tablets (such as mobile check-in, mobile / information about the hotel via mobile/ tablet, mobile communication with the employees of the hotel, etc.), as well as applications with QR codes via mobile devices for reading the menu in the hotel restaurant or for finding useful information in brochures / posters specially placed in the hotel (31% and 29% respectively). One out of four companies have already adopted dynamic pricing and CRM systems (25% and 24% respectively). Interestingly, the vast majority of the sample (over 70%) reported that they have no interest in investing towards more advance digital solutions (i.e., Artificial Intelligence Systems – AI) (Figure 1). However, a very small number of firms, about 2% of the sample, have already implemented an AI solution.

Non-adopters exhibit a similar pattern of expected digital solutions implementation. Only but a small fraction of the sample express their reluctance to exploit their website and/ or social media as a communications platform with their customers. Mobile applications and corporate information systems (CRM and dynamic pricing systems) present similar preference priorities. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the study participants expressed a more long-term adoption determination.

Figure 1: Adoption levels of digital initiatives by the Greek hospitality industry

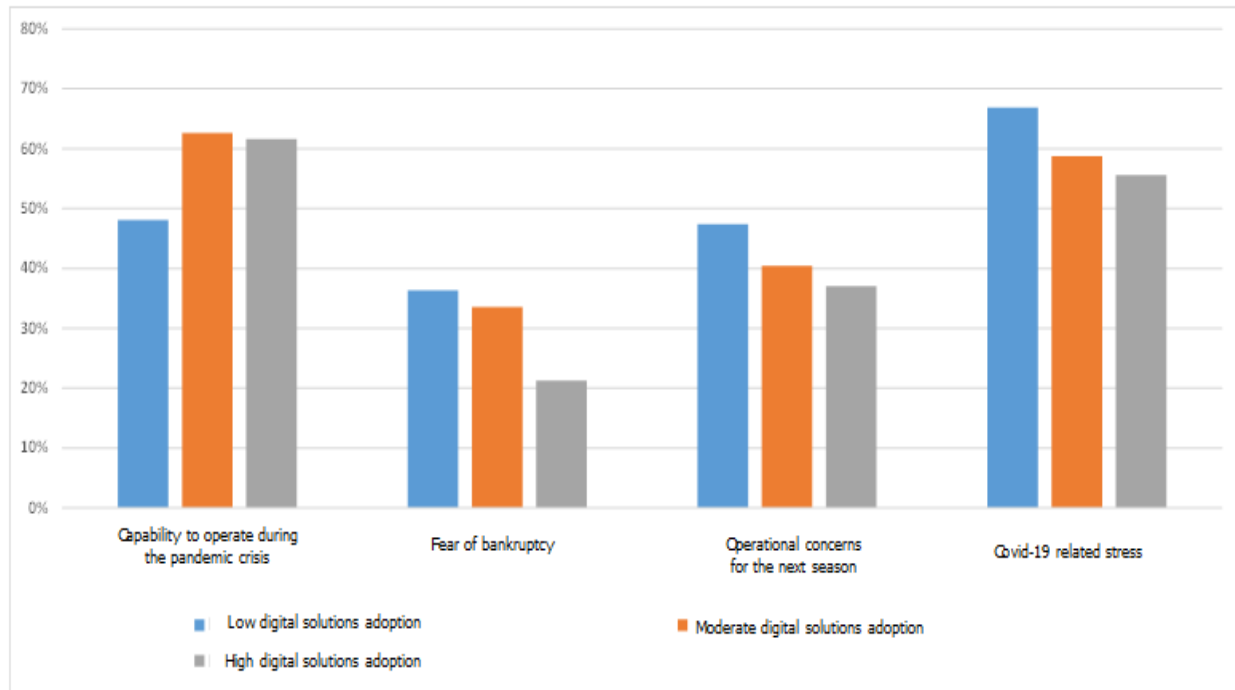


### *Relation of perceived digital transformation and organizational resilience*

In order to address the second research question, we have categorized the sample hotels into three subgroups according to their level of digital solution adoption. Low adopters include participants that have not yet implemented any of the examined digital solutions. Moderate adopters include participants that have implemented at most one digital solution; in our sample such adopter types typically exploit either their website or social media as a communication platform to their customers for Covid-related information. Finally, high adopters include hotels that fully exploit their website and social media as information platforms for their customers. The latter category also includes hotels that additionally exploit one or more of the remaining examined digital solutions.

The degree of adoption of digital solutions has a positive effect on the perceptions of Greek hotel companies regarding the prospects of their business and the level of optimism for the next tourist season (Figure 2). In particular, hotels with moderate or high degree of digital solutions implementation show greater confidence by a probability of 14% in their capacity to manage the company during the pandemic compared to hotels with low degree of digital adoption. Similarly, hotels with a high degree of acceptance and use of digital technologies are less worried about the possible bankruptcy of their business by a probability of 15% compared to companies with a low level of acceptance and use of digital technologies. Respectively improved perceptions, which approach 10% in probability terms, are observed in the perceived levels of concern for the next tourist season, as well as in the stress due to the pandemic between high and low digital solutions adopters. In all cases, companies with increased adoption of digital applications are more optimistic.

Figure 2: The relation between the digital transformation levels of Greek accommodation businesses and their resilience degree



## 5. Discussion

According to the empirical survey, the vast majority of the respondents initially used their websites and social media pages as a way to communicate with their customers concerning the Covid-19 related updates. This preference was possibly chosen as to ensure an online presence and maintain customers' engagement. The use of mobile applications, QR codes, dynamic pricing systems and CRM systems enable hotels to update their services and ensure full compliance with the operating standards during the pandemic (Jumadi, 2021). The findings indicate that many of the respondents find value in these technological tools either by already using them or reporting their intention to do so. Instead, the current study revealed that AI (e.g. chatbots) are not widely implemented. This is probably because small businesses, like those represented in our survey sample, have limited resources and cash flow (Chen et al., 2021). Advanced digital technologies require significant money and effort (Chen et al., 2021). During the pandemic, digital implementation and investment could not be easily applied as hotel enterprises had to remain financially viable, since their income dramatically shrunk.

The deployment degree of digital services is positively related with their perspectives pertaining their ability to manage the challenges introduced by the pandemic: organizations with higher deployment degree of digital solutions tend to be more capable to operate during the pandemic crisis whilst retaining a more positive attitude pertaining the future. In a time of crisis, digital technologies provide small businesses with a chance for higher business sustainability (Chen et al, 2021), as they can offer them flexibility in their movements, facilitate their compliance with the respective institutional framework and contribute to serving and strengthening the sense of



security of customers. Furthermore, digital transformation has been considered as one of the key factors for gaining a competitive advantage during the post Covid-19 recovery .

Previous research studies also suggest that organizations adopt digital technologies to improve different aspects (processes, services, functions) of their business (Ghobakhloo, et al., 2019). This study suggests that Greek hotels apply digital technologies to increase communication with their customers, to enhance their customer experience but mainly to enable their sustainability in time of crisis. By applying digital solutions, hotels could resist the negative effects of pandemic, transform their value proposition and overall business model, and thus create opportunities for surviving and even thriving in the post pandemic era (Chen et al., 2021). Moreover, the hospitality businesses raise the value of digital implementation as enabler for their resilience in two ways. First, digital implementation is positively related with their firms' ability to cope and resist with the ongoing pandemic crisis and secondly, with their ability to plan their future in the post pandemic period. Accommodation businesses with high digital adoption seem to be more confident about their operation in the pandemic period, with a slight fear of bankruptcy and clearly more optimistic about the future.

This research has indicated that Covid-19 can be a catalyst for digital transformation in the Greek hospitality industry. Adopting digital transformation seems unavoidable. The current digital ecosystem has given the organizations the great opportunity to develop solutions to overcome obstacles through digital transformation (Mahraz et al., 2019), even more now than ever before due to the global pandemic crisis. When it comes to policy strategic planning it is vitally important to take into account the characteristics that comprise the SMEs, as for example small businesses have lower digital innovation access and low managerial skills to deal with the new digital technologies (Chen, et al., 2021). Policy makers should institutionalize education, promote education programs, incentives, information services especially designed for small, medium and micro-service enterprises. As the current study has shown, the early stage of digital solution adoption of the Greek hotels could be the trigger point and the opportunity to sustain their resilience and sustainability. Governments should adopt policies that will support and fund hospitality firms in order to train their employees in development of digital skills (Chen et al., 2021).

The implementation of moderate digital solution (e.g. website or social media ) seems to be beneficial regarding perceived sustainability, especially for the small businesses that are unable to transform quickly enough to compete against digital ready hotels. Nowadays it is vital for any business to develop further its online presence and improve communication platforms. Official company websites often serve as the first impression to potential customers offering opportunities to optimize a visitor's experience. However, the operational challenges are mainly dependent on human capital, rather than on technology itself. In fact, there is a wide range of prerequisites and requirements surrounding an integrated digital transformation journey that business have to take into consideration, as for example dependencies on third party systems and processes or availability of technical/organizational environment for supporting the transformation (Chen et al, 2021). In order to better target and utilize such resources, consultation and cooperation with the involved public systems and managing authorities are crucial. For example, using outsourcing for digital transformation needs, forming alliances with other innovative companies or reinforcing cooperation with partners from other countries,

This study was not without limitations. The results should be interpreted with caution considering the bias derived from the use of self-perceived scales. Furthermore, the online nature of the study may indicate over- or under-representation of specific sub-groups e.g. hotels that do not use technology at all. Finally, due to the cross-sectional design of the study, associations do not provide insight into causality or possible mediator effects. Longitudinal studies can be very useful in order to further investigate the influences of technology adoption during the post-pandemic era.

It should be taken into account that this study is conducted in the hospitality industry in Greece and it provides information about the tourist season of 2020 as well as some thoughts about next tourist season. As the pandemic continues to be a certain problem globally and its effects are obvious in the current tourist season, it would be interesting to reconsider how hotel companies are going to operate in the next tourist seasons. A second survey would therefore be complementary and enlightening to many questions posed in the current study. Additionally, it would be of interest to conduct similar surveys in other countries worldwide and to compare the results. This would help us to draw clear conclusions about the effect of covid-19 on accommodation industry and the role of digital transformation in its resilience.

Tourism industry is not limited to accommodation businesses, which means that it is important to research the place of digital solutions in other tourism activities, such as tour guides or travel agencies. On the other hand, it is crucial to examine the factors that motivate tourism organizations to adopt digital solutions or yet the effect of their demographic characteristics on this adoption. Some of the distinctive organizational features, such as the number of employees, the annual income or in other words the size of the business, can be particularly important for its level of digital implementation.

## **6. Conclusions**

Despite the turbulence that covid-19 pandemic has created in almost all areas of human life, it is obvious that it has been in many cases the cause for reorganization and reorientation. Those changes could not leave the tourism industry unaffected, as one way to get out of the crisis is definitely to strengthen its position through digital transformation.

The present research aimed to ascertain the level of adoption of digital solutions of the Greek hotel companies and the importance that has been given to them in this specific period. In addition, emphasis was placed on the relationship between the level of adoption of digital solutions and the degree of business resilience. Our empirical findings reveal that Greek hotel companies have chosen digital solutions to manage the new conditions created by the coronavirus. Moreover, their level of adoption of digital solutions appears to affect factors related to their resilience, as high adoption level companies maintain their optimism but also their ability to cope with the raised difficulties. Subsequently, covid-19 gave the opportunity to hotels to embrace the capabilities offered by technology and accelerate their digital transformation, as well as to develop a sense of security and advantage regarding their survival in the crisis.

Finally, the pandemic, despite the extensive crisis and the problems it has created, it could become a trigger for digital transformation. In addition to the digital transformation and its contribution to hospitality businesses' resilience, there is a plethora of additional elements and data on the changes brought by the pandemic (compliance with health protocols, increased

customer demands, social distancing) but also the development imposed on the tourism industry (increased use of technological means that strengthen the sense of customer safety, solutions related to innovation and agility of businesses) that could offer essential research findings. This research area, although unexplored, is fertile and certainly deserves attention.

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# Province of Bataan, Philippines as Potential Food Hub Amidst Pandemic

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## Abstract

*Food hub development has become a focus of local food movement as an opportunity to offer scale-appropriate infrastructure to small and mid-sized producers to determine the potential of the Province of Bataan to be a food hub center in Central Luzon, Philippines. Descriptive research was utilized. A mixed method was used in the study. The total respondents were 792, composed of 384 producers and 408 consumers. The producers were farmers and fisherfolks from the province while the consumers involved were people who have the purchasing power. Respondents revealed that most of the indicators were extremely important. A food chain model was created as a result of the findings of the study which can be adopted by the Province of Bataan and can be modified as the need arises. A working committee is highly advisable to conduct a comprehensive study about the food distribution system thereby leading to the construction of the food hub. Giving priority and importance to the fresh produce of the province will boost tourist visits once the transportation infrastructure is completed and once the pandemic is over. For future research, a feasibility study may be conducted focusing on food hub operations.*  
**Keywords:** Cooperative, Food Chain Model, Food Chain System, Food Hub, Pandemic

## 1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to 119 million confirmed cases and over 2.65 million bereavements worldwide. It generated uncertainties of an imminent economic emergency and stagnation. The nutriment division is in front of escalating demand in line for agitation and accumulating of various items of food. (Nicola et al., 2020) In the Philippines, a total of 616, 611 confirmed cases were recorded while for the Province of Bataan there were 3, 904 confirmed Covid-19 cases, most of which came from the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). (Bataan, 2020) In this regard, the Philippine economy is on a downward trajectory. The main culprit: the COVID-19 pandemic which has also affected over 120 countries.

Almost simultaneously, supply chain disruptions and demand compression fanned out. Supply chain lockdowns affected the flow of goods from farms to urban markets. Agricultural labor faced mobility issues. Food is cross-sectoral economic progress and closely related to some activities like tourism. (Civicchi et al., 2016) It is of massive economic impact globally, that harnessing the power of tourism for food is necessary to the economic growth and stability of the developing world. (Clark, 2014)

Based on the Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act No. 10816 also known as the “Farm Tourism Development Act of 2016” which reflected the growth and promotion of Farm Tourism in the Philippines. Moreover, it aims to highlight the significance of agriculture in providing livelihood to the majority of the population.

## **2. Literature Review**

The definition presented by Barham et al. (2015), food hubs are values-based focusing on the agri-food chain of supply. As per Fischer et al. (2013), food hubs are economically feasible organizations that exhibit an important dedication through accumulation and promotion. In terms of ecological food public growth, food hubs serve as avenues for community-based associations and residents that collaboratively exert effort to create feasible and effective food systems intended to link the producers to the consumers.

Through careful analysis of the literature presented, the values-based focusing on agri-food chain of supply method is intended for the market and necessity driven and the emphasis is on the supply chain and market effectiveness. While other sources highlighted that food hubs serve as unique entity models to achieve the local food employing corresponding the demand of the buyers in wholesale by employing coordination to the producers. With the other concept, of being not into profit, consumer, and community-driven, shared values are the priority of the operation of food hubs.

By uniting the producers, entailing the farmers and fisherfolks into a cooperative can offer scale, assembly, and modified marketing system to aid the members to succeed. As elaborated by Matson et al. (2013), food hubs depicted a continuity of principles with an expansion of the traditional concept of agricultural cooperatives to cover other stakeholders.

The development of a local food system will benefit the Province of Bataan. Food hubs are the emerging infrastructure that is an innovative, value-chain business model aimed to be financially viable while having broader economic, social, and environmental impacts within the communities. This study is similar to the operations of the food hubs which entail shared values focusing on the welfare of the community. The educational institution will do its share by providing knowledge and expertise to the producers to acquire economic gains.

With various definitions, purposes, and operations of the food hubs, it can be summarized that the agri-fishery products of the producers in the Province of Bataan could be placed under one roof through the potentiality of the food hub, providing access and ease for the end consumers which can then be used as a basis for the food chain model. As such, this study is unique, in the sense that the elements included in the proposed food chain model was the result of the data gathered from the producers, consumers and government’s representative.

Moreover, strategies concerning addressing the research gap, a future study will be undertaken which will entail a feasibility study to make the realization of the food hub in Barangay Dangcol, City of Balanga, Province of Bataan.

## **3. Research Methodology**

A mixed method was used in the study. The respondents were divided into producers and consumers. The data gathered from the master list of fisherfolks and farmers was utilized to determine the reliable and valid sample out of the given population. This was gathered from

Provincial Agriculture Office. For the consumers, it was based on the age bracket wherein the respondents have the purchasing power, most were for the consumption of a household, government, and business employees, as well as employees in the educational institution. Slovin's Formula with a 95% confidence level (giving a margin error of 0.05), was used as the basis for the needed respondents of the study. It covered the various municipalities and city in the Province of Bataan.

For the research process, relevant agencies and organizations were identified. The research area was selected based on the location in nearby coastal areas. The knowledge and experience of the respondents about the products being offered. For the institution, Bataan Peninsula State University was selected to serve as the representative of the food value chain.

Before the data collection, a letter of request was made addressed to the office of the Provincial Governor of Bataan to sought approval for the conduct of the survey. The respondents were provided with sufficient information about the study before their consent to participate was obtained to allow them to make an informed decision about their participation in the study. For the online interview, all possible measures were undertaken to protect and treat the data in a confidential manner wherein their identity was not revealed.

Frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and standard deviation were utilized to determine the demographic profile of the respondents, the different perceptions of the producers and consumers in relevance to the various areas about products, operational activities, elements, the concept of the food hub, and supports from the local government. The Mann-Whitney U-test, which is a non-parametric test was utilized to indicate the significant difference in the stakeholders' perceptions on the concept of the food hub.

#### 4. Findings and Analysis

The profile of the producers is shown in Table 1. Characteristics such as sex, age, highest educational attainment, the sector they belong to; products produced; and the number of years in farming/agri-fishery. The respondents of the producers were mainly fisherfolks and farmers who partake in the survey.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Producers

Demographics		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	290	75.52
	Female	94	24.48
Age	25 to 34 years old	21	5.47
	35 to 44 years old	58	15.10
	45 to 54 years old	244	63.54
	55 to 64 years old	58	15.10
	65 years old and above	3	0.78
Highest Educational Attainment	College Graduate	105	27.34
	College Level	74	19.27
	Vocational/ Diploma	189	49.22
	High School Graduate	11	2.86

	High School Level	2	0.52
	Elementary Graduate	1	0.26
	Elementary Level	2	0.52
Sector they Belong	Fisherfolk	282	73.44
	Farmer	102	26.56
Products Produced	Fruit	58	15.10
	Vegetable	58	15.10
	Rice	92	23.96
	Fish and other Seafood	250	65.10
	Oyster	35	9.11
	Seashell/ Mussel	244	63.54
	Poultry/ Egg	10	2.60
	Others	9	2.34
Number of years for Farming/ Fishing Industry	Less than 5 years	2	0.52
	5 to 10 years	10	2.60
	11 to 15 years	22	5.73
	Over 15 years	350	91.15

There were a total of 384 respondents from the producer. There have been limited senior citizens because of the pandemic, they attended the activity because there were no other representatives from the family, they immediately went home after they received their Christmas package.

The profile of the consumers is shown in Table 2. Characteristics such as sex, age, highest educational attainment, and sector they belong to.

Table II: Demographic Profile of the Consumers

Demographics		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	120	29.41
	Female	288	70.59
Age	25 to 34 years old	235	57.60
	35 to 44 years old	110	26.96
	45 to 54 years old	46	11.27
	55 to 64 years old	16	3.92
	65 years old and above	1	0.25
Highest Educational Attainment	Post Graduate Level	79	19.36
	College Graduate	284	69.61
	College Level	27	6.62
	Vocational/ Diploma	6	1.47



	High School Graduate	8	1.96
	High School Level	3	0.74
	Elementary Graduate	1	0.25
Sector they Belong	Government	147	36.03
	Business/ Investor	141	34.56
	Household	57	13.97
	Educational Institution	63	15.44

As shown in Table 2, there were a total of 408 consumers. The respondents for the online survey questionnaire could purchase goods and services.

As presented in Table 3, the preference of the respondents based on operating format.

Table III: Respondents' Preferences in Establishing a Food Hub According to Operating Format

Operating Format	Producers		Consumers		Overall	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Grower Owned	30	7.81	138	33.82	168	21.2
Cooperative (Owned by producers/processors/buyers/distributors)	350	91.15	261	63.97	611	77.1
Volunteer Run	4	1.04	8	1.96	12	1.5
Others			1	0.25	1	0.1
Total	384	100.00	408	100.0	792	100.0
				0		0

As to the respondents' preferences in establishing a food hub according to operating format, it can be gleaned that 77.10% of the combined respondents preferred the Cooperative. The results of the analysis using the Mann Whitney U-test, which is a non-parametric test indicate that significant difference is evident in the stakeholder's perceptions on the concept of food hub when grouped accordingly. The p-values are statistically lesser than the alpha of .05 thus rejecting the null hypothesis.

## 5. Discussion

Bataan serves as the heartland of Central Luzon in terms of industrial activities mainly because of the existence of the anchor industries in the province. Considered a prime business hub that offers a major transshipment area in the region. The province also claims for commercial and fishery industry plus a vigorous agriculture and aquaculture sector. Moreover, beach resorts, as well as natural parks along with numerous historical and cultural developments, mark the landscape and offer settings for fine fettle ventures in tourism. (Coastal Land and Sea Use Zoning Plan of the Province of Bataan)

According to Matson (2015), in selecting a location for an effective food hub, the major roads and institutions should be of prime importance, there must be an easy transport of produce in and out of the facility, moreover, the comfortability of the consumers in accessing the operation.

In terms of funding sources in constructing a food hub, the Provincial Government of Bataan is interested to construct the facility to uplift the lives of the fisherfolks and farmers, it was based on the interview conducted. There was an approved Fishport proposal for Orani, Bataan that will cover 1.4 hectares amounting to 200 million pesos which were presented last September 25, 2019. The said proposal also included the construction of a floating restaurant, processing zone, overpass, and market, however, the project had been delayed due to a pandemic. The products will be mostly coffee and seafood which were the top products from the said municipality. The concept is about raw to table and it was inspired from the existing Fishport in Thailand, Malaysia, and Cebu. Based on the assessment conducted by the Provincial Planning and Development Office as well as the City Planning and Development Office, the food hub can be located in the City of Balanga, specifically in Barangay Dangcol.

Based on the statement of Matson (2015), the visibility of the food hub is of significant factor wherein it will serve as community awareness and allow to serve as a marketing tool. The target location for the food hub is passable with wide roads along the highway and owned by the City Government of Balanga, it is 15 hectares, one of the facilities to rise is the Sports Complex, proposed to be built on the said location by this year if the situation permits.

Given the zoning considerations, the enactment of a specific locality to regulate land use to comply with the city's land and development laws, together with a comprehensive land-use plan, Barangay Dangcol is declared as a production zone. The said zone categorizes the areas where production can take place like agricultural and fishery production, as well as industrial areas. Agricultural production, crop production, livestock, aquaculture, and fishing are the priorities for zoning in relevance with production. Barangay Dangcol in the City of Balanga is a potential location for a food hub that could provide efficient operation of production to consumption.

The City of Balanga, a 4th class city and capital of the Province of Bataan, has a population of 96,061 people on the 2015 census. The location helps determine various components for the business which includes the customer base to enable the meeting of producer-members. (Matson, 2015)

The City of Balanga can host a facility that will operate a food value chain where collective business networks compose of food producers, processors, distributors, marketers, and buyers can collaboratively plan and coordinate the activities to reach shared economic objectives.

The entire agricultural land of the province is allocated to rice lands, croplands, and fishponds. The total effective area for palay production is 14, 514 hectares. Mangroves provide ecological significance in safeguarding the shoreline and coral reefs, serves as a nursery for fishes, shrimps, crustaceans, and mud crabs, offer potential eco-tourism sites, protection for reclaimed land, and as windbreaker during typhoons.

According to Matson (2015), goods and services such as natural resources would define the availability of the products that the food hub needed to supply the essentials and demands of the consumers and to differentiate the line of products.

From the information, interview, and documents collected for the profile of the Province of Bataan, it was understandable that with regards to the aspect of resources, the province could provide the resources needed for dry agricultural goods and fresh produce from seafood. Even there was a source, the Province of Bataan registered a necessity for the production of pork and beef. (CLUP 2015-2024)

The identified necessity did not mean that putting a food hub in the Province of Bataan became unmanageable. The reason behind western countries, specifically the United States of America, the origin of food hubs, the decreasing agricultural produce paved the way to the rise of food hubs as an infrastructure that would save the agricultural aspect and eventually would provide nutritious, easily reached, fresh and affordable foods for the community. That was an initial step to address the problems encountered such as loss of farms, financial pressures on small and mid-sized farms, wider environmental health, and existing social issues in the food system.

The Province of Bataan has an increasing shift from an agricultural economy to a residential or commercial center. Malls proliferate in the City of Balanga. The zoning plan provided a comprehensive framework for economic development balanced with environmental conservation. The four policy areas included settlements, production, protection, and infrastructure. The integration of land and water use enhances coastal resource management. The urban structure for coastal management and growth. Ecotourism is also of prime importance, development of transportation network and environment management to balance the ecology with the rapid rate of the growth of the population.

The Provincial Agriculture Office was active in assisting farm and agri-fishery sectors, before and during the pandemic. There are programs and projects such as sustained self-sufficiency programs like seeds and fertilizer distribution, crop production, institutional development cooperative through assisting the organizations and cooperatives, fishery production, development through intensified high-value aquaculture production, and promotion of fish production improvement.

The programs and projects of the local government vindicated the community's economic development to advance the economies and at the same time, adjust to changing circumstances in the economy. The programs gave support to the statement of Flint (2015), knowledge and resources in the community define and capitalize on opportunities to enhance economic development and employment.

Hence, the supports coming from the government were of a significant role to consider in the viability of the establishment of a food hub in the locality.

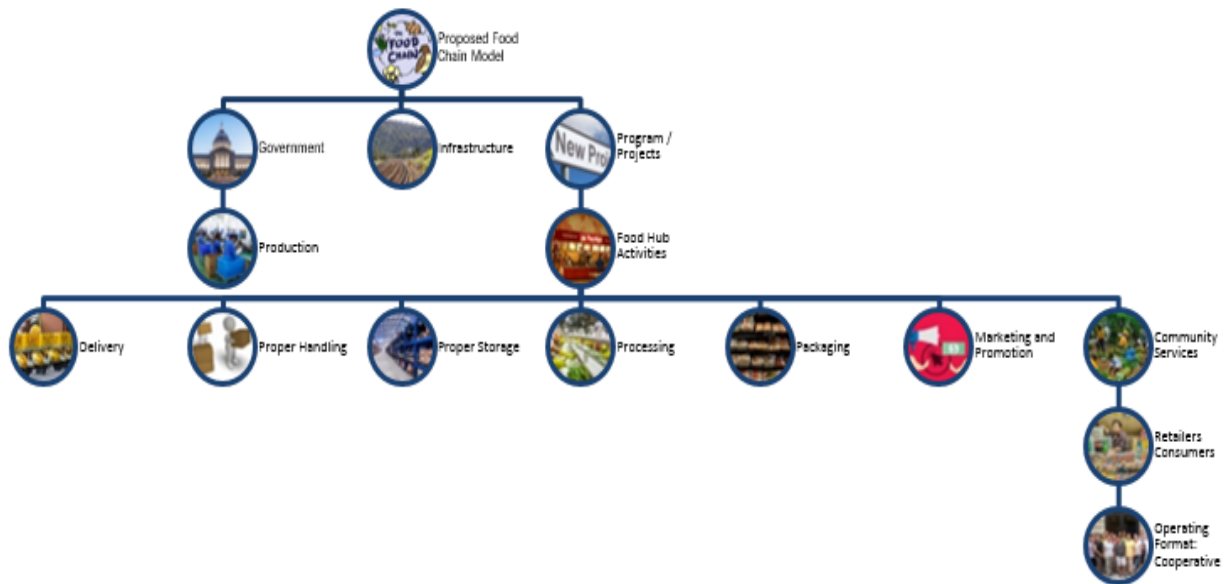
This model will help on emerging opportunities in the food economy, achieve additional food earning, expand food security, decrease in food remains, and on condition that system will be in place for the producers and keeping valuable agri-fishery production. The food hub as a tool for a sustainable food chain system will alleviate the use of local food resources for the growth of food tourism, leading to the uplift of lives of the farmers and fisherfolks in the Province of Bataan. To make available customary considerations for the stakeholders, specifically the local government to make the most of the potentiality of local food resources as well as the local community.

The general objective of the food chain model was to illustrate a system intended for the food chain operation in the Province of Bataan. The SWOT analysis positions the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the potentiality of a food hub amidst the pandemic, which will serve as a basis for the food chain model.

For the strengths, the aggregation will be responsible for the one-stop shop to purchase a variety of products. All fresh produce is available in the Province of Bataan. Agri-fishery products, fresh and processed will be available in an infrastructure where everyone can purchase in wholesale or retail. A central facility intended for knowledge and technology, training will be conducted to

help address the needs of the community. Provide education to ensure quality products, successful crop planning, consistent packaging, and grading. This can be coordinated to the local government units for funding and the experts to provide the training can be sourced from the Office of the Extension Services from Bataan Peninsula State University. Leadership will highlight the Province of Bataan in the aspect of food aggregation, distribution, processing, marketing, and local food tourism. The geographical location and the proposed infrastructure for transportation in Bataan will make the province more accessible to nearby towns and provinces as well. Marketing and promotion offer a good avenue for advertising locally grown products in the province. This leads to more opportunities intended for the micro, small and medium scale industries. Processing will provide continuity in terms of product innovation and development with the presence of a processing facility in the food hub. Facilities for fresh fish and seafood as well as dry produce, washing areas, and even parking spaces will be available. Tangible source of income for the residents of the province. Through various activities and programs to be conducted as well as the inclusion of food services focusing on locally grown products. In terms of weaknesses, the investment required is extensive. The capital needed to build the food hub entails millions of pesos. As it will be needing storage, equipment, operation team, construction among others. Transportation as a food hub needs to transfer the product from producer to food hub to the end consumer. Variety of food products to meet the expectations of the large distributors. There is a growing number of malls and residential areas as per the interview conducted. Thereby leading to the reduction of agri-fishery productions. For the opportunities, Market access entails the producers for easy access to large markets. Ownership pertains to the cooperative model for operating format wherein the community can possess more of the value chain. Participation can lead to the producers for a broader distribution channel. Tourism in the aspect of eco-tourism, agritourism, and food tourism is now proliferating in attracting tourists.

Figure I. Proposed Food Chain Model



In the assessment of threats, Industrialization leads to the conversion of agricultural lands turning into commercial facilities like malls and subdivisions. Product trends wherein some agricultural products are geared toward cash crops, they are primarily grown for sale and not use for consumption of the growers and their families. Promptness of the producers in terms of being abrasive for the concept of truck distribution-ready and not retail-ready. For the final point, the situation which is still at present, the pandemic, which greatly affected the lives of the producers and consumers, but through the help of the government, the economy will surely bounce back. The proposed output for the study is a Food Chain Model that can be adopted by the Province of Bataan and be modified as the need arises. It was based on the result of the survey and interview conducted. An in-depth analysis of the literature was undergone. The model will start with the government funding to have an initial start-up for the infrastructure of the Food Hub, it will then have an impact on the production process of the farmers and fisherfolks. After which, the food hub activities and services will be put into place to have a smooth flow of operation in the food hub. The community services were enjoined to tap the expertise from the educational institution. The consumption of the consumers will take place as well as the purchase of the retailers. The operating format is included which is Cooperative as the majority of the respondents preferred the said business model.

## **6. Conclusions**

In view of the significant findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn: Making the most of the locally produced resources of the Province of Bataan, it is of prime importance to develop a food chain system that will alleviate the growth of the community and in the process, uplift the lives of the farmers and fisherfolks; Through the supports provided by the local government amidst the pandemic, the producers and the consumers rated the products, operational activities, and the elements of the food hub mostly extremely important. Thereby increasing the viability of the establishment of the food hub in the Province of Bataan through a cooperative; The null hypothesis is rejected since the data revealed that the perception of the producers as to the importance of the given variables is higher than that of the consumers, and The realization of a food hub in Barangay Dangcol at the City of Balanga can create a huge impact on the stakeholders of the Province of Bataan.

Based on the conclusions, the following are hereby recommended: The local government of Bataan should take into consideration the budget intended for the development plan for food chain value to ensure the consumers of sustainable food which are locally grown; A working committee is highly advisable to conduct a comprehensive study about the food distribution system thereby leading to the construction of the food hub in Barangay Dangcol, City of Balanga, Province of Bataan; Determine the best approach to institute community aggregators to have a better comprehension of the current supply and demand, infrastructure, and the ability to meet the growth and governance in the province; Scrutinize the current situation of the farmers and fisherfolks amidst the pandemic to generate a viable program that will assist them in their livelihood; Giving priority and importance to the fresh produce of the province will boost the tourist visits once the transportation infrastructure is completed and once the pandemic is over; The food chain model can be adapted and modified by the province to best suit the need of the producers, the operations of the food hub, and the consumers; For further research, a feasibility

study may be conducted focusing on food hub operations to get budget approval from the local government of Bataan.

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# The Evaluation of Mu Cang Chai Brand Equity from the Domestic Tourists' Perspectives

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## Abstract

*The purpose of the study is to evaluate the destination brand equity in Mu Cang Chai, a rural district with a spectacular landscape of sheer, striking rice terraces in the Northwest of Vietnam, from the perspectives of domestic tourists. From February to April 2021, data was collected from 280 domestic respondents using social networking sites such as Instagram, Facebook, and analyzed in SPSS version 20. The research results indicate that Mu Cang Chai brand equity includes four key factors: Mu Cang Chai brand awareness, Mu Cang Chai perceived quality, Mu Cang Chai brand image, and Mu Cang Chai brand loyalty. Empirical results indicated the predominant effects of brand image on Mu Cang Chai brand equity. Domestic tourists appreciate Mu Cang Chai destination brand awareness and Mu Cang Chai brand loyalty, but these factors authenticated minor effects on Mu Cang Chai brand equity. The research results contribute to the existing literature of branding knowledge by consolidating and supplementing the theoretical basis of this destination brand equity from the tourists' point of view. Thus, the findings would help marketers develop suitable marketing strategies to promote Mu Cang Chai brand equity for long-term competitive advantage.*

**Keywords:** Brand equity, Destination, Domestic tourists, Mu Cang Chai

## 1. Introduction

From the late 1980s, brand equity is a term that has been noticed by many researchers, managers, and businessmen around the world. However, at this time, research only focused on brand equity for tangible products or services. Compared to research on brand equity for pure products, the research on destination brand equity is still a new academic topic with relatively



few works (Kotsi et al. (2018). Entering the twenty-first century, tourism growth is the major driving force for the economic development of many nations. In a fierce competition among nations to attract tourists, branding helps differentiate a country's identity among hundreds of others with similarities. Strong brand equity will remain in tourists' minds and affect their intention to visit that destination. Thus, branding in general, brand equity, in particular, has gained significant attention in both research and practice in the tourism context. There have been outstanding studies on brand equity conducted by famous researchers, for example, Konecnik and Gartner (2007), Boo et al. (2009), Konecnik (2010), Pike et al. (2010), Myagmarsuren and Chen (2011), Lajevardi (2015), Tran et al. (2015), Kheiri et al. (2016), and Tran et al. (2017). These prior works contributed to branding literature the foundation of destination brands and tested the relationship among components of destination brands in a specific research context. However, depending on each place or destination, each type of target market, or targeted tourist segmentation, the factors affecting overall brand equity can differ. Customer associations and perceptions with each specific brand will add value to the product (Winters, 1991).

In the light of branding literature, our study aims to evaluate brand equity for a special remote mountainous area in Vietnam. Mu Cang Chai is an attractive rural district with a beautiful landscape of rice terraces in the Northwest region of Vietnam. Brand equity and relationship among components of brand equity of this area are evaluated and verified from the domestic tourists' perspective. It is critical to focus on domestic tourists as they account for the largest proportion of tourism economic contribution of this area, especially in low tourist season.

Further, this study aims to verify and analyze perceptions and evaluations between different groups of domestic tourists. Outcomes of our analysis can be considered as the reference in the strategic branding of Mu Cang Chai.

Another reason to choose this area for our research is that Mu Cang Chai has experienced rapid development in recent years and become one of Vietnam's most attractive destinations for both domestic and international tourists. According to the latest statistics of Yen Bai Newspaper on January 13, 2021, Mu Cang Chai district welcomed 167,200 tourists to visit in 2020 (Hong Oanh, 2021). In addition, recently, Big 7 Travel - a well-known tourist information site has announced a list of the 50 most beautiful destinations in 2020 through surveying over 1.5 million users across its multiple social channels such as Instagram, Pinterest, and Mu Cang Chai ranks 21st (Big 7 Travel, 2020) in the list. In 2019, Mu Cang Chai rice terraces were listed as one of the world's top 20 most colorful destinations officially in the top 20 most colorful destinations in the world by Condé Nast Traveler – a reputed magazine with an annual award known as “The pinnacle of world tourism” (Condé Nast Traveler, 2019).

## **2.Literature Review**

Brand positions and differentiates a destination from its competitors on a global touristic map. Different brands include the different impacts of power and perceived equity delivering values towards customers. As values remain in customers' minds, brand equity is used to understand knowledge about a brand and customer perception of a brand (Keller, 1993).

Brand equity has, therefore, gained utmost attention from managers and scholars in the marketing field. However, the issue, scope of each prior study is evaluated and measured in a specific research context. Their approach and findings contributed to brand equity theory in

different ways. As a result, brand equity remains a multi-dimensional concept in branding literature.

Although brand equity has been approached in a variety of ways, there are three main perspectives: financial, sales-based, and customer-based (Aaker, 1991). Consumer-based brand equity stresses the evaluation of customer responses and their evaluation of a brand.

In the tourism context, the majority of prior research has applied the brand equity model developed by Aaker (1991) to various tourism sites (Kladou, 2014; Pike, 2007; Pike et al., 2010). Although most of the key dimensions to measure brand equity from a customer perspective are destination brand awareness, destination brand image, destination perceived quality, and destination brand loyalty. Thus, our study also applied to measure these four components in a touristic destination of Vietnam.

### *2.1 Destination brand awareness*

“Awareness” in tourism implies that an image of the destination exists in the minds of potential tourists (Gartner 1993). In other studies such as Pike et al. (2010), Bianchi and Pike (2011), and Pike and Bianchi (2013), this term is also known as destination brand salience. Brand awareness is critically important as it is the first stage to form an individual’s perceptions of a destination. Previous studies examined the positive influence of brand presence in the customer’s mind on brand equity or travel intention (Bianchi & Pike, 2011; Bianchi et al, 2014; Tasci, 2018). As the result of these earlier findings, the following hypothesis is presented.

Hypothesis H1: Destination brand awareness of domestic tourists has a positive and significant influence on the Mu Cang Chai brand equity.

### *2.2 Destination perceived quality*

Destination perceived quality is a comparison between real perceptions and expectations of a destination's service (Mygarmarsuren & Chen, 2011). According to Konecnik and Gartner (2007), the destination perceived quality is the overall evaluation made by the tourists, or rather an evaluation of the combination of products, services, and experiences that they had had at that destination. Specifically, Pike et al. (2010) suggested that destination perceived quality is related to the perception of the quality of the infrastructure, hospitality services, and the amenities of the accommodation facilities. Furthermore, a customer's preference for the brand over competitors is influenced by its perceived quality. Thus, the greater a brand's perception is the better its overall brand equity (Yoo et al., 2000).

Hypothesis H2: Destination perceived quality of domestic tourists has a positive and significant influence on the Mu Cang Chai brand equity.

### *2.3 Destination brand image*

In the studies of Boo et al. (2009), Tran et al. (2015); Tran et al. (2017), brand image is limited to social image and self-image of brand personality. Recent studies by Martin and Del-Bosque (2008), Savaş et al. (2013), and Kashif et al (2015) have measured the destination image by its two component structures: cognitive image and affective image. Accordingly, the cognitive image refers to knowledge or beliefs about the attributes of the destination (Baloğlu, 1999), and it is the result of the visitor's evaluation of physical characteristics, local people, and events held at that destination (İlban et al., 2008; Savaş et al., 2013). In contrast, the effective image represents

emotions or feelings of visitors about a destination (Chen & Uysal, 2002; Kim & Richardson, 2003), and it is the result of the evaluation based on emotions, and meanings that the destination brings to tourists (İlban et al., 2008, and Savaş et al., 2013). Prior studies on destination brand equity confirmed a positive relationship between destination brand image and brand equity. Thus, the following hypothesis is:

Hypothesis H3: Destination brand image in the mind of the tourists has a positive and significant influence on the Mu Cang Chai brand equity.

#### 2.4 Destination brand loyalty

In the tourism industry, with regards to the behavior approach, the attitude approach is more suitable for researching tourist loyalty, as visitors can be loyal to a destination even if they are not visiting this place (Chen & Gursoy, 2001). Brand loyalty will encourage the building of brand equity since loyal customers have more favorable responses to a brand (Buil et al., 2013). Therefore, this research focuses on the attitude approach to study destination brand loyalty. In this respect, destination brand loyalty is defined as an intention to recommend and return to the destination (Myagmarsuren & Chen, 2011, Nam et al., 2011, Pike & Bianchi, 2013).

Hypothesis H4: Destination brand loyalty of domestic tourists has a positive and significant influence on the Mu Cang Chai brand equity.

Based on the theoretical basis of destination brand equity, along with a careful examination of research models for brand equity, and destination brand equity. The research has inherited, drawn, and applied to develop this research model below:

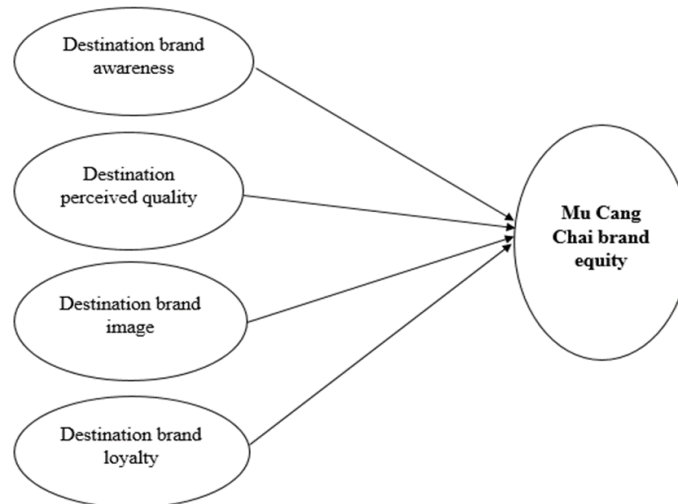


Figure 1. Proposed research model

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Sampling and data collection

To achieve the research objectives, the target population for this study was domestic travelers who have visited Mu Cang Chai at least once, as this is one of the preset criteria for the survey participants. A convenience sampling method was used to select participants for this survey. Data

were collected by questionnaires through interviews, online surveys via Google Forms application from February 7 to April 20, 2021, and on social networking platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Gazo, etc.

The sample size can be calculated using the formula based on standard 5: 1 by Bollen (1989). To ensure good data analysis (exploratory factor analysis), the study needs at least 5 observations for 1 variable. The number of observations should not be less than 100. The survey questionnaire has a total of 22 observed variables (questions using the Likert scale), so the minimum sample will be  $22 \times 5 = 110$  samples. The research team gathered around 300 responses but only 280 are accepted to analyze after removing incomplete and inconsistent answers. The data were cleaned and processed by IBM SPSS Statistics 20.

### 3.2 Dialectical and historical materialism methods

In this study, the matters are not studied in the stationary state but the active state. They are seen in a unified, and interrelated relationship, not singly and separately. Things are not only examined in a fixed moment but a certain time series to draw the most objective observations.

### 3.3 Measures/ Research design

The research approach adopted in this study is quantitative. The measurement constructs were all adopted from existing literature. There are two sections of the survey instrument: (1) demographics characteristics of domestic tourists to Mu Cang Chai; (2) measurement items on a 5-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Table 1. Summary of Brand equity scale items

Symbol	Items	Source
<b>Destination brand awareness</b>		
NB1	I know Mu Cang Chai destination	Author's recommendation
NB2	The destination has a reputation	Boo et al.(2009)
NB3	I can recognize the logo and symbol of Mu Cang Chai	Author's recommendation
NB4	Mu Cang Chai is a well-known tourism destination	Boo et al.(2009)
NB5	The characteristics of Mu Cang Chai come to my mind quickly	
NB6	Recognition of the distinctive features of Mu Cang Chai among competing brands is easy	Author's recommendation
NB7	When I am thinking about a destination, Mu Cang Chai comes to my mind immediately	Boo et al.(2009)
<b>Destination perceived quality</b>		
CN1	Mu Cang Chai provides consistent quality for tourists	Boo et al.(2009)
CN2	Mu Cang Chai provides quality experiences	
CN3	From Mu Cang Chai's offerings, I can expect superior performance	
CN4	Mu Cang Chai performs better than other similar destinations in Vietnam	
<b>Destination brand image</b>		
HA1	Mu Cang Chai fits my personality	Boo et al.(2009), Pike and Bianchi (2013)
HA2	The image of Mu Cang Chai is consistent with my self-image	
HA3	My friends will appreciate it if they know that I traveled to Mu Cang Chai	
HA4	Visiting Mu Cang Chai reflects who I am	
<b>Destination brand loyalty</b>		
TT1	I consider Mu Cang Chai to be my favorite destination	Author's recommendation
TT2	When in need of travel, I consider this destination to be my first holiday choice	Wang and Hsu (2010), Kashif et al.(2015)
TT3	I will advise other people to visit Mu Cang Chai	
TT4	I intend to return to Mu Cang Chai	
<b>Overall destination brand equity</b>		
TTS1	Given the other destinations in Vietnam, I think visiting Mu Cang Chai is a smart move	Tong and Hawley (2009), Kashif et al.(2015)
TTS2	Although other destinations have the same characteristics as Mu Cang Chai, I still choose Mu Cang Chai	
TTS3	Mu Cang Chai is more than a destination to me	

The measurement constructs include five factors and each is measured with multiple items: destination brand awareness (NB-7 items); destination perceived quality (CN-4 items);

Destination brand image (HA-4 items); destination brand loyalty (TT-4 items); overall destination brand equity (TTS-3 items). The summary of scale items is presented in table 1.

For analyzing the demographics of 280 respondents, this research applied the main value-frequency which is shown in percentage (Table 2). The result showed two main targeted groups of domestic travelers to Mu Cang Chai: 44.6% tourists under 25 and 52.1% tourists from 25-40 years old, coming mainly from Northern Vietnam (66,1%) and Southern Vietnam (30.4%). Their occupations are civil servants (29.6%); Traders (21.8%) and Students (21.4%). Basically, the results of descriptive statistical analysis revealed important aspects to describe tourists to Mu Cang Chai such as those mainly under 40 years old, with high educational level, living in the North or South of Vietnam, having stable jobs with good discretionary income, and having relatively high demand for traveling. This information helps tourism managers develop strategic management to approach targeted segmentations of tourists to Mu Cang Chai.

Table 2. Demographic characteristics

Demographic characteristics	Group	Number of tourists	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	115	41.1
	Female	152	54.3
	Others	13	4.6
Age (years)	[<25]	125	44.6
	[25 - 40]	146	52.1
	[41 – 55]	9	3.2
	[>55]	0	0.0
Place of residence	Northern Vietnam	185	66.1
	Central Vietnam	10	3.6
	Southern Vietnam	85	30.4
Education level	Under the High school graduation	0	0.0
	High school graduation	8	2.9
	College (2 years)	3	1.1
	College (3 years)	8	2.8
	University	217	77.5
	Postgraduate education	44	15.7
Occupation	Civil servant	83	29.6
	Trading	61	21.8
	Student	60	21.4
	Others	76	27.1
Income per month (VNĐ 1.000.000/month)	[<2]	13	4.6
	[2 – 5]	35	12.5
	[5 – 8]	55	19.6
	[>8]	177	63.2
No. of times visiting Mu Cang Chai (times/year)	[1]	13	4.6
	[1 – 2]	65	23.2
	[3 – 5]	92	32.9
	[>5]	110	39.3
<b>Total</b>		<b>280</b>	<b>100</b>

## 4. Findings And Analysis

### 4.1 Reliability and Validity of constructs

The scale was assessed on reliability through two tools: Cronbach's alpha coefficient and factor analysis. Cronbach's alpha analysis is used to evaluate the “internal consistency reliability” of scale. Variables with a corrected item-total correlation less than 0.3 will be disqualified to ensure differentiated values between factors (Nunnally, 1978), and scale will be chosen when Cronbach's alpha coefficient is greater than 0.6 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). As shown in Table 3, all scales have met the requirements.

Table 3. Construct reliability of preliminary test

Construct components and items		Cronbach's alpha	Item-to-total
<b>Destination brand awareness</b>		0,824	
NB1	I know Mu Cang Chai destination		0,528
NB2	The destination has a reputation		0,543
NB3	I can recognize the logo and symbol of Mu Cang Chai		0,406
NB4	Mu Cang Chai is a well-known tourism destination		0,674
NB5	The characteristics of Mu Cang Chai come to my mind quickly		0,73
NB6	Recognition of the distinctive features of Mu Cang Chai among competing brands is easy		0,654
NB7	When I am thinking about a destination, Mu Cang Chai comes to my mind immediately		0,538
<b>Destination brand image</b>		0,859	
HA1	Mu Cang Chai fits my personality		0,689
HA2	The image of Mu Cang Chai is consistent with my self-image		0,782
HA3	My friends will appreciate it if they know that I traveled to Mu Cang Chai		0,599
HA4	Visiting Mu Cang Chai reflects who I am		0,765
<b>Destination perceived quality</b>		0,818	
CN1	Mu Cang Chai provides consistent quality for tourists		0,684
CN2	Mu Cang Chai provides quality experiences		0,605
CN3	From Mu Cang Chai's offerings, I can expect superior performance		0,606
CN4	Mu Cang Chai performs better than other similar destinations in Vietnam		0,671
<b>Destination brand loyalty</b>		0,83	
TT1	I consider Mu Cang Chai to be my favorite destination		0,732
TT2	When in need of travel, I consider this destination to be my first holiday choice		0,541
TT3	I will advise other people to visit Mu Cang Chai		0,666
TT4	I intend to return to Mu Cang Chai		0,712
<b>Overall destination brand equity</b>		0,851	
TTS3	Given the other destinations in Vietnam, I think visiting Mu Cang Chai is a smart move		0,699
TTS1	Although other destinations have the same characteristics as Mu Cang Chai, I still choose Mu Cang Chai		0,787
TTS2	Mu Cang Chai is more than a destination to me		0,693

Reliability is used to describe measurement error because it is impossible to know the exact degree of variability of the correct and error variables, it is not possible to calculate directly the reliability level of the scale. However, we can establish reliability based on Cronbach's alpha analysis. This coefficient indicates the degree of correlation between the variables in the

questionnaire, and it is used to calculate the variation of each variable and the correlation between the variables (Bob E. Hayes, 1983).

Factor analysis will be useful to consider the possibility of reducing the number of 22 observed variables to a handful of variables that specifically reflect the impact of the major factors on the overall brand equity of Mu Cang Chai through the evaluation of domestic tourists. Factor analysis will verify once again whether the variable indexes in each factor are reliable and have the adhesion as shown in the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient determination.

Table 4. Factors identified by principal components factor analysis

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
HA4	0,824				
HA2	0,794				
HA1	0,684				
HA3	0,682				
TT3		0,771			
NB6		0,745			
TT4		0,711			
TT1		0,672			
CN1			0,814		
CN4			0,744		
CN2			0,625		
CN3			0,613		
NB1				0,788	
NB2				0,782	
NB3				0,519	
TTS3					0,876
TTS1					0,86
TTS2					0,814
<b>Eigen-value</b>	<b>7,3</b>	<b>1,238</b>	<b>1,169</b>	<b>1,007</b>	<b>2,168</b>
<b>Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings</b>	<b>48,663</b>	<b>8,252</b>	<b>7,795</b>	<b>6,716</b>	<b>72,275</b>
KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy = 0,893; p = 0,000 (p < 0,05); df = 105					

In Exploratory Factor Analysis, the study uses the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to extract the main factors. As shown in Table 4, independent variables having 4 factors that have been extracted with a cumulative explanatory variance of 71.426 percent (> 50 percent), while Eigenvalue is 1.007, KMO = 0.893 (> 0.50) and Sig = 0.000 (<0.05). With factor analysis, the dependent variable was extracted with the cumulative explanatory variance of 72,275 percent (> 50 percent), while the Eigenvalue was 2.168, KMO = 0,701 (> 0.50) and Sig = 0,000. (<0.05). All items are significant with a factor loading higher than 0.5 and therefore retained for the next round of analysis. After the Exploratory Factor Analysis, 4 variables were eliminated including: “I can recognize the logo and symbol of Mu Cang Chai; Mu Cang Chai is a well-known tourism destination.”; “When I am thinking about a destination, Mu Cang Chai comes to my mind immediately.”; “When in need of travel, I consider this destination to be my first holiday choice.” due to load factor <0.5. Cronbach's alpha and total correlation for all scales were used to evaluate the reliability of measures. As shown in Table 3, Cronbach's alpha shows results showing all components above 0.60 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). Furthermore, the correlations between the items are all above 0.30 (Hair et al., 1998).

#### 4.2 Correlation and regression analysis

According to the research results, it is confirmed that four components are making up the Mu Cang Chai brand equity including Mu Cang Chai brand awareness, Mu Cang Chai perceived quality, Mu Cang Chai brand image, and Mu Cang Chai brand loyalty. All these factors have significantly influenced Mu Cang Chai's brand equity.

Table 5. Result of regression analysis

Model	Standardized Coefficients
CN	0,314
NB	0,142
HA	0,387
TT	0,123
Anova: Sig. = 0,000	
Adjusted R Square = 0,674	

The regression equation shows that Mu Cang Chai brand image has the largest impact coefficient on Mu Cang Chai brand equity with 0.387 whereas Mu Cang Chai brand loyalty has the smallest impact coefficient with 0.123. This means that if Mu Cang Chai brand image increases by one unit, Mu Cang Chai brand equity increases by 0.387 units. Similarly, if Mu Cang Chai perceived quality, and Mu Cang Chai brand awareness increases by one unit, Mu Cang Chai brand equity will increase in turn to 0.314; 0.142; 0.123 units respectively (Table 5).

#### 4.3 Domestic tourist's evaluation of the components of the Mu Cang Chai brand equity

To find out the domestic tourists' evaluation of the components of the Mu Cang Chai brand equity, the study tested the consent with a test value = 4.

Hypotheses:

- H0:  $\mu = 4$  Customers agree with this evaluation level
- H1:  $\mu \neq 4$  Customers disagree with this evaluation level

If:

- Sig. > 0.05: Accept the hypothesis H0
- Sig. < 0.05: Rejects hypothesis H0
- 

According to Hoang Trong and Chu Nguyen Mong Ngoc (2008), if a sign is less than 0.05, reject H0 and accept H1.

The research results show that domestic tourists have a good level of Mu Cang Chai brand awareness, and most of them have the Mu Cang Chai loyalty brand because the criteria of these two factors are rated at the level of consent (level 4) or higher. Contrary to expectation, this study indicates that Mu Cang Chai perceived quality, and Mu Cang Chai brand image are not good. Therefore, if Mu Cang Chai is to compete with other destinations as well as enhance its brand equity, it needs to pay more attention and effort in improving the service quality as well as building and promoting the brand image to suit its target domestic tourists.



Table 6. Results of domestic tourist consent testing

Criteria	Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
NB1	4,12	0,003	0,121
NB2	4,03	0,535	0,025
NB3	4,14	0,002	0,143
CN1	3,45	0,000	-0,55
CN4	2,87	0,000	-1,132
CN2	3,8	0,000	-0,196
CN3	3,58	0,000	-0,425
TT3	4,19	0,000	0,193
NB6	3,98	0,717	-0,018
TT4	4,01	0,829	0,011
TT1	3,85	0,003	-0,146
HA4	3,24	0,00	-0,757
HA2	3,52	0,00	-0,479
HA1	3,81	0,00	-0,193
HA3	3,53	0,00	-0,468

#### 4.3 Examining the differences among domestic tourist groups in their evaluation of the constituent factors of Mu Cang Chai brand equity

Before examining the different evaluation among domestic tourist groups on the components of Mu Cang Chai brand equity, the study hypothesized:

- H0: There is no difference
- H1: There are differences

If:

- Sig. <0.05: rejects H0, there are differences between tourist groups

Sig. > 0.05: the difference is not statistically significant

Table 7. Results of testing differences in evaluation of domestic tourist groups

		NB	CN	TT	HA	TTS
Gender	Asymp. Sig.	0,804	0,542	0,482	0,136	0,346
Age		0,042	0,003	0,001	0,005	0,005
Place of residence		0,177	0,065	0,052	0,015	0,032
Education level		0,094	0,412	0,63	0,811	0,437
Occupation		0,562	0,032	0,365	0,785	0,037
Income		0,329	0,909	0,914	0,725	0,104

Testing the normal distribution of the variables to choose the appropriate test. As a result, the use of non-parametric tests (Kruskal-Wallis test) was carried out on the variables that did not obey the normal distribution. The results of the tests of domestic tourist groups by gender, education level, and income show that there is no difference in the evaluation of the domestic tourist group on the factors that constitute the Mu Cang Chai brand equity (coefficient Sig.> 0.05). On the contrary, there are differences in the evaluation of the factors between three groups of

different ages. There are differences in the evaluation of Mu Cang Chai brand image and brand equity between groups of tourists in the North, Central, and South. Moreover, there is a difference in the evaluation of Mu Cang Chai perceived quality and brand equity between the groups with different occupations (Sig. <0.05 ).

## **5. Discussion**

The destination brand equity is an extremely valuable factor for tourist destinations. It creates a very strong competitive advantage for a destination in competition with others. In other words, it can help a tourist destination develop in a sustainable and long-term way. Therefore, tourist destinations, in this case, Mu Cang Chai, must pay attention to this factor.

Therefore, the study's main contribution is to provide a deeper understanding of the destination brand equity. The research has confirmed scales for the components of brand equity and the overall evaluation of brand equity in the light of the existing research results by Konecnik (2007), Boo (2009), and Yoo and Pike (2010) but in the context of a remote and mountainous region Mu Cang Chai. Importantly, the destination brand awareness scale is validated by exploratory factor analysis, Cronbach's alpha analysis in the context of domestic visitors visiting Mu Cang Chai, except for eliminating three items. Thus, this study highlights the importance of the scale by analyzing data from a sample of tourism destinations in a specific context. Besides, this study has provided some useful information for the managers and marketing administrators of Mu Cang Chai to enhance awareness of Mu Cang Chai as an attractive destination in tourists' minds.

The results in the study show that domestic tourists have not yet appreciated the Mu Cang Chai brand image and perceived quality. This means Mu Cang Chai is yet to become a competitive brand when compared to other domestic and international destinations that share similar characteristics, despite its popularity and recent development. In other words, the brand equity value of Mu Cang Chai added from the tourist side is still insufficient. To enhance its destination brand equity, Mu Cang Chai needs to improve the destination image brand and perceived quality. The potential of Mu Cang Chai as a tourist destination has not been explored fully and promoted effectively. Moreover, Mu Cang Chai brand image still needs to improve because it has not identified its target markets to effectively build up the destination image. The current image of Mu Cang Chai destination is not able to attract its target tourists (age from 25 years or older. - 40 years old). In addition, Mu Cang Chai perceived quality is not good because the destination has limited human and financial resources due to being a poor mountainous district of Yen Bai province. Investment in tourism in Mu Cang Chai is still limited. To make tourism in the destination reach its full potential, more investment needs to be made.

At the same time, the Mu Cang Chai perceived quality is not good because it is the result of the poor Mu Cang Chai brand image. The reason is that the destination brand image significantly influences the perceived quality of the destination, (Myagmarsuren & Chen,2011; Aliman et al., 2014; Tran et al., 2018).

## **6. Conclusions**

This study indicates that the research results have met the research objectives and supported four hypotheses. Specifically:

First, 4 factors positively impact Mu Cang Chaibrand equity including destination brand image, destination perceived quality, destination brand awareness, and destination brand loyalty. In which, destination brand image and destination perceived quality are two components that have a strong influence, and contribute to the Mu Cang Chai brand equity.

Second, the analysis of the domestic tourist's evaluation with the factors making up the Mu Cang Chai brand equity shows that domestic tourists rated at an agreed level (level 4) with Mu Cang Chai brand awareness and brand loyalty. In contrast, Mu Cang Chai destination brand image and Mu Cang Chai perceived quality are below the agreed level (below level 4).

Third, throughout the close examination of the evaluation of domestic tourists for the Mu Cang Chai brand equity, research has shown that there is no difference in evaluation between groups of tourists by gender, education level, income, and the factors that constitute the Mu Cang Chai brand equity. There are differences in the evaluation of Mu Cang Chai brand image and brand equity between groups of domestic tourists in the North, Central, and South. There are differences in the evaluation of Mu Cang Chai perceived quality and brand equity between groups of domestic tourists from different occupations.

Based on research findings, recommendations are made to the local government of Mu Cang Chai district to focus on tourism management, tourism-driven investment, and the training of human resources for the tourism industry.

However, the above findings in the report still have limitations that arise from the fact of focusing only on one destination. In this case, the implication of generalization to other destinations may be limited. Moreover, this study emphasized only the views of domestic travelers who have come to Mu Cang Chai at least once. This criterion has a limited scope of research as well as the possibility of generalization beyond this group. However, these strict criteria are crucially important to achieve our study objectives. Thus, the future study may expand the scope to examine other tourists such as international visitors to get more general results. Other factors affecting destination brand equity may need to be examined in this context such as the role of marketing activities, social media, the role of e-WoM.

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# Impact of Organized Commercial Events on Local Community in Sri Lanka: Events Managers' Perspective

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## Abstract

*Present, the event industry is a significant and growing economic sector. However, Sri Lanka has not specifically popular events among the visitors, which exemplify opportunities and create responsibility on stakeholders to uplift the industries'. Equally, optimizing positive impacts while minimizing negative impacts is critical to ensuring sustainability. This study aims at identifying positive and negative social, economic, and environmental impacts of events to provide a platform for future research. Data was collected from 12 MICE event managers and out of 28 event management organizations who are a member of Sri Lanka Association of Professional Conference, Exhibition, and Event Organizers. Purposive sampling was used with structured interviews. The qualitative approach was employed and the transcribed data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The study identified international events benefit the country more than local events, and can be used by host communities as a tool to enhance social interaction, satisfaction, employment opportunities, revenue generation, and enhance the quality of life. Contrarily, events bring negative impacts due to poor planning, especially on the environment. Further revealed, Sri Lanka promotes cultural events very low, and it does not enhance community pride. Moreover, which helps to identify the weaknesses, and ways to transform negative impacts into positive impacts.*

**Keywords:** Event Impacts, MICE Event Managers, Local Community, Qualitative Content Analysis

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the event industry has become very attractive for public and private sector investments given its growing market. Since people are seeking more and more memorable experiences in their day to day life. Thus creating and delivering memorable events has become a part of modern social life. These events have a range of impacts on their host communities and stakeholders. The event manager's role is to recognize and predict these impacts (Glenn Bowdin, 2006), and it is important to understand the objectives, aspirations, and opinions of the

communities when planning events to achieve a good balance and gain support from local communities (Zhou, 2006).

Glenn Bowndin, (2006) the study identified a vast gap in the available literature on the events industry, such as providing education, training, events management, and planning, marketing, finance, human resource management, and operations courses for lecturers, students, and professionals alike. Further, Sherwood, (2007) has mentioned only two publications were dealing with the environmental impacts of events around this time-May (1995) and Harris & Huyskens, (2002)-Events and the environment got some interest from researchers.

In the Sri Lankan context, there is a serious dearth of research work on the impact of organized commercial events on the local community, and the only impact of tourism on the local community type of research can be found.

At present, most countries have identified the specific market and innovated new events to the world. For example, Belgium innovated Tomorrowland in 2005, America innovated Ultra music festival in 1999, etc. Dakar Rally is now organized in South America. All of these events allow opportunities for country development and growth. E.g.400000 people have come to Belgium to participate in the Tomorrowland festival and all tickets were sold out in 15 minutes. That showed the demand for the event (Tomorrowland, 2021). A large number of people participate in these events. That is why it becomes a world fast-growing, and one of the larger industries in the world. In 2018 this industry earned 30.3billion USD )( Statista - The Statistics Portal for Market Data, Market Research and Market Studies, 2021). But review about Sri Lankan events there is not many popular events among the foreign visitors. Only a little of the information is on the websites regarding Sri Lankan events. Kandy Esala Perahera, Sinhala, and Tamil New Year kinds of festivals are mainly highlighted events there (Read Travel Guides & Book Stays and Experiences | Culture Trip, 2021).

When considering the Sri Lankan MICE tourism market; current trends, opportunity, growth potential, and forecast to 2025(2019) that data analysis has identified potential opportunities and future trends related to Sri Lanka. That they expect to reach US\$285 Million by 2025 (Sri Lanka Travel - Tourism Awards, 2021). But still, Sri Lanka promotes the event industry at a lower level. Through the following statistical data, it can prove very clearly.

Table 1“Percentage Distribution of Tourist Arrivals in Sri Lanka by Purpose of Visit (2010-2018)

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>
Pleasure/Holiday	78.9	80.4	74.4	72.7	67.95	66.6	83.4	82.4	81.72
Business	12.7	8.0	9.0	5.2	1.33	1.3	1.8	3.3	3.95
Visiting Friends & relations	5.4	8.2	11.7	12.4	27.45	25.5	11.5	11.3	10.84
Convention & meeting	1.0	1.7	2.2	2.0	0.29	0.2	0.8	1.3	1.71
Religious & cultural	0.8	0.3	2.2	4.8	0.01	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.09
Health	-	-	-	-	0.53	3.2	0.6	0.5	0.89
Sports	-	-	-	-	0.53	0.7	0.4	0.8	0.64
Official	-	-	-	-	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.06



Education	-	-	-	-	0.11	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.06
Others	1.2	1.4	0.5	2.9	1.49	1.7	1.2	0.0	0.04
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: (SLTDA, 2018)

As illustrated in the above table, it reveals that the tourist arrivals for various purposes over the period from the year 2010 to 2018 in Sri Lanka. There is the highest number of visitors who come to Sri Lanka for pleasure. Secondly for business and thirdly for visiting friends and relations. It highlighted that there is a low number of tourist arrivals for convention & meeting and it got fourth place according to the table statistics. Through this analysis, event organizations can identify, who should be the target market, which kind of event should be created for them, and create strategies for the industry's future development.

The purpose of this research is to discuss the general question; what are the social, economic, and environmental impacts of events? And its objective is to identify the social, economic, and environmental impacts of events. These impacts are identified and categorized into two positive and negative impacts. The study expects to elucidate the rapidly growing event management sector in Sri Lanka context both theoretically and empirically. Theoretically, the papers opt to explore the impacts of commercial events on communities from the managers' perspective. Equally, the study expects to guide the event management sector for better management through the findings of the study.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Event Tourism

It is essential to elaborate on tourism and its link to MICE since both these aspects are the same coin having two facts. According to UNWTO, tourism is defined as the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes (Definition of Tourism (UNWTO Definition of Tourism) / What Is Tourism ? | Tugberk @ the Heart of Software, 2021).

The event industry cannot be separated from the tourism, hospitality, leisure, and recreation industries and which is a complex and diverse nature industry (By Glenn Bowdin, 2006). Getz, (2008), event tourism introduces an important and rapidly growing segment of international tourism. In the 1993s starting with festival management and event tourism, it was renamed Event Management.

According to Getz, (2008) "Event tourism, as with all forms of special interest travel consideration must be given to both demand and supply sides." A consumer perspective needs to determine who is traveling for events, why, and those who attend events during travel. They also need to know what kind of events tourists organize and spend. "This demand-side approach includes an assessment of the value of events to promote a positive effect image of the destination, generally place marketing, and co-branding with destinations."

From the supply side perspective, destinations develop, facilitate, marketing and promote events of all kinds to meet multiple goals and objectives; Attract tourists (especially during the off-peak season), serve as a catalyst (for urban renewal and enhancement of destination infrastructure,

and tourism capacities) To foster a positive image and contribute to the destination to marketing general place (especially better to live, invest, and work) (Getz, 2008).

## *2.2 Impact of Events on Local Community*

### **Social Impact of Events**

Social impact is defined as, how tourism and travel affect changes in the collective and individual value systems, behavior patterns, community structures, lifestyle, and quality of life (Balduck, Maes, & Buelens, 2011).

IAIA (International Association for Impact Assessment) organization has identified social impact changes to one or more of the following (Vanclay, 2003).

- The way of life of people – that is, how they live, work, play, and interact with one another daily with each other;
- Their culture – that is, their common shared beliefs, customs, values, language or dialect;
- Their community – its cohesion, stability, character, facilities, and services;
- Their political systems – to what extent people can participate in decisions that affect their lives, the level of democratization that is taking place, and the resources that have been provided for that.
- Their environment – the air and water quality that people use; the level of hazard or risk, dust and noise to which they are exposed; the adequacy of sanitation, their physical safety.
- Their health and wellbeing – health is not only the absence of illness or infirmity, health is a state of complete or accurate physical, mental, social, and spiritual wellbeing;
- Their fears and aspirations – their perceptions of their safety and security, their fears about the future of their community, and the future of their children.

### **Positive Social Impact**

The success of any event mainly depends on the host community, and it helps to send positive feedback to participants (Etiosa, 2012).

Events can contribute to a “more democratic, locally representative understanding of community”. When considering the impact festivals make on people’s sense of place. Including local resources and local identity and cultural contributions to the social stability of a place (Black, 2016).

Events contribute to a sense of community, the spirit within-host destinations, and community pride, thus improving the quality of life of residents. The benefits of events also have been widely recognized in terms of educational and cultural understanding (Reid, 2007). Delamere and Hinch, (1994) have denoted social benefits such as creating social pride, facilitating association/sharing of ideas, promoting social interaction, and creating social identity and welfare, etc.

### **Negative Social Impact**

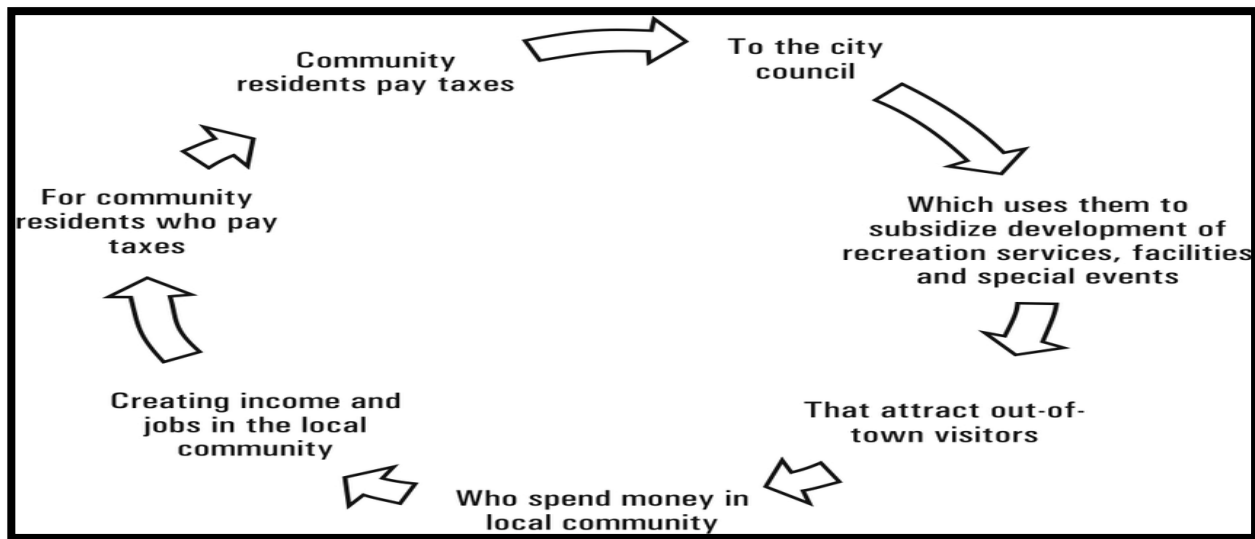
Events have short-term negative impacts related to inconvenient impacts such as crowding and anti-social behaviors (drunken, rowdy, and potentially life and property threatening behavior) (Deery & Jago, 2010). Anti-social behavior can seriously tarnish the image of an event and reduce their pride in the destination. The events disrupt the regular and consistent rhythm of urban

development (Liu & Chen, 2007). Sometimes major events can create unexpected consequences that can hijack the agenda and determine how the event is perceived by the public if the consequences are not properly managed the consequences can be in form of substance abuse, bad behavior by crowds, and an increase in criminal activities (Allen, 2010).

**Economic Impact of Events;**

**Positive Economic Impact**

Events can positively impact the economy in a variety of ways. Events attract visitors from outside a region so they can spend more time at a destination (Chalip & Layns, 2002). This revenue in turn can provide new employment opportunities, and the taxes associated with this revenue can be used to pay for certain projects and infrastructure development (Gursoy et al., 2004). Tourism often leads to improvements in public utilities such as water, sewerage, sidewalks, lighting, parking, public restrooms, landscaping, and litter control, all of which benefit both tourists and residents (Kreag, 2001). The same author has indicated that event tourism also encourages transportation infrastructure improvements resulting in upgraded roads, airports, and public transportation. Also, events are platforms for host communities to highlight their talents, attract potential investors, and foster new business opportunities. The input-output analysis is a widely used method to assess the economic impacts of events at a region or community level (Egresi & Kara, 2014).



**Figure 1:** Basic Principle for Undertaking Economic Impact Studies

Source:(Diedering & Kwiatkowski, 2017)

Multiplier analysis was introduced by Brian Archer in 1984, this concept was initially developed to indicate public expenditure but is now rather applied to determine the economic effect of events or industries. That “recognizes that changes in the level of economic activity created by visitors to a sports facility or event result in changes in the level of economic activity in other sectors, thus creating multiple economic effects”(Diedering & Kwiatkowski, 2017).

### **Negative Economic Impact**

(Sims and D’Mello, 2005) have indicated the participant's ideas on the rising prices of goods, services, and rents who conclude that people with different incomes have different views on prices-lower and middle-income groups felt the process would rise, while high-income earners disagreed with that opinion. Thesis & Supervisor, (2015) the study has discussed these three facts as well. Further, if care is not taken, economic impact may cause inflation in a community economy and, in the nation as a whole. This is when tourists visit the destination, they do not declare how much money they are planning to spend in that community and their money is not government-controlled, which can lead to higher prices or inflation (Chubo, 2014).

### **Environmental Impact of Events;**

ISO 20121, the International standard on Sustainable Event Management helps event organizers and businesses to identify the potential impacts of an event, how to reduce any negative impact on the environment, communities & local economy, and leave a positive legacy (Environmental | Event Impacts, 2021).

### **Positive Environmental Impact**

Macgregor & Jones, (2008) study, six of the events have mentioned promoting environmental awareness. Further to their study, PWC concluded overall, during the construction phase, the Games (sports events) will bring negative environmental impacts to the Upper Lea, but overall, they believe that the impacts on this scale will be positive.

### **Negative Environmental Impact**

In most situations, there are more various negative environmental consequences than positive consequences, especially if there has not been enough study, evaluation, and measures put in place on how to eliminate these impacts. The environmental impact of events starts from the events planning stage to the assessment stage of any event. Any destination needs to provide service and facilities for visitors, in developing these infrastructures and services, they will have negative impacts on the environment in the negatively initial stage, but positively in the long-term (Etiosa, 2012). After these infrastructures have been put in place, another problem is an increase in the number of people utilizing them. There may be basic consequences, such as increasing traffic, crowded parks but it may be sufficient to cause harm to a natural environment (Cook et al., 2010).

Another impact of event tourism is the degradation of the natural physical environment because, during the performance of events, people eat and drink canned food. These canned foods are thrown just everywhere in the destination, making the entire place to be lighter with canned foods that are dangerous to human beings (Chubo, 2014). In this section, present your literature review, exhibiting and discussing the current knowledge including substantive findings as well as theoretical and methodological contributions to the particular topic of your manuscript.

## **3. Research Methodology**

### *3.1 Research Design*

This study focuses on identifying the Impacts of organized commercial events on local communities in Sri Lanka from event managers' perspective. To solve the research questions, the

researchers needed detailed information, experiences, and ideas from event managers. Knowing the event managers' pure and realistic idea of assessing social, economic, and environmental impact, the qualitative research design is the best one to use to achieve the research objectives.

### *3.2 Study Area*

For the study area, Colombo city has been selected since Colombo city, Sri Lanka's commercial capital was nominated by the World Bank in 2013 as one of the fastest-growing urban cities in South Asia. Therefore, most of the event management companies are located and operated in Colombo city. Equally, large commercial events are organized in Colombo due to the location of several significant event locations in Colombo.

### *3.3 Population and Sample Size*

The population is identified as the event organizations that are registered in the Sri Lanka Association of Professional Conference, Exhibition, and Event Organizers (SLAPCEO) in Colombo Sri Lanka. Its database showed 28 organizations that are registered in SLAPCEO. Therefore, those 28 companies are considered as the population and a sample of 12 organizations was drawn to proceed with the study.

### *3.4 Sampling Technique*

The purposive sampling technique was used for this research because, due to the qualities that the participant possesses, it may deliberately choose a participant. Simply in qualitative explorations, the researcher decides what needs to be known and aims to find people who can and are willing to provide the information through knowledge or experience (Bernard, 2006).

### *3.5 Data Collection Methods*

This study is mainly based on the primary data which was collected through structured interviews. All 12 interviews were held in face-to-face conversation, and the length of each interview ranged from 30 minutes to 40 minutes. Secondary data is gathered through research articles, websites, newspapers, books, reports, journals, and the internet, which was too helpful in the analysis.

### *3.6 Data Analysis Method*

The qualitative content analysis method was used to analyse the respondents' opinions. The purpose of content analysis, as with this research strategy, is to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomena under the study. It offers practical applicability, promise, and relevance for research involving the practice and education of professionals due to its focus on human communication (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). Moreover analyzing the data the researcher tries to do so by bringing a wider range of knowledge to the study context. The interview transcriptions generated from the survey were scrutinized and analysed to generate information.

## 4. Findings and Analysis

The purpose of this study was to identify Social, Economic, and Environmental Impacts of Events from events managers' perspectives. Therefore, all the questions posed were much related to the above objective.

### *4.1 Social Impact*

Based on findings, without any argument events are much important to everyone. Because the event industry is interconnected to every industry, and which is connected to social life, country economy, environment, and the whole world. That creates an opportunity for people to interact with each other and it is the best method to enhance the good feeling, self-satisfaction, interactions, and build a relationship with each other. Sri Lankan event managers often organize MICE events. Based on their experience they mentioned that events allow the sharing of knowledge, enhanced education opportunities, and found the solution for peoples' problems. Another aspect is to build an image of the event destination or country. Especially international events which are very helpful to promote our own culture, tradition, attractions, destinations, etc. That means a society, a country, a place, or anything could gain publicity through the events. Further, some of the event organizers like to engage in CSR activities. Through such strategies, the organization promotes itself, and on the other hand CSR activities enhance the social welfare of the community. Finally, as a package, events give more benefits to the community which enhances the quality of life of residents. The analysis also showed that events cause damaging social ethics and culture. Because there are different ranges of events today, which can bring westernized things and can change the social pattern of society.

### *4.2 Economic Impact*

When staging the events, event companies work with many stakeholders, and they maintain a better relationship during and after the event with every stakeholder, which generates benefits for both parties. Such as promotion opportunities, better offers, they can sell their products on the premises, etc. Any event's success is heavily reliant on manpower, it creates different job opportunities in the economy. Through the creation of jobs, events generate revenue in many ways. The event managers added that the selection of local suppliers and small business owners the selection of suppliers will bring greater benefits to society. Another highlighted fact is international events generate a higher revenue than local events, which injects new money into the economy. Also, the event industry's benefit is not limited to one industry; it spreads across a section of the industry, which creates a large circulation of money in the economy, and part of it goes to the government as tax revenue. Economically, it was found out that positive events have spurred most of the infrastructural development in the country. Especially, it can be seen that the government invests more in infrastructure development for events when organized by the government. Another point is that events give opportunities to identify and discuss with new partners, which creates a good platform to identify new investors and build a partnership, business promotion, and business boom. Moreover, event managers believe that an event can enhance tourist attractions. That means, events can greatly enhance the tourism industry, and further event managers added that the cost per person attending an event is three to four times

higher than the average tourist. Another aspect is the identification of new technology for relevant industries and the import of new technological equipment to the country.

As a negative economic impact, 03 out of 12 interviewees (25%) pointed out that importing goods and services. Their opinion is, there should be restrictions and limitations on what should be allowed, and what should not be allowed, if it is not it can be negatively affected by the local economy. Other 09 out of 12 interviewees (75%) believe that the events do not create any negative impact on the economy.

#### 4.3 Environmental Impact

2 out of the 12 (16.6%) interviewees' point of view that an environmental awareness or another positive impact can be made from environmentally targeted events, and other interviewees say that there is not any positive impact on the environment.

Table 2: Summary of Categories

Objective	Codes	Categories	Sub Categories
01	Social Impact	<b>Positive Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote social interaction</li> <li>Self-satisfaction</li> <li>Knowledge sharing</li> <li>Local identity</li> <li>Image building &amp; Publicity</li> <li>Create social welfare</li> <li>Improving the quality of life resident</li> </ul>
		<b>Negative Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Damage social ethics &amp; culture</li> </ul>
	Economic Impact	<b>Positive Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business opportunity and promotion</li> <li>Creation of job</li> <li>Generate revenue</li> <li>Tax revenue</li> <li>Making foreign currency</li> <li>Infrastructure development</li> <li>Attracting potential investors</li> <li>Destination promotion and increase tourist visit</li> <li>Identify new technology</li> <li>Increase circulation of money</li> </ul>
		<b>Negative Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Import goods and services</li> </ul>
			<b>Positive Impact</b>

	Environmental Impact	<b>Negative Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waste disposal</li> <li>• Carbon emission</li> <li>• Noise pollution</li> <li>• Crowding</li> <li>• Traffic congestion</li> <li>• Urban transformation and renewal</li> <li>• Deforestation</li> </ul>
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Source: Develop by the Researcher (2020)

All interviewees stated that waste disposal is the main negative impact of the events. Events also cause to increase in carbon emissions, because people use their modes of transportation to get to a specific destination, especially through private events, and social events. Further, if the event is attended by foreign guests, they use air transport facilities. Therefore, it increases the air pollution in the environment. Another impact is noise pollution, which means unwanted or disturbing noises that interfere with the environment or the community's general lives. Where a big event is held, a large crowd gathers at the venue. That directly affects the creation of traffic congestion and noise. Interviewees mentioned that many events in Sri Lanka are organized in Colombo, when organizing the events at BMICH large crowds gather to Colombo. Then it is a cause to increase the traffic congestion around that area, and it disturbs to the community general life.

Other factors are deforestation, urban transformation, and renewals. These environmental impacts of events on the destination begin from the planning stage of any event. Because infrastructure is the basic and main factor of the venue. But most of the event managers did not see that negative side to the environment. Only 02 out of 12 participants mentioned the negative effect of events on the environment.

Based on the above finding, the researcher was able to identify many impacts, which affect the local community in Sri Lanka. Mainly there are three basic categories. They are the social, economic, and environmental impact of events. Under the three basic codes, there are positive and negative categories and subcategories. All these categories have been extracted from the information mentioned by the interviewees.

#### *4.4 Current Situation of Sri Lankan Cultural Events, and Event Promotion*

Beyond the research objective, it was found that Sri Lanka promotes cultural events at a very low level. Interviewees mentioned that Sri Lanka is a multinational country that they have many traditional events, such as Sinhala & Tamil New Year Festival, Perahera Events, Religious Festivals, and diverse food cultural festivals, etc. Through those events, they can attract foreign visitors. For example, Indians can promote Hindu festivals. But, they do not have a proper plan to promote these events. 08 out of 12 interviewees (66.66%) had such views regarding cultural events.

Further, experts believed that Sri Lanka should have a proper plan to promote events, and then who can reap more benefits in the future more than in the present. They propose different methods for that. Interviewees' opinion as follows.



*“What we need to do, we need to hold our main event in one place, and then the next event is held in Kandy, and the next one is in Galle likewise need to create publicity through it. We want to show through it, this is Sri Lanka, There is this kind of beach in Sri Lanka, and there are hill countries and different cultures. We need to promote things like this.”*

(Participant 01: Personal Communication, 2020)

## **5. Discussion**

The implication of the study is presented in three distinct aspects: Findings that consisted of the previous literature, findings that contradict the literature, and the impact of events on the local community in Sri Lanka. The study agreeing with (Black, 2016), (Rose,2002,p.100), (Bowen, 2013), Fabiani, (2011), and Delanty, (2011) findings, have denoted events are enhancement of knowledge and promote social interaction. Also, research has agreed with, Lavenda, (1992) study, which cited events that satisfy different tastes and are subject to different interests.

However, under the Sri Lankan context experts’ ideas argue with (Gursoy et al., 2004) study. In their argument, events contribute to community pride and localness, contributing to the continuity of local culture. According to the findings, 66.66% of event managers argue, Sri Lanka promotes cultural events at a very low level. Thus, we do not enhance community pride via events. But 33.33% of event managers’ agreed, Sri Lanka can promote the destinations and build an image through events. Further research has agreed with Chubo, (2014) study. He argued on, events create income opportunities, and which improve the standard of living of the community. Moreover, Chubo, (2014) study has denoted events that generate conflict in the host community because communities turn to copy the culture of others. Agreeing with this, the study identified events as a cause of harm to social ethics and culture.

Josing et al., (2012) the study has revealed that collaboration is beneficial for both parties. Also, they have studied the collaboration aspect; 87% of respondents are willing to work even more together while 13% of companies did not consider the partnership important (Josing et al. 2012). Most event hosting literature focuses on economic impacts (e.g. Crompton & McKay 1997; Gartner & Holecek 1983; Kim, Scott, Thigpen & Kim 1998; Thrane 2002; Kasimati 2003; Gursoy et al. 2004) with the perceived positive economic benefits proving to key stakeholders, so, compelling that the negative impacts are considered minor and either ignored or hidden (Hall & Hodges 1996; Hiller 1998). Agree with the study Kumar et al., (2014) has identified that the events generate revenue for destination and individual enterprises, and generate tax revenue for the local and central government. Event has the multiplier effect of business tourist expenditure within the local economy, and inject foreign currency where the visitors are foreign. Further, they have mentioned that the event enhances the potential stimulation of inward investment.

Chubo, (2014) the study also has mentioned high leakage may occur as most communities spend money to buy raw materials to produce goods as souvenirs for tourists, and further, they have denoted most roads, airports, and hotels are often constructed by foreign companies thus causing leakages. Agreeed with the study, Allen et al. (2010) study have cited environmental awareness as a positive effect of events. Also, (Kim & Petrick 2005; Kim, Gursoy & Lee 2006) dominantly has identified traffic congestion and parking as a negative impact. Moreover, only 16.66% of interviewees saw the urban transformation, and deforestation as a negative environmental impact generates by events. Agreeed to Chubo, (2014) a study has mentioned, vegetation and some crops or gardens are destroyed during the preparation and construction for

this occasion. Moreover, Etiosa, (2012) study argument on, developing these infrastructures, will impact the environment negatively in the initial stage but positively in the long run.

This study revealed that events have a positive social, and economic impact, and a negative impact on the environment rather than a positive one. But based on all the findings, the researcher was able to conclude that there is a positive contribution to the local community in Sri Lanka.

## **6. Conclusions**

The present, the event industry has created vital space from the economy all around the world which has apace. Because it generates significant and wide-ranging benefits to a country. This study aimed to identify the social, economic, and environmental impact of events from the event managers' perspective. Through the finding identified that events have a positive social and economic impact and a negative impact on the environment rather than positive. The finding indicated another significant thing is, Sri Lankan event companies promote cultural events very low, or it is nil and there is less number or nil participation from foreign visitors for the local events. Thus, it is a reason to lose a bundle of benefits to the country.

Also, events have a hugely positive contribution to the economy. Moreover, findings indicated that the buying power of the MICE clients is higher than normal clients and international events generate a higher revenue than the local event. Therefore important to identify these impacts and opportunities in the event industry in Sri Lanka and need to make necessary changes where needed.

Finally, the findings in this study contribute to the event tourism field in Sri Lanka. The results help stakeholders who are part of event tourism and event planning to see the weaknesses and what need to be done to improve the event industry and increase its benefits for everyone.

According to the results found by the researcher, it is imperative and very important that recommendations are given. The recommendations will focus on how the positive impacts of the event on the local community can be increased, and also the possible ways to reduce the negative impacts of events. These facts will help the event industry to further develop.

### **01. Build a better partnership among the stakeholders**

This will make a team of trusted and efficient people in different fields, and when they execute their professionalism on the organization or hosting an event, it will give great success, Apart from this, more realistic ideas will emerge because of the combined power.

### **02. Selection of appropriate venue**

According to the type of event need to choose a suitable venue for host particular events. Through that, they can mitigate the damage to social ethics and culture, as well as a disturbance on the local community.

### **03. Waste management**

It is necessary to learn people in the community how to separate and dispose of waste materials. Trash cans should be put at every 800 meters in the particular premises so that people can throw the dirt into it. Waste recycling should be used in the community to dispose of waste and empty cans and plastics should be collected and sold. This allows people to collect their cans and plastic containers because they know it will give them some money.

### **04. Restrict the import of goods, and services**

Local authorities and event organizers can put limitations on the import of goods and services to events.

05. Measuring human impacts on the environment- through tools such as biophysical testing, and environmental footprint analysis

That can tell whether festivals are harming the local ecosystem and assess how many resources are being consumed during the events. This can be a useful intervention in event management to minimize environmental damage.

06. Carbon neutral certificate and Planting activities

The government can put limitations, rules, and regulations on event companies to reduce carbon emissions. When they held large events have to get carbon neutral certificates etc. And also event organizations can do a planting activity annually.

07. Green events and festivals concept

Host green events and festivals to minimize their impact on the environment, and it saves money, and resources as well.

08. Encourage to host different events - cultural events(New year events, Perahera events, Holy events, Diverse food cultural festivals) large events, and rural event

Finally, much more needs to be done to encourage private investors, and the city council to invest in the development of the event tourism sector. Further, not only limited to the city they can host the events selecting different destinations (rural areas) as well. They can attract more local and foreign tourists through the promotion activities, and the positive impact will be huge in all respects, especially if more funding is provided to host large events. Under the variety of event concepts and themes, they can build an image of the country.

## **7. Limitations of the Study**

The study data was collected from the events managers in Sri Lanka which has restrictions on the other stakeholders. Therefore cannot make conclusions that generalize the whole event industry. In addition to that, Event managers just want to show their event as only a good thing, and they do not like to mention the negative effect related to it. Thus it is difficult to identify the negative impact of events from the point of view of event managers.

## **8. Future Research Directions**

The research was conducted to study the impact of organized commercial events on the local community in Sri Lanka from the events managers' perspective. Future researchers can be conducted in a wider manner based on this research using mixed-method analysis and all the events stakeholders like a local community, DMOs, tourist, and event managers' perspectives. Since the study was conducted in the qualitative method, it cannot provide significant proof regarding the conceptual indicator model. To validate this concept indicator model, future researchers can conduct this study in a quantitative analysis method.

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# Developing diving tourism in Eastern Chalkidiki. Implications and prospects in a characterized mining area

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## Abstract

*Eastern Chalkidiki is a characterized mining area, but has also specific tourism identity. Mining collided violently with tourism development perspectives for almost twenty years. Is there a potential to develop sustainable diving tourism in an environmental, social and economic way? This paper focuses mainly on social sustainability and aims to: i) investigate diving tourism development possibilities; ii) highlight conflicted interests and different opinions concerning diving tourism; iii) clarify if diving parks is the solution to promote different forms of economic development in proximity. This research uses Musa's and Dimmock's Scuba Diving Tourism System framework – a whole system approach – to integrate all different stakeholders' opinions. Stakeholders consider tourism a very important asset for local economic development. Local communities remain divided about a possible negative impact of mining on tourism, but less deeply on diving tourism. Conflicted interests between fishermen and diving tourism may appear. So, further development in the area still questions the social and the environmental pillars of sustainability. A diving spots network is an interesting stepping stone to create consensus for a diving park. Purposive sampling was used, limited only to the supply-side of diving tourism. Further researches with larger datasets covering the demand-side are needed in the future.*

**Keywords:** Diving tourism, Sustainability, Governance, Stakeholders, MPAs

## 1. Introduction

Greece has invested on tourism since the early 1960's. Sea and sun are the most precious allies to attract tourists from all over the globe. On the 21<sup>st</sup> century alternative tourism forms develop such as religious, gastronomic, or even "identitarian" (such as the well-known visits of Turks and Jews in Thessaloniki). Diving tourism is another special tourism form relatively undeveloped in Greece, which gives an opportunity to expand supply-side offers to new markets and target groups. Eastern Chalkidiki is not only an ideal-type of sea-and-sun holiday destination but also a well-known starting known point for exploring the Monastic Community of Mount Athos (Agio

Oros). She has got a specific productive and tourist identity. It is a gold mining area, with traditional sea activities like fishing and tourism.

We chose Eastern Chalkidiki for three reasons. Diving tourism implications' on host communities are a very new field of study in Greece (Avrami, L. Demertzis, N. Armenakis, A., 2021). The majority of scholars focus on island communities, where tourism is almost monoculture. Second, there is no other known coastal area in Europe where two conflicted activities (mining and sea tourism) take place in so close proximity. Third, the area needs a rebranding as a tourism destination. This paper claims that diving tourism might be a proper solution in order to attract high income tourists (Dimmock, Cummins and Musa 2013) with as little as possible interventions in the landscape.

Assessing added value of (scuba) diving tourism for destinations and host communities (Davis and Tisdell, 1996; Dimmock, Cummins and Musa, 2013; Rudd and Tupper, 2002) and exploring environmental impacts on marine ecosystems (Edney, 2012; Dearden, Bennett and Rollins, 2007; Harriott, Davis and Banks, 1997; Zakai, and Chadwick-Furman, 2002; Liu, 2003) cover a significant part of literature research. Some scholars focus on interactions between social, economic and environmental factors while others highlight the importance of stakeholders inside hosting communities (Hillmer-Pegram, 2013; Wongthong and Harvey, 2014' Haddock-Fraser Hampton, 2012).

Concerning the area of eastern Chalkidiki, diving tourism should be considered as a complex social- ecological- and economic system, which includes not only marine environment, diving tourists (demand-side) and diving operators but also a host community (supply-side). Therefore, we need an approach that integrates the views, the concerns and the attitudes of multiple players – stakeholders both from the demand and the supply side of the scuba diving tourism system.

## **2. Literature Review**

There are two different theoretical approaches/ frameworks to assess multi-players' inputs in a complex phenomenon like developing diving tourism in a specific area.

The first theoretical approach, the so-called resilience theory, suggested by Hillmer-Pegram (2014), focuses on how ecosystems have the ability to absorb and adapt to changes "while maintaining its fundamental structure and function" (Hillmer-Pegram, 2014). They follow Olson et al.'s (2006) suggestions and extend the validity of resilience theory to social, economic cultural and political changes (Hillmer-Pegram, 2014). They argue that "social-ecological systems are understood to possess the same basic tendencies as ecosystems, and can flip between more and less desirable states..." (Hillmer-Pegram, 2014).

Hillmer-Pegram suggests a certain framework which contains all fundamental components of diving tourism. First and foremost the "attractive marine environments are understood to be the foundations of the system..." (Hillmer-Pegram, 2014). The second part of that theoretical framework are divers and dive operators. Both parts interact and influence each other producing more or less "dive tourism livelihoods". The system's fundamental function of providing livelihoods is emphasized because these livelihoods are one of the system's main benefits and largely define the desirability of its current state" (Hillmer-Pegram, 2014).

Resilience theory not only focuses on changes of natural world but also examines social-ecological systems and economic, social and environmental change. But in Eastern Chalkidiki the



intensity of controversies has decreased since 2019. The electoral victory of the new mayor Mr. Stelios Valianos during local elections (May 2019) and two months later conservative party's (New Democracy) overwhelming victory on national election (July 20219) and accession to power revealed a change in perceptions towards mining. Emphasis was given to environmental protection while mining operations were running. Mining activity and tourism seem to find a new *modus operandi*. So we think that we face a 'frozen' and not a dynamic situation in terms of economic, environmental and social change in Eastern Chalkidiki, which makes the resilience theory less useful. However, an important finding of Hillmer's and Pegram's research is that the dive tourism system does not have the direct support of the larger political and cultural system in which it is embedded (Hillmer-Pegram, 2014).

The second theoretical approach suggested by Dimmock, K. and Musa, M. (2015) proposes a conceptual model for the scuba diving tourism system (SDTS), which focus on sustainability and stakeholders' concerns. They argue that "achieving sustainable outcomes needs an approach which draws the views and concerns of multiple stakeholders together to integrate social and ecological issues in scuba diving issues" (Dimmock and Musa, 2015) Integrating different stakeholders' views and needs in the decision-making process is a great advantage of Dimmock's and Musa's theoretical concept. Thus, we can easily track and "...explore patterns in the relationships between stakeholders involved in scuba diving tourism" (Dimmock and Musa, 2015).

The SDTS approach recognises three main categories of stakeholders: scuba divers, the scuba diving tourism industry and the host community. In other words, SDTS approaches takes into account demand-side (divers), supply-side (diving tourism industry) and the socio-economic environment (host communities). Although each of these stakeholders has got their own role and responsibilities, they interact with and are dependent on each other. According to those scholars, the scuba diving tourism system requires collaboration and regulations on specific roles and perspectives. It is indicated that a sustainable diving system regulates each stakeholder's desires and goals in order to accomplish positive effects and to abate the negative prospective.

According to Dimmock and Musa (2015) divers "seek opportunities to view and experience diverse underwater sites and landscapes". So the marine environment is a key factor in a well-balanced SDTS. The second group of stakeholders consists of the broader diving tourism industry, i.e. hotels, restaurants, diving clubs, diving accessories retailers, boat owners etc. The third group of stakeholders includes the host community, local governing and maritime management authorities, local community etc.

While the so-called resilience theory focuses on change and interactions between divers and the natural environment, the approach of Dimmock and Musa, prioritises the element of the socio-economic environment. That's the reason why it is chosen.

Dimmock and Musa face host communities as a whole with undifferentiated interest. We believe, on the other hand, that there are many different and even conflicted interests inside host communities with broader economic base. In Eastern Chalkidiki we recognise host community includes: i) fishermen, ii) other than scuba diving services suppliers for tourists and locals, iii) local authorities officials, iv) divers and scuba diving businesses and v) the mining community (the mining company and miners trade unions). We included local authorities' officials for two reasons. First, through them we could capture the opinions of larger audiences because politicians articulate and represent broader interests. Second, because the political conflict in

Eastern Chalkidiki is organised upon the “mining cleavage” and people’s opinion on local economic development is influenced by their attitude towards mining activities.

Eastern Chalkidiki was deeply divided in gold mines. For many years mining supporters and against mining devotees collided in every chance, from local and national elections to conflicts outside the constructions sites and facilities of Hellas Gold. We use the term “mining community” to describe the employees, the company that operates the gold mines (Hellas Gold S.A.). On the other hand, for and against mining local authorities’ officials formed one group.

### **3. Research Methodology**

Eastern Chalkidiki has got two main administrative districts: Municipality of Aristotelis and the Monastic Community of Mount Athos (Hagio Oros). In HAGio Oros all economic activities are forbidden, so we focus only on communities of Municipality of Aristotelis which are connected to summer and sea tourism activities due to time considerations, resources availability and covid\_19 restrictions. Even though the purposive selection of our sample does not allow us to claim its strict geographical representativeness, we aimed at representation of stakeholders from all coastal communities and some of the inland.

We approach twenty nine (29) potential participant stakeholders. One (1) declined to take part from the initial approach and four others (4) did not answer the questionnaire. Stakeholders [N=24] come from six major pools: a) local authorities’ officials (11 including the mayor of Aristotelis, the chairman of the municipal council, all three leaders of the opposition, 6 out of 15 chairmen of local communities all strongly related with tourism, and the vice-governor of Chalkidiki); b) 5-star hotel managers/owners (3, all of them promote diving tourism); c) divers (4 including the 2 diving clubs, Hippocampus Institute and a private diving teacher); d) representatives of tourism business owners (3, coming from the more tourism depended local communities representing restaurant and catering branches among others); e) the local fishermen association (1); and f) the mining community (2, including representatives of the Hellas Gold S.A. and gold miners’ trade unions).

Initially we designed to conduct face-to-face interviews with semi-structured questionnaires. The pandemic restrictions and the anxiety of all stakeholders that their recorded interviews may be used for other purposes, despite our assurances and disclaimers for independent non-funded academic research, did not make such an arrangement possible. The only acceptable solution was to send a copy of the questionnaire to all stakeholders, in order to reply alone and send it back. That process took place from 16 March 2021 to the 9<sup>th</sup> of April. All questionnaires were distributed by one researcher who was responsible to clarify any questions arising by the study. This pilot study is based on interviews of 25 closed and 3 open question (semi-structured interviews) regarding diving tourism development. We used the extensive questionnaire of Lucrezi et al. (2017) as a base of our questionnaire. Open questions were addressed mainly to divers and diving industry stakeholders and were optional for all the others.

When all questionnaires were collected, the data were stored in researchers’ personal computers and were used only for the purposes of this study. Additionally, we gave each questionnaire a code name, which responds to the social-professional status of the responded stakeholder and a serial number. In other words, “local authorities’ officials” are coded as LAO1 to LAO11; 5-star hotel managers as Hotel1 to Hotel3; divers as Diver1 to Diver4; tourism services’ business owners as TSS1 to TSS3; and the gold mining community as Gold1 to Gold2. Microsoft excel was used to

process data. Since our data were non-sensitive, no special security and storage requirements were needed.

#### 4. Findings and analysis

In that part of the paper we are going to present and discuss the findings of the survey. The questionnaire included 5 sections, four complimentary and one optional for divers or business experts only: i) tourism development in Eastern Chalkidiki; ii) the relationship between local communities and tourism development in Eastern Chalkidiki; iii) the contribution of diving tourism in local economic growth/development; iv) the contribution of diving tourism to protecting the environment in Eastern Chalkidiki; and the optional v) indicating interesting diving points.

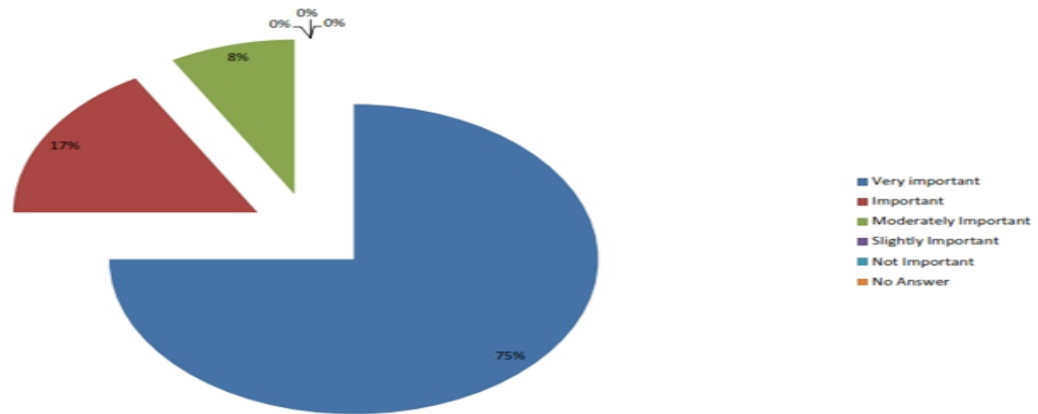


Figure 1: Importance of tourism

In the first section it is expected that all stakeholders acknowledge the importance of Tourism for the economic development of the area (75% find tourism very important, a 17% important, and an 8% moderately important (Figure 1).

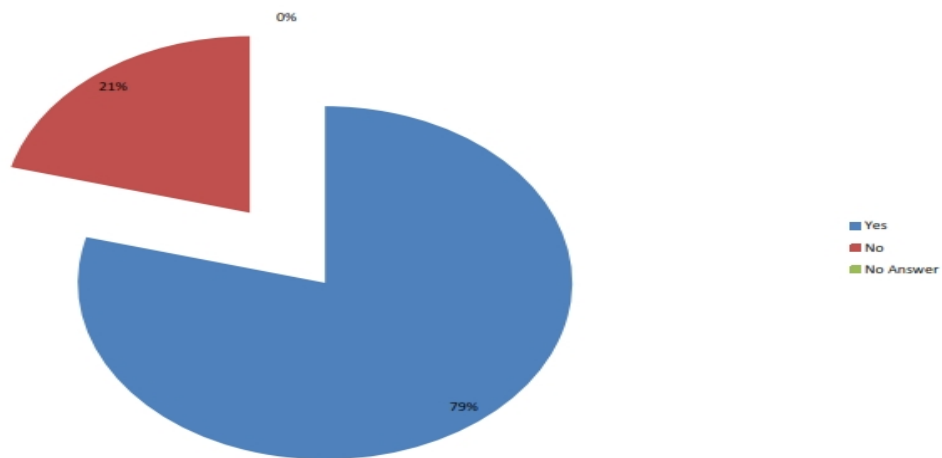


Figure 2: Knowledge regarding diving tourism.

A remarkable finding of your research is that 79% are aware that there is diving tourism (D.T.) in E. Chalkidiki and only 21% are not aware of it (Figure 2). Among those who know about D.T. 53% think that it is very important or important for the tourism image of the area against 47% that is moderately or slightly important (Figure 3). Those findings are adverse with the picture of an area with only two diving centers in the area of Ouranoupolis, 21 diving spots in Ammouliani Island and no businesses providing necessary material for organized scuba diving experiences (Figure 2).

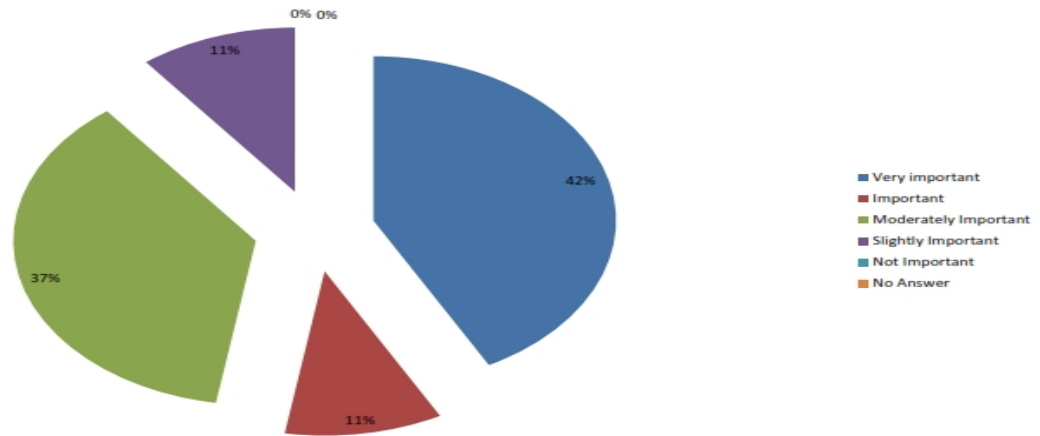


Figure 3: Importance of diving

In the second section, it is not surprising that stakeholders consider diving tourism as a beneficial alternative form of tourism in the area (Figure 4) especially through creating other activities indirectly linked with D.T. (32%), enhancing environmental protection (25%) and increasing income for locals (18%) in conjunction with decreasing unemployment (10%) (Figure 5).

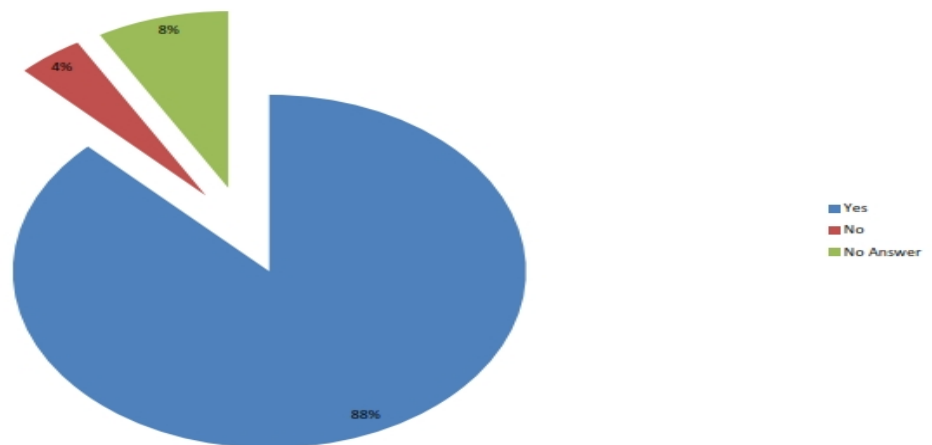


Figure 4: Development

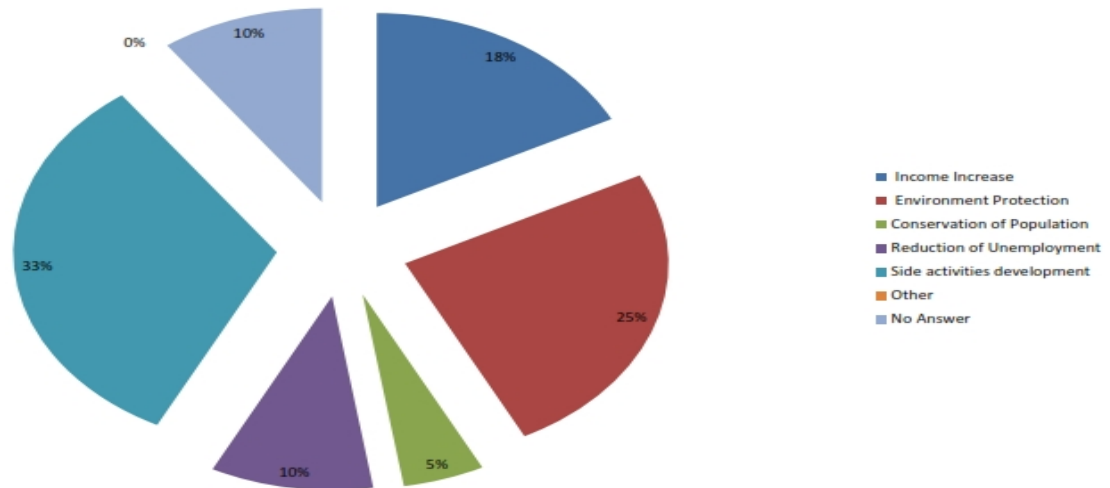


Figure 5: Ways of development

Studying a characterised mining area emphasizes the fact that the local community is considering the development of diving tourism as a pillar for environment marine protection, even though in international literature there is a concern about the consequences scuba diving may have on marine ecosystem. Saphier and Hoffmann (2005) in their research prove that diving tourism may damage underwater ecosystem. Moreover, it is noticed that divers provoke an imbalance to marine environment via physical contact (e.g., touching coral, mess sand) (Harriott & Simon, 1997; Luna, Perez, and Sanchez-Lizaso, 2009; Roupael and Inglis, 1997); Hillmer-Pegram, 2014). Furthermore Wongthong and Harvey (2014) research shows that irresponsible behaviors of scuba divers are another source of reef damage. Dimmock and Musa (2015) claimed that negative impacts can occur to ecosystems from contact with divers, diver equipment and fins, as well as from poor buoyancy control.

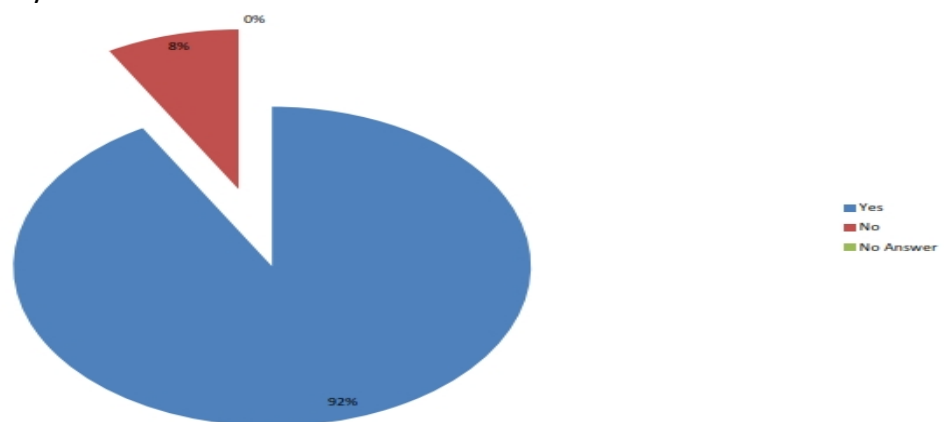


Figure 6: Benefits

Another interesting finding is the striking support for diving parks, 92% of the stakeholders believe that is going to be beneficial for the local community (Figure 6), but we can assume that local communities are not well informed about regulations and restrictions according to Laws L. 4296/2014, and L. 4688/2020 [in Greek] a diving park creates in other sea activities (Figure 7).

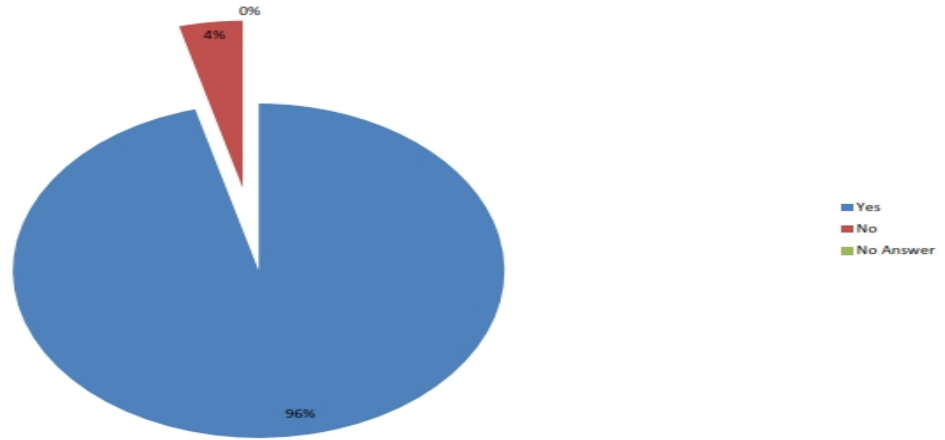


Figure 7: Local Communities

Thus, when stakeholders were asked if it is necessary to impose restrictions in order to develop diving tourism in eastern Chalkidiki over other activities, only 54% of them answered YES, 25% NO and 21% did not answer (Figure 8). Figure 9 might reveal that lack of essential information about diving parks. When we asked stakeholders how host communities could support a diving park 36% answered by developing infrastructures and networks (roads, broadband connection etc), 27% by having more focused advertisement, 20% by improving environmental protection and a 16% by improving hospitality and catering.

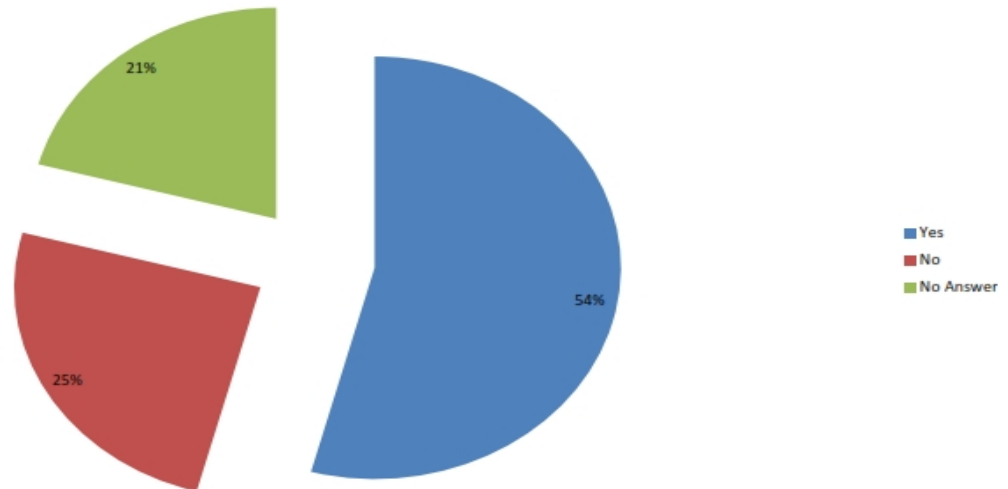


Figure 8: Restrictions

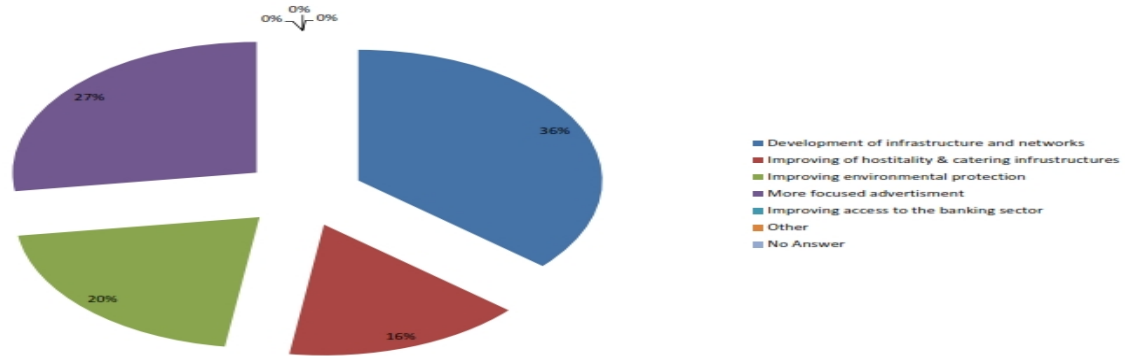


Figure 9: Support by local community

The greatest concern of stakeholders (Figure 10) about further development of D.T. is a possible negative impact on fishing activities (50%). Furthermore, they are equally concerned (13%) about a possible reduction of mining activities, an increase of maritime accidents, and a change of the tourist character of the area. Fishing is a traditional activity and the fishermen association includes 400 members. There is a law restriction for fishing in a 500 m. zone from the shores of Agion Oros and according to the president of the local Fishery Association there is strong competition in Strymonas' Gulf by fishermen coming from nearby areas (Kavala, Thermaikos, Volos) as well.

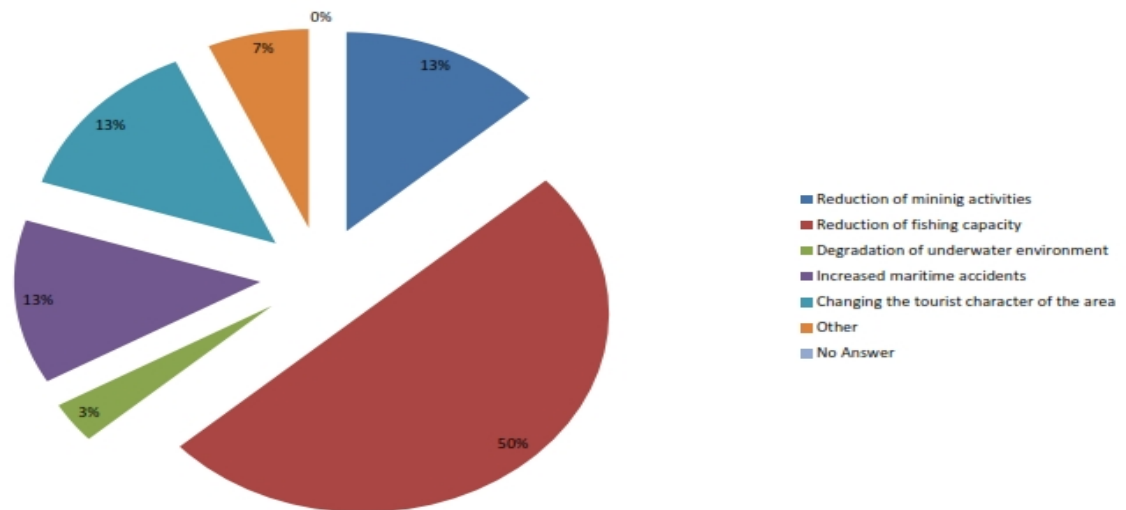


Figure 10: Negative Impact

The last set of questions on the second section of the survey concerned the relationship between mining activity and tourism. We can observe that local community is divided in mining activity and tourism development: a 50% doesn't believe that mining activity has got negative impacts on tourism development, a 42% thinks that tourism development is threatened by mining activity and an 8,% doesn't respond (Figure 11).

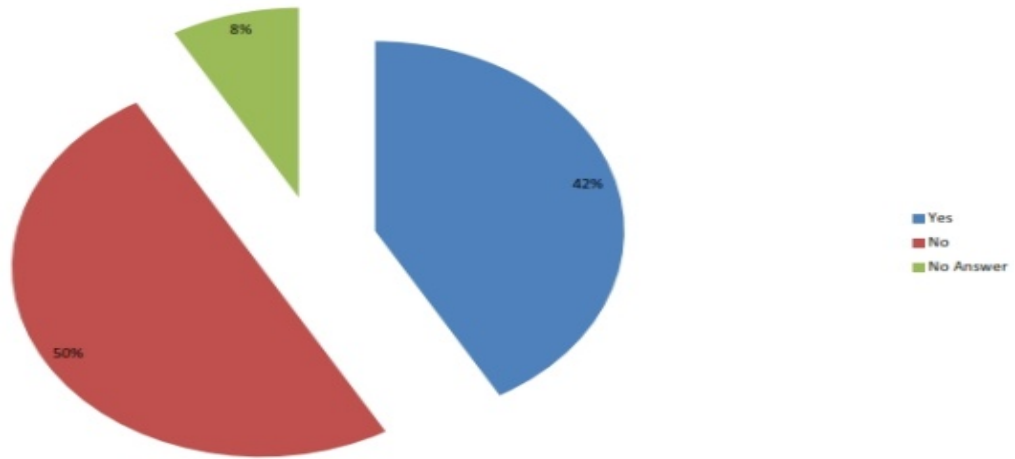


Figure 11: Mining activity

On the other hand, the conflict between mining activity and diving tourism is less significant as a 58% believe that mining and diving can be combined and a 33% believe the opposite (Figure 12). Due to the non-expected change from semi-structured interviews to self-replied questionnaires, we missed the opportunity to ask if they are aware that recreation scuba diving is prohibited in transit or mooring of ships areas. (L. 4688/2020, art. 2. par. 2). This clarification is crucial because Hippocampi leave outside Stratoni’s port.

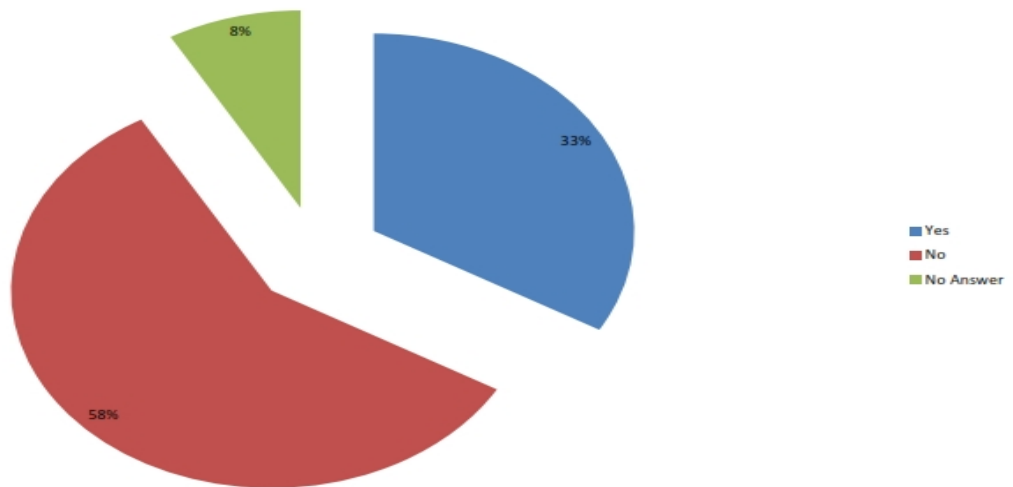


Figure 12: Mining and development

In the third section we tried to investigate how D.T. is going to affect Eastern Chalkidiki in socio-economic terms. A strong majority of 88% (Figure 13) believes that if the area acquires a new brand as a diving destination, the economic growth will be boosted through the creation of new and support of existing tourism businesses (36%), increase occupancy and booking on accommodation (22%), extend of the tourist season (20%) and increase employment (13%) (Figure 14). It is notified that there is no concern about rising prices of the local real estate market (Wongthong and Harvey, 2014).



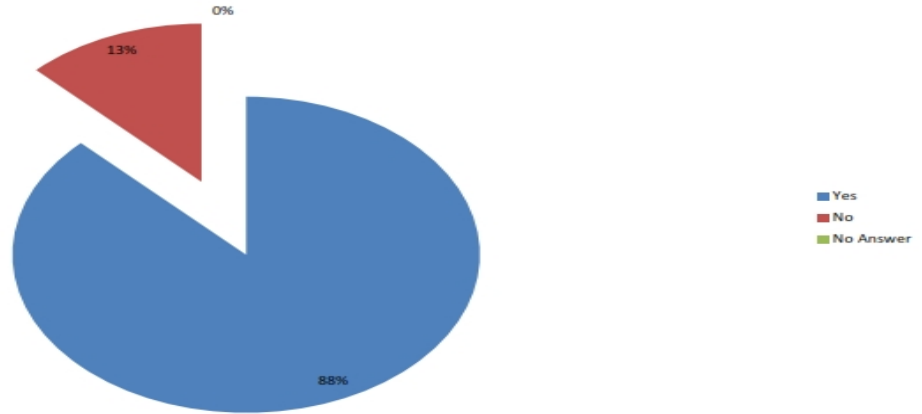


Figure 13: Economic development

On the other hand, positive impacts have been considered as an opportunity to generate new jobs, sustainable livelihoods and positive socio-cultural outcomes (Dimmock and Musa, 2015).

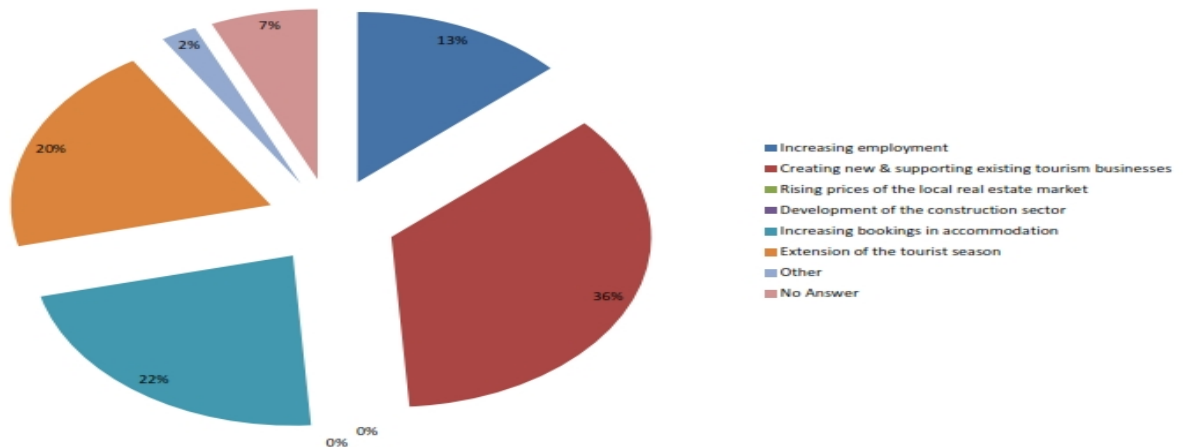


Figure 14: Development stimulation

It is not surprising that 35% of the stakeholders believe that investing on sustainable and alternative forms of tourism is a great means to strengthen the overall tourism image of the area (Figure 15). Integration of the culture and the ancient Greece heritage (Stagira is the birth place of Aristotle) gathers 30% of preferences, while the reduction of mining activity 13%, better advertisement in Greece and abroad 11% and the opening to new markets only 9% .

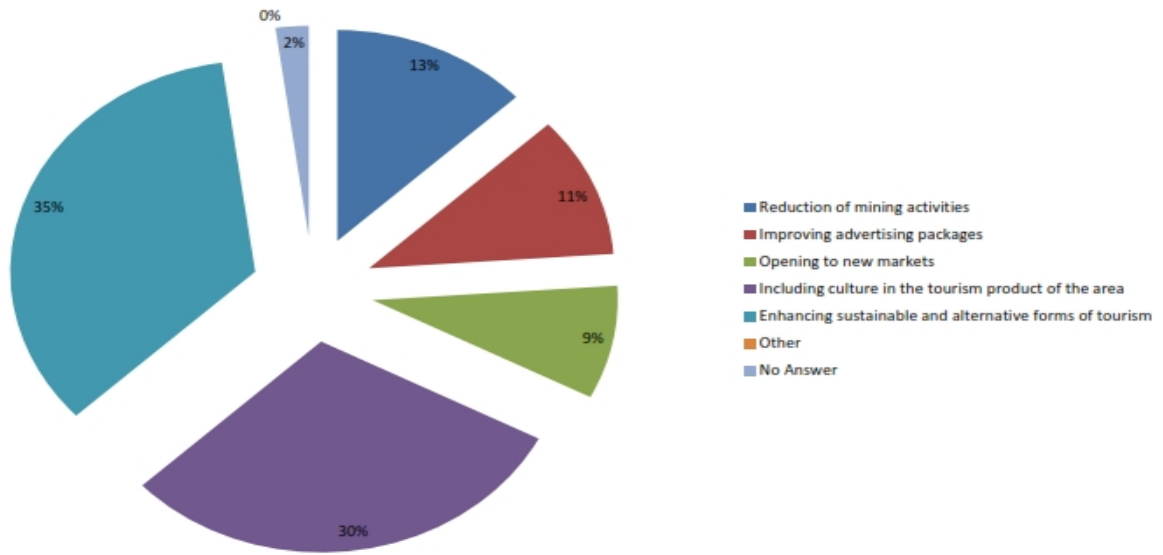


Figure 15: Image

Most stakeholders (79%) believe that Eastern Chalkidiki needs new infrastructures to develop further (Figure 16) diving tourism. Port facilities (34%) and road access to the area (31%) are the most common answers followed by health-care facilities (14%), maintenance of the local road network (11%) and environmental protection facilities (6%) (Figure 17).

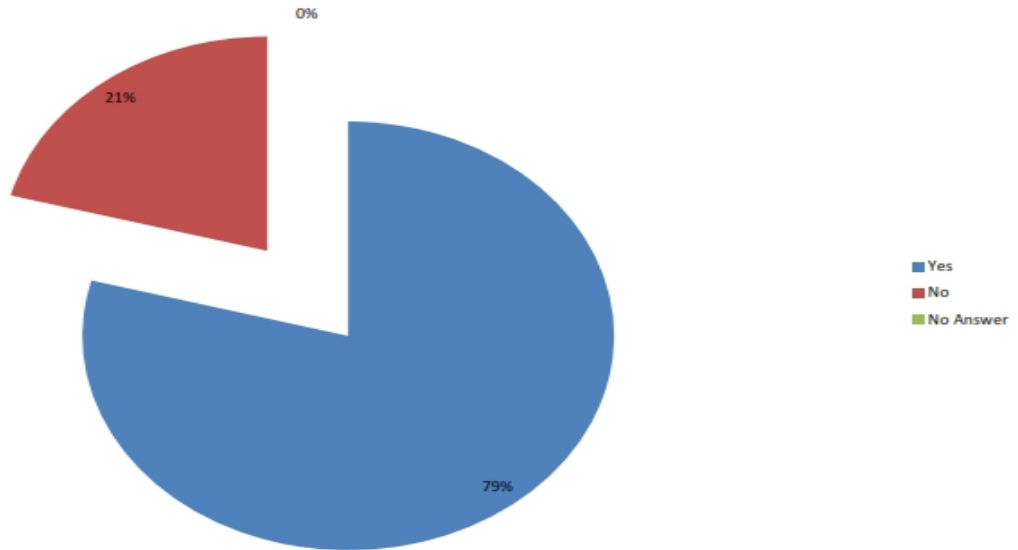


Figure 16: Infrastructures

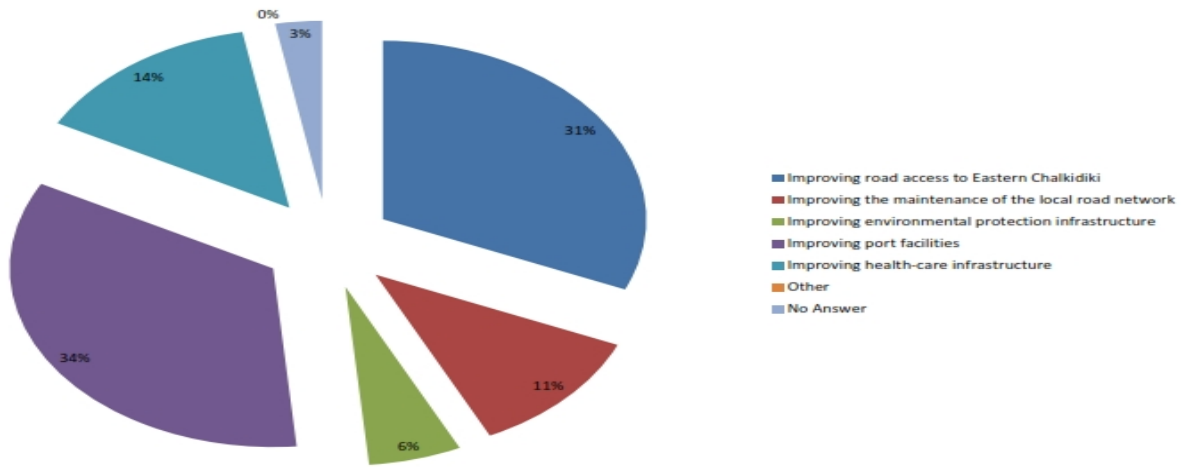


Figure 17: Projects

In the fourth section of the questionnaire we try to find stakeholders' opinions on diving tourism and improving environmental protection on the area. Again the majority (71%) of stakeholders believe that developing D.T. is going to enhance environmental protection while 8% believe the opposite and 21% didn't answer (Figure 18). Among that 71% there are different answers as far as the main reason is concerned, 28% answered the increase on quality waters controls as the main reason, 22% the increased maritime law enforcement and increased surveillance of mining activities, 19% the improvement of municipal waste management and 9% the better monitoring of individuals' waste disposal (Figure 19). That point of view is in correspondence with the perception that clear waters and a pure marine ecosystem which are significant elements for scuba diving may apply for strict environment marine rules (Salim, Bahauddin and Badauddin, 2013).

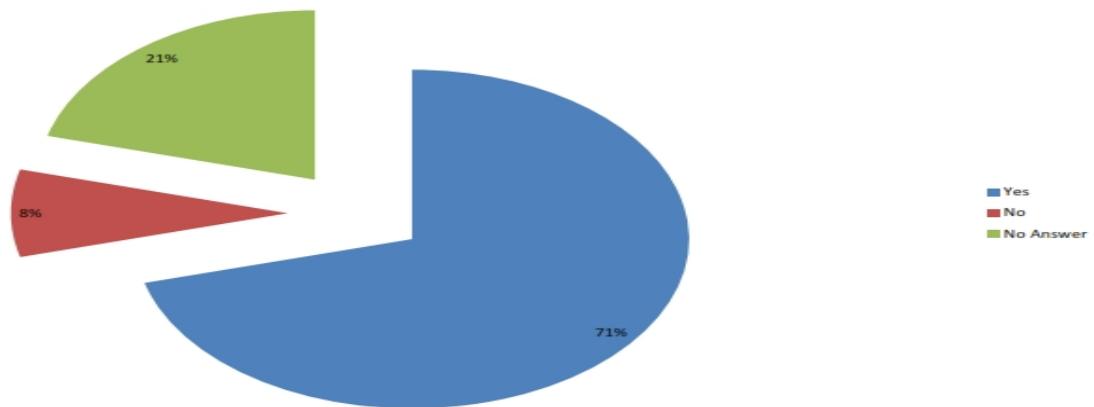


Figure 18: Environmental protection

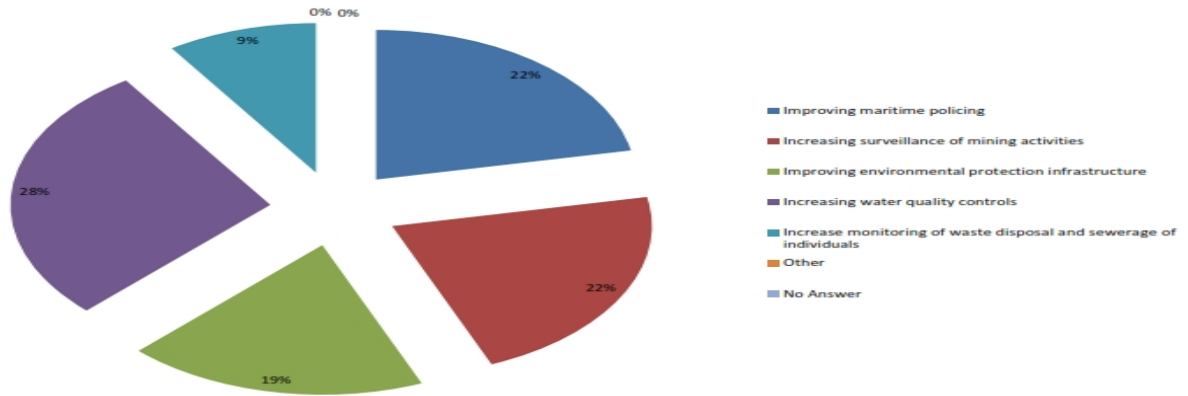


Figure 19: Reasons for environmental protection

Diving Tourism is strongly connected with stakeholders' perceptions that it is going not only to improve environmental protection but also to protect underwater flora and fauna (88% - 12% did not answer) (Figure 20). It is clear that mining activity made all stakeholders considerably sensitive towards sustainability and environmental protection.

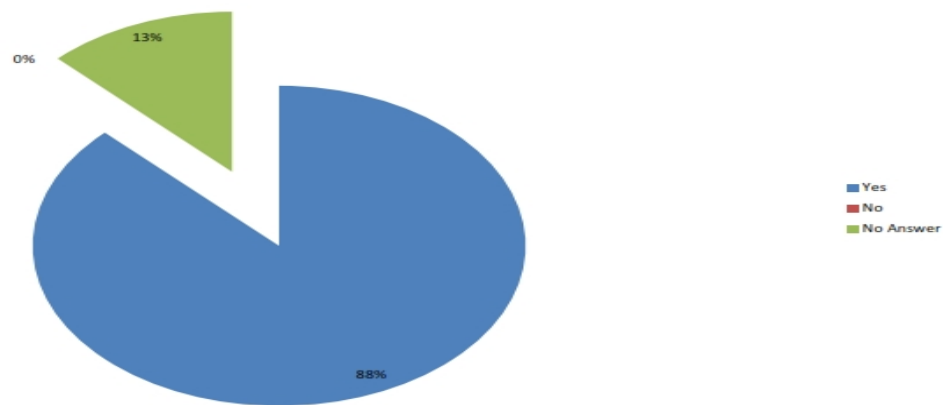


Figure 20: Natura zone

The main concern towards diving tourism is the effects on fishing, which reveal lack of information. In Q24 we asked stakeholders if creating a diving park within a designated Natura Zone – MPA (there is NO such one in E. Chalkidiki) will decrease local communities' anxieties for diving tourism. "Yes" was slightly majority (42%) followed by "No Answer" (33%) and "No" (25%) (Figure 21).

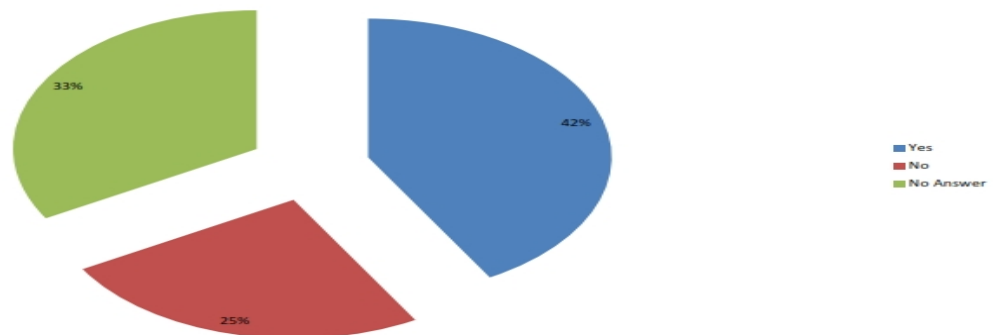


Figure 21: Local community diving park

Concerns are stronger when stakeholders have to decide whether to promote diving tourism or fishing in specific areas. We name four areas: Eleytherides at the north of Ierissos' gulf, near Stratoni, Arkouda on the north end of Agio Oros gulf, Kafkanas near Olympiada on the east coast of Chalkidiki and Ammouliani in Agio Oros gulf as well. In all four areas the option "No Answer" came first by 54%, 63%, 63% and 38% respectively. Positive opinions are 25%, 13%, 13% and 25% accordingly while negative 21%, 25%, 25% and 37% respectively.

From the fifth and final (optional) part of the questionnaire some interesting conclusions came out. We included three open questions, asking stakeholders opinions about: a) sea areas with diving interest; b) sea flora and fauna species in each of the indicated areas; c) "the existence of rare species worthy of diving". Fourteen out of twenty four stakeholders responded (1/3 hotel managers; 6/11 local authorities' officials; all 4 divers; the fishermen association; and 2/3 representatives of the tourism businesses).

Underwater flora and fauna present particular diversity both in the broader area of Ammouliani Island (Agio Oros gulf) and in Stratoni and Olympiada, on the other side of the peninsula (Strymona's gulf). Hippocampi in Stratoni are the jewel of the crown but they are quite few and its habitat is located outside Stratoni's port where ships' load the gold mines. There also are some dolphins, seals, and interesting reefs. But far more interesting is seabed's conditions and geophysical conformation. "Seabed in Greece, even though they are ideal for diving, they lack marine life, in order to be interesting for scuba divers, (the problem is common in all Mediterranean countries)" (Στάθης, Μαρκάτος and Κούτσης, 2019).

## **5. Discussion**

Research shows that stakeholders are not well informed about the restrictions as well as the benefits of a diving park or a Marine Protected Area on fishing. If a diving park is to be created, stakeholders and host communities should need more information, fishermen substantial educational programs and a governing body that should be established through participative procedures.

Participative procedures should include all host communities. Despite possible difficulties, a broader governing body shall have to operate properly. As Tosun (2000) has already revealed, without creating opportunities for local people to take part in the decision-making process, it would be very difficult for local communities to get advantages from tourism development.

Stakeholders should not only be informed about the benefits of diving tourism as a sustainable form of tourism but also about inadequate practices in order to overcome environmental disorders and to achieve a sustainable development. As we see in literature, diving tourism may have a negative impact on marine ecosystems and clearly indicates the need for various forms of regulation (e.g., diver education, carrying capacity limits) (Hall & Lew, 2009).

A versatile marine fauna and flora has been accented with the footprint of hippocampi in Stratoni, and the interesting formations of the Mediterranean seabed. Divers are interested in new opportunities to see and to experience diverse marine sites and landscapes (Dimmock and Musa, 2015). A diving spots network is an interesting and safe path to further develop diving tourism in Eastern Chalkidiki.

The Institution of Hippocampi in Stratoni should be enhanced with educational environmental programs, about marine life, and be considered as an educational- training spot not only for

divers and tourists but also for scuba diving instructors and local community members. New technologies at the field of monitoring Hippocampi life and 3D cinema with underwater life may be a positive prospect in order to succeed sustainability through knowledge.

The development of diving tourism should be considered as a process combining various alternative forms of tourism like diving tourism, wine tourism, cultural tourism and historical tourism. Eastern Chalkidiki's (new) brand name shall be built on a multilateral approach like this. From the supply-side point of view, destination is a complex system formed by different dimensions and stakeholders. A destination management organization is needed. It will bring together opinions and perspectives while analyzing demand-side trends. At the same time, it will articulate socio-cultural, economic and ecological interests of host communities' stakeholders (Crouch, Ritchie 1999).

From the point of view of demand, the attitude of tourists towards sustainability focuses on health-nature and wellness. That means a holistic approach, where visitors' willingness to pay for a sustainable model is crucial in order to meet local community's perspectives.

The local governance is responsible to run the procedures. Emphasis should be given to natural resources, sustainable management and local stakeholders' needs management (Ruhanen, 2013). In other words, local authorities should be used as a connection hub, where host communities' stakeholders co-decide and work together to add value to the destination and maintain a respectful environment for the visitors.

The sustainability regulations need to keep scuba-diving spots network and related activities in line with other groups' activities. The management destination organisation has to take stakeholders' conflicted interests and different opinions into account while trying to favor the engagement of all of them (Nagai et al, 2017).

A well-organised Tourist Information System should be the starting point of the destination management system including an interactive catalog, which gives information about the destination and especially about the conditions and the details of the water in diving spots (Kiriakou, 2005). This system must be in full operation, 24/7 to prepare and help visitors find information about the hidden corners of the destination. These tools might help scuba-diving tourists to be more interested in the destination and to understand that human centric character is needed to achieve sustainability in all three ways, economic, environmental and social.

## **6. Conclusions**

In brief, our research revealed 4 significant points. First, Eastern Chalkidiki remains divided over mining activity and the potential negative effects on tourism, even though there are significantly less concerns about effects on diving tourism. Second, local communities strongly desire further tourism development but without compromising mining activity or fishing. Third, local community despite its intentions, is not well informed about restrictions and regulations a diving park will bring on. Fourth, stakeholders consider diving tourism development as a great means of enhancing environmental protection. Points two and four indicate that local community is fully aware of the conditionality of sustainability. Sustainable development has to be sustainable in economic, social, and environmental way at the same time.

Overall, more information about possible restrictions on other non-tourism related activities like mining and fishing is needed to stakeholders of Eastern Chalkidiki if they intend to further develop diving. But the demand side of diving tourism is still a black box. What diving tourists

think about Eastern Chalkidiki's perspectives as a diving destination? Our study was limited only to the supply-side of tourism. Further researches with larger datasets covering the demand-side are needed in the future. In addition, more specialized surveys are needed in the field of diving tourism, in order to keep a social consensus between different stakeholders and a sustainable development in an environmental, economic and social way.

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# Rethinking Tourism Planning and Development in a Post COVID-19 World

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## Abstract:

*Tourism destination management organisations (DMO's) should already be planning for a post COVID-19 world. Therefore, this paper aims to address the following questions: what will the "new normal look like", and how can destinations develop tourism in this never seen conditions. Bearing that in mind, the objective is to show that DMO's should rethink their present strategic tourism planning and development objectives by starting to use 'Scenario Planning'. This paper is exploratory and with it, one intended to broaden the discussion scope and to bring new insights into tourism planning and development thematic in the post COVID-19 era, suggesting new interpretations. Results demonstrate that by using scenario planning destinations can amid the COVID-19 pandemic better predict what will the "new normal look like", and how should destinations develop tourism. This research asserts, that by using Scenario Planning, DMO's will be better prepared, not only to respond to the unpredictability of the future ahead, but also to design more adequate tourism development policies and planning. Future studies must be made in order to help us all to further understand this new reality and its implications in the tourism destinations' management and development dimensions.*

**Keywords:** *Tourism planning and development; DMO's; Scenario planning; Competitive advantage; COVID-19 pandemic*

## 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 global pandemic has created a health crisis never seen since the 'Spanish Flue' pandemic (1918-1920). According to the latest data from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2021), global tourism suffered its worst year ever on record in 2020, with international arrivals falling by 74%, these numbers are in line with the drop between 60% and 80% predicted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2020).

Being the tourism sector so sensible to variation in the external environment, it has taken a severe toll, and all around, the world tourism businesses are struggling to remain open.

Pandemics like COVID-19 fall under the umbrella of what Rittel and Webber (1973) called 'wicked problems'. These, are interrelated dilemmas, issues, and other problems at multiple levels of society, and include, in addition to pandemics, concerns like: other emergence diseases, terrorism, climate change, etc. (Horn and Webber, 2007). Governments must address these 'wicked problems' and prepare the future (post COVID-19 pandemic) by developing policies and actions (e.g. strategic tourism planning) to address market failures and to mitigate the cultural, social and environmental effects of the sudden decrease in the number of tourist arrivals.

Schwartz (1996) says, that what increasingly affects all of us, whether professionals planners or persons preparing for a better future, is not the tangible elements of life, such as, bottom-line numbers, but intangible elements: as our hopes and fears, our beliefs and dreams. Only stories, scenarios, and our ability to visualize different types of futures adequately can help capture those intangible elements. So, so it is important that policymakers incorporate scenario planning both in their policy process and in tourism strategic planning designs.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, traditional strategic tourism planning models should be left aside by Destination Management Organisations (DMOs), since they are not prepared to deal with today's levels of uncertainty, complexity and disruption.

As a strategic tool, Scenario planning has been increasingly adopted by organisations to enable them to cope with volatile environments, because traditional planning often fails when facing new and unexpected contexts.

As a strategic tool, scenario planning has been increasingly adopted by organisations to enable them to cope with volatile environments, because traditional planning often fails, when facing new and unexpected contexts.

According to Gössling, Scott & Hall (2021), several tourism organisations have already published estimates of the consequences of COVID-19 for the global tourism industry in 2020. These estimates need to be treated with extensive caution, as it remains fundamentally unclear how the pandemic will develop, what enhances the need of destinations to use scenario analysis in their policy definition and in strategic tourism planning.

In this paper, first one discusses the origin, meaning and the different objectives surrounding the use of scenario planning. Secondly, one talks on the why scenario planning must be incorporated in the design of the tourism development policy process. Moving on, the several methods to develop a tourism scenario base strategic planning are discussed. Then, one makes an incursion in how scenario planning can be applied to tourism strategic planning in post COVID-19. Finally, findings are discussed, and the paper is concluded with the final considerations.

## **2.Literature Review**

Scenario planning had its origins in the military forces after the II World War, with the RAND Corporation in U.S. Military strategic planning and in French spatial planning at DATAR (Van Notten, 2006).

The term 'scenario' has many meanings, ranging from movie scripts and loose projections to statistical combinations of uncertainties- In its broadest sense, scenario thinking is as old as storytelling itself (Schoemaker, 2020). Lockie (2010:101) says that scenarios "help to render the Earth as a co-evolving human-ecological system both thinkable and governable".

According to Rickards et al. (2014:595), “scenarios are themselves defined in various, contested ways, involving a wide range of methodologies and philosophies.

According to Rickards et al. (2014:595) “scenarios are themselves defined in various, contested ways, involving a wide range of methodologies and philosophies. Somewhat reflecting the spatiality of the broader futures schools, where scenario approaches range from near predictions (‘the American approach’) to explicitly normative stories of the future (the ‘French approach’), with the characteristic exploratory approach (the ‘UK approach’) in between”.

In corporate strategic planning, scenarios usually refer to narratives of possible futures with a special emphasis on causal connections, internal consistency, and relevance (Hawken et al., 1982; Ramirez & Wilkinson, 2016).

Therefore, scenarios offer alternative views of the future. They identify some basic differences and key players, as well as their motivation and offer different perspectives on future world development. The development and application of scenario planning; that includes environmental and economic models, crisis management simulations and the use of scenarios as long-term business planning tools, can help to find ways to face future uncertainties.

The aim of scenarios is not probabilistic forecasting nor to characterize a few uncertainties in terms of their possible outcomes and likelihoods. The main intent is to develop insightful narratives about possible futures that improve strategic conversations about planning, not forgetting however, that no scenario can provide an accurate description of the future (Van der Heijden, 1996; 2011). The purpose of scenario planning is that organisations, businesses or destinations take measures that make them more resilient against future developments that otherwise might affect their market position (Postma, 2015).

Research that have been made recently related to tourism, according to Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie (2005), include building scenarios to cope with external crises, such as acts of terrorism and pandemics, from which tourism is heavily impacted, but also others such as: transport and mobility developments (Dubois & Ceron, 2007; Dubois et al., 2011), demographic and social changes (Yeoman et al., 2010), economic recovery from earthquakes Nagamatsu & Hayashi, 2012), market segmentation and marketing (Yeoman, 2008), scenarios for 2050 (Yeoman, 2012) and climate change adaptation (Grimm et al., 2018).

According to Kosow and Gaßner (2008) scenario approaches can be regarded as methods for the future, and scenario planning a complex set of methods which invariably consists of numerous different methodological steps or phases. Some of those use innovative and complex scenario-based tools for planning (Gössling & Daniel Scott, 2012).

In the end, one must agree with Wright et al. (2013:1), when they say that there are “three main objectives of the application of scenario methods are to: (i) enhance our understanding of the causal processes, connections and logical sequences underlying events – thus uncovering how a future state of the world may unfold; (ii) challenging conventional thinking, that is, reframe perceptions and change the mindsets of those within organisations, and (iii) improve decision-making, so as to inform strategy development.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This paper is exploratory and with it, one intended to broaden the discussion scope and to bring new insights into the tourism planning and development thematic in the post COVID-19 era, suggesting new interpretations and perspectives. An exploratory scenario exercise seemed the

most appropriate taking in consideration our aim, that is, to explore possible developments of external factors in a context of uncertainty. In these cases, which depend mainly on creativity and in qualitative data, an intuitive approach based on logical thinking seemed an appropriate process to develop our analysis (Van Notten et al., 2003; Piirainen and Lindqvist, 2010).

With this intention, one has used a systematic secondary research method relying solely in existing materials. The use of a secondary data method allowed us to contribute to knowledge by answering to sensitive-time questions faster, and that permitted to develop new ideas and directions in what regards to the design of strategic tourism plans and policies for the post COVID-19 pandemic world. However, some limitations exist when one carries out an exploratory study, because being this an interpretation of a completely new reality, it is only possible to formulate hypothesis without truly having the possibility of verifying them.

#### **4. Scenario Planning in Tourism Policy -Making Process**

Bearing in mind, that the impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic are of such a vastness that its consequences in the tourism sector are today still hard to fully foresee and even harder to measure. So, in the present study when calling for the use of scenarios planning in tourism policy-making process, one agrees with the thoughts of Argyriades (2010:292), who claims about the modern government that the new “value accorded to improvisation – ‘creative problem solving’, as it is often called – bespeaks the growing feeling that adaptation to new social conditions is a *sine qua non* of survival”. One also agrees with Anderson (2003:2), who prefers a conceptualization of policy that emphasizes actions rather than actions: “relative stable, purposive course of action followed by government in dealing with some problem or matter of concern”. This definition focuses on what is done instead of what is only proposed or intended, differentiates a policy from a decision, which is inherently a specific choice among several alternatives, and looks to policy as something that unfolds over time, thus, it differentiates policy from what is a policy-making. One must not forget that policies (specially tourism policies) often change as they move through bureaucracies to the local level where they are implemented. This implementation always results in policy changes, even that subtile, into some degree (Lindblom, 1980).

Baum and Szivas (2008) say that governments’ interest in tourism and with the sector’s development is widely accepted, but scholars’ debate about the form and the level of such involvement is limited. But more important that knowing the ‘why’ of governments interest in tourism is understanding the policy implementation process, because this is extremely important for the tourism sector, since many tourism plans and policies are not applied or are just partially applied, creating a gap between what was intended and what was really accomplished. This problem is also significant as it reflects the governments’ objectives and intentions, as well as, the extent to which governments can convert these intentions in actions (Krutwaysho and Bramwell, 2010). Therefore, due to the power that local DMOs have in tourism and to the COVID-19 pandemics, it is pressing its participation from the policy definition to its implementation, avoiding possible gaps between what is decided and what is truly implemented.

Thus, Selim (2006:2) advances that “scenario planning is introduced in environments of uncertainty where there is a need for action, prioritizing agendas or making decisions”, and what a more uncertain environment that the one we are experiencing right now in the world. Therefore, its use is of the utmost importance, because, scenario planning as proven to be a

useful tool for strategic planning in both the public and private sectors, and is used by government planners, corporate managers and military analysts as a powerful instrument to aid decision-making in the face of deep uncertainty (Leitner, 2018).

Scenario planning in tourism policy-making process amidst this pandemic and after it, is crucial, because as Wright et al. (2013) emphasize, the understanding of the connections, causal processes and logical sequences which determine how events may unfold to create different futures, will challenge conventional thinking and will also prove to be beneficial in improving organisational decision-making and strategies.

Tessun and Hermann (1999) stated that, scenarios identify the development key driving forces, including their mutual dependences which are further tied with existing opportunities and risks. One should also understand that tourism policymaking and its implementation is important due to its multi-faceted nature and due to the complexity in inter-organisational relations and collaborative policymaking (Wang and App, 2013).

Thus, governments and DMOs must realize that organisations that apply scenario planning are usually more perceptive, recognize events for what they are, and, on this basis, realize their implications (Van der Heijden, 1996; 2011). As a result of this, they are more able to adapt faster to environmental changes through alterations of their policies.

## **5. Developing a Tourism Scenario-Based Strategic Planning**

The scenario development in strategic tourism planning seems necessary once, COVID-19 based tourism research should not be solely seen, conducted and used as a useful tool to help resume 'business as usual'. Instead, tourism strategic planning in this time of uncertainty should also, as stated by several authors, challenge our growth-paradigms and assumptions (Ioannides & Gyimóthy, 2020; Hall et al., 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

According to Strelkovskii et al. (2020), scenario planning is an umbrella concept for several approaches that differ both in their objectives and in their design process. However, all these approaches share a common goal, that is, of producing a set of plausible futures for the development of the system under consideration.

Thus, more than just defining and characterizing scenario planning, authors like Schwartz (1991) and Wulf et al. (2010) propose some procedures to scenario planning that one thinks that can be easily adapted to scenario planning in tourism.

From his point of view Schwartz (1991) presents the following steps:

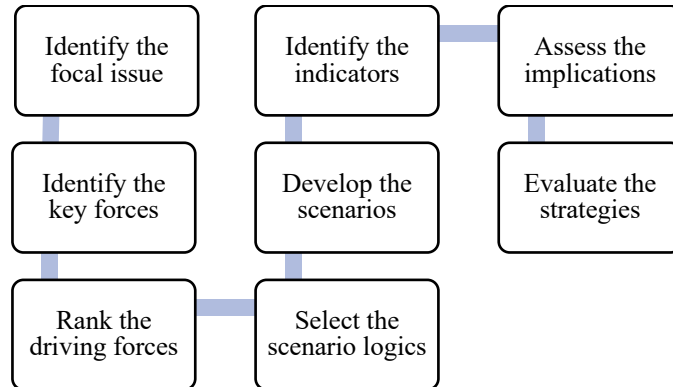
- 1) Identification of the focal issue or decision;
- 2) Identification of the key forces and trends in the environment;
- 3) Ranking the driving forces and trends by importance and uncertainty;
- 4) Selecting the scenario logics by characterizing alternative future conceptions;
- 5) Developing the scenarios by researching and writing the story from the perspective of each driving force and identified actor;
- 6) Identifying the indicators, once scenarios are developed, indicators describe the implication of the scenario of the focal issue. Indicators must be a) relevant; b) sensitive to differences between scenarios; c) quantifiable and d) communicable;
- 7) Assessing the implications, which are assessed by predicting alternative future baseline conditions. The future value of a variable incorporating the implications of



the scenario storylines, selecting the leading indicators and signposts for monitoring purposes;

- 8) Evaluating strategies by testing the efficacy of alternative strategies with respect to improving the future conditions of the selected indicators. The scenario planning process can help identify strategies and assess their ability to achieve the desired objectives across the different scenarios.

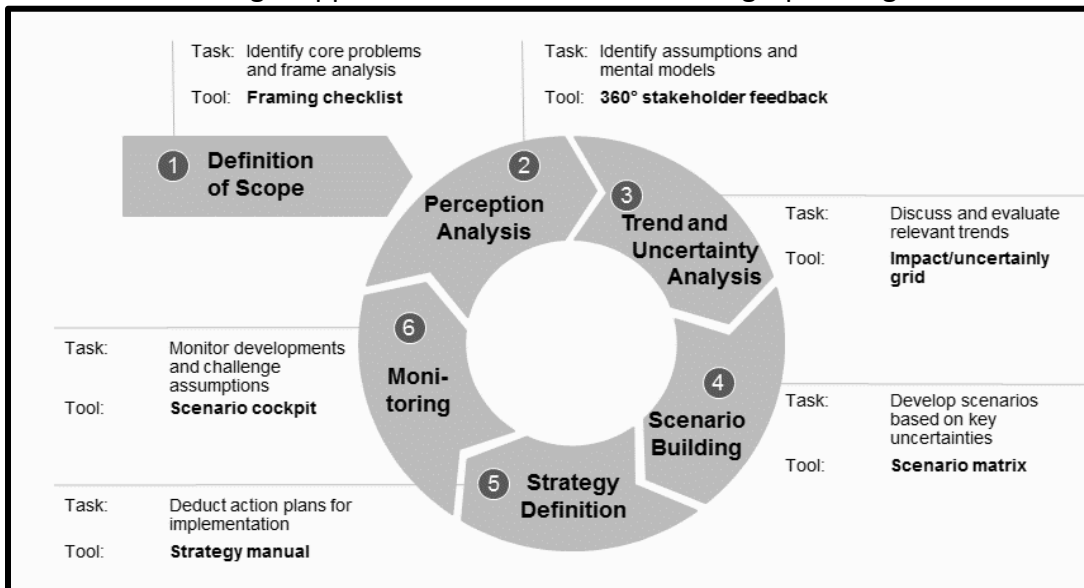
Figure 1. Scenario Planning Model



Source: Adapted by the authors from Schwartz (1991)

Roland Berger Strategy Consultants developed together with the HHL Leipzig Graduate School of Management, the “Scenario-based strategic planning” approach. This approach allows not only to generate the best strategies, but also to plan for different potential future developments (Vlasselaer et al., 2014).

Figure 2. HHL-Roland Berger approach to scenario based strategic planning



Source: Wulf et al. (2010:14)

According to the HHL-Roland Berger approach (Wulf et al., 2010) scenario planning should go through the following steps:

- 1) Definitions scope – identifying core problems and frame analysis, it analyses the answers to five questions: a) Definition of the questioning to be solved; b) Shall the strategic planning process be conducted for the organisation business level?; c) How closely is the top management involved in the process? – which members of the respective departments will participate in the workshops?; d) Which key-stakeholders shall be involved in the 360° stakeholder feedback and e) What time horizon is the planning process provided for (1,2,5 years or longer)?
- 2) Perception analysis – identifying assumptions and mental models, having in mind three main objectives: a) to establish a comprehensive list of factors that potentially influence the future of the organisation; b) to evaluate these factors according to their potential performance impact and their degree of uncertainty; c) to benchmark perspectives of different stakeholder groups concerning these influencing factors, identifying blind spots and weak signals.
- 3) Trend and uncertainty analysis – discussion and assessment of relevant trends by addressing the question: What are important trends and critical uncertainties that potentially have an impact on the future of the organisation? The so-called ‘Impact/Uncertainty Grid’ serves as a tool to facilitate this step.
- 4) Scenario building – to develop scenarios based on key uncertainties by the development and description of specific scenarios for an organisation. The major tool that is proposed for this process step is the so called ‘Scenario Matrix’.
- 5) Strategy definition – deducting plans for implementation by aiming at both testing existing strategies against the multiple scenarios that were created and developing new strategies that can be applied in one or several scenarios.
- 6) Monitoring – monitoring developments and challenges assumptions by aiming at constantly benchmarking the created scenarios against real world developments. This offers organisations an early warning system that enables them to analyze if the world is moving into the direction of a particular scenario and thus indicates which strategy option needs to be executed.

The idea of these authors and others with the same thought, is to offer a systematic process to scenario creation that is built on specific management tools and thus easy to implement. These approaches of Schwartz, (1991) and Wulf et al. (2010) allow to integrate strategic options derived from different scenarios in strategic planning in general, and in tourism strategic planning in particular.

## **6. Scenario Planning Applied to Tourism Strategic Planning**

Tourism, as an activity, promotes the interaction of visitors with destinations places and with their communities, resulting in a set of effects for the local community, the physical space and for the tourists themselves (Martins, 2020). This interactions and effects must all be predicted in a well-designed strategic tourism planning, one that allows to enhance positive effects and to reduce negative impacts that already result and will further result from COVID-19 pandemic. So, and having that in mind, one can say that in the current context, research on the fields of scenario

planning, tourism strategic planning and in both, becomes immensely relevant for governments and destinations alike.

Moriarty (2012) states, that tourism scenarios generally depend on a synthesis of quantitative (economic and environmental modeling) and qualitative (behavioral) relationships and properties. In cases where there is a greater emphasis on qualitative than quantitative approaches (Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2005) there is a high probability that causal and nomological relationships may lapse (Godet & Roubelat, 1996).

Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie (2005) describe the need to quantify the outcomes of potential future shocks to the tourism industry, in order to make the planning outcomes more easily understood by policymakers. Because, as Sigala (2020:313) says, “researching, investigating, measuring and predicting tourism impacts is important in order to eliminate ‘casualties’, draft, monitor and improve response strategies (i.e., you cannot manage what you cannot measure)”. Many different groups, whether from politics, business or government, have a stake in reducing and understanding the uncertainty latent in their decision-making and finding rationale for their decisions. To address this problem, “it is required a political will and a sustained and comprehensive approach, a national, regional and local strategic tourism planning that include a wide range of measures and actions which must complement and reinforce each other” (Martins, 2018:3).

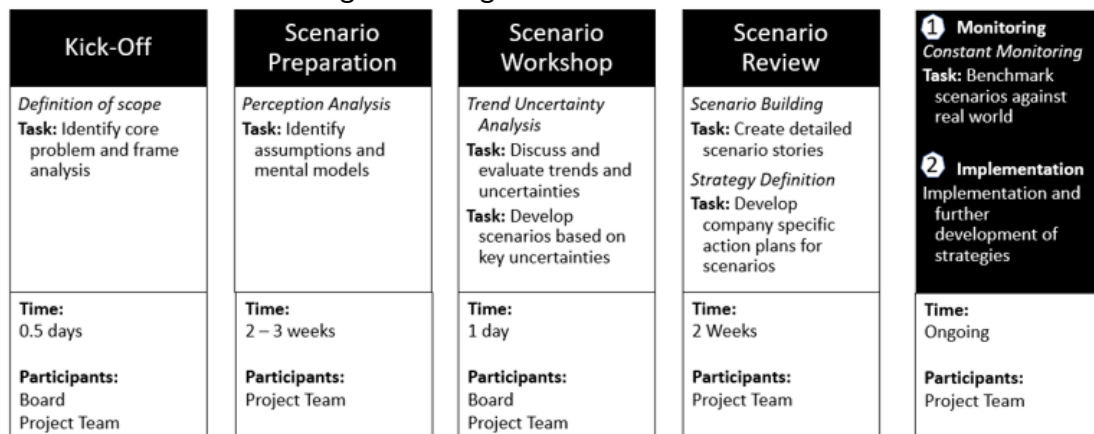
Gunn (1988:16) expresses that strategic planning is predicting and “it requires some estimated perception of the future. Absence of planning of short-range planning that does not anticipate a future can result in serious malfunctions and inefficiencies”. Therefore, one can say that a strategic tourism planning that does not uses scenario planning as a tool for ‘predicting the future’ will have a higher probability of resulting in serious malfunctions and inefficiencies. Therefore, “tourism strategic planning can be seen as a dynamic, systemic, participatory and continuous process that has in view the determination of the destination’s objectives, strategies and actions. It is then relevant to deal with changes in the internal and external environments and to contribute to the success of a destination” (Martins, 2018:4).

Consequently, tourism strategic planning should deal with changes, both in the internal and external environments in constant mutation, even more so, with the COVID-19 pandemic, and contribute to the success of a destination. Because of this pandemic, it also should contemplate a plethora of possible futures, since for the first time in tourism modern history, near future looks like a blank sheet. Traditional strategic tourism planning should then be re-thought. That however raises the question: where to integrate scenario planning in strategic tourism planning? Scenario planning can at least be used to strengthen a strategic tourism planning timeline in four different ways:

- 1) Scenarios provide a grander context and inform about possible critical strategic decisions and directions;
- 2) Scenarios help units/departments to generate new ideas or re-define the existing plans, since they show the risks and opportunities around future market conditions;
- 3) Helps design stress-tests plans against scenarios to help decisionmakers adjust portfolio;
- 4) It allows to employ contingencies, as rehearsed, brought about by early indicators.

On the other hand, Wulf et al. (2010) say that the integration of the scenario planning approach in the strategic planning process and also, in strategic tourism planning, can be conducted in five consecutive steps (Figure 3) complemented by a strategy implementation stage.

Figure 3. Scenario-Based Strategic Planning Process



Source: Wulf et al. (2010:29)

Overall and according to Wulf et al. (2010:31), “the scenario-based approach to strategic planning fulfills all requirements of a framework for strategy creation that is supposed to integrate planning and process perspectives of strategy”.

After this analysis, it seems that the use scenario planning in the design of strategic tourism planning is today, amid the COVID-19 pandemic and anticipating what is to come, one of the most important strategic tools available for governments and DMOs. One must assume that strategy is a complex thought by nature, which involves perceptions and intuitions, and strategy happens first in our minds, much before of the analytical and systemic development process called strategic planning. Furthermore, it is a strategic tool that enables us to have a better idea of how future will be.

In conclusion, adapting Van der Heijden’s thinking (1996; 2011), one can say that scenario planning in tourism succeeds when a DMO manages to adapt itself in such a way that it "gains the high ground", i.e, maximizes its chances of achieving its purpose, in whatever environment it finds itself, through a process of organisational learning, which gains a competitive advantage. Thus, “for scenario planning to be useful, planners must integrate it with the broader planning process” (Chakraborty & McMillan, 2015).

## 7.Findings, Analysis and Discussion

The main objective of this paper was to address the following questions: “what will the new normal look like” and “how can destinations develop tourism in these never seen conditions”. Well, it is still very difficult to predict what will the new normal look like, but this paper shows that the use of scenario planning by governments and destination management organisations will certainly get them closer to answering it.

Regarding the second question – how destinations can develop tourism in this never seen conditions – through a revision of literature, this paper demonstrates that by using scenarios planning in both tourism policy and in the strategic tourism planning definition, destinations’

policymakers and decisionmakers will be a step closer to predict how they can better plan their destination, allowing them to become more resilient and adaptable to changes.

According to Sigala (2020), COVID-19 fortified and generated many other paradoxes, which are also identifiable at all tourism management levels (macro, meso and micro). This enhances the importance of using scenario analysis in strategic planning, because traditional plans do not consider the existence of paradoxes nor its possible generation.

Basing ourselves in Brands et al. (2013), one can say that there are three main messages that one believes being central for tourism policymakers and decisionmakers operating in these uncertain times due to COVID-19 pandemic:

- 1- Tourism policymakers and decisionmakers must understand the impact of uncertainty in planning and decision-making, as well as, its consequences for tourism strategic management in general;
- 2- Scenario-based planning provides a powerful methodological framework to account for uncertainty, volatility and complexity in the strategic tourism process;
- 3- Scenario planning can increase the quality of tourism strategic decision in uncertain environments and lead to flexible strategies that can counteract volatility.

This study also claims, that by using 'Scenario Planning', DMOs will be better prepared not only to respond to the unpredictability of the future ahead but also to design more adequate tourism development policies. Results also suggest that in these times of uncertainty, the development of strategic scenarios is a tool that enables tourism DMOs to identify opportunities and threats in the external environment, and in a superior way plan to maximize the opportunities and minimize threats contributing to the development of the tourism destination. Our study also demonstrates that DMOs should establish scenario planning as the gold standard for future-oriented strategic tourism planning.

Findings also suggest that, the use of scenario planning by DMOs can bring clarity in the comprehension and prediction of global issues, as well as, challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and, help to prevent or even avoid gaps between tourism development policy and strategic planning implementation. However, that requires flexible and adaptive frameworks.

But limitations exist when using scenario planning, Bradfield et al. (2005) describe the proliferation of models and techniques adopted under the umbrella of scenario planning, making it difficult for practitioners to choose the right one(s).

Due to its novelty, it is clear, that future studies must be made in order to help us all to further understand this new reality and its implications in the tourism destinations' management and development dimensions. As suggestions for future research, it is recommended further quantitative and qualitative research that address this thematic, which presents itself as a challenge for the tourism destinations management area. Thus, this paper underlies that DMOs that adopt this strategic thinking will probably have a major competitive advantage over their competitors.

This study also contributes to the discussion and reflection on the relevance of scenario planning for strategic management on destinations. Finally, it contributes to fill a gap that exists in tourism research in this field of knowledge.

## 8. Conclusions

Results demonstrate that only by using scenario planning amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, destinations can better predict what will the 'new normal' look like and how should destinations develop tourism in this never seen conditions.

It seems to us that scenario planning is an efficient method to improve performance in most tourism companies and organisations, however, it is important that it satisfies the criteria of transparency, completeness, relevance, creativity, consistency, differentiation, and plausibility (Amer et al., 2013) when used to strengthen strategic tourism planning.

Scenarios have a temporal property rooted in the future and suggest external forces in that context. Scenarios should also be possible and plausible while taking the proper form of a story or narrative description, and that scenarios exist in sets that are systematically prepared to coexist as meaningful alternatives to one another (Spaniol and Rowland, 2018).

Conscious strategic tourism planning and policy research differentiates itself from the simple conclusions and normative suggestions about policy that are often found at the end of tourism research. Morally conscious research helps bridges the theory-practice dichotomy through reflexivity, critical engagement and praxis/research activism, such as via embedded community research (Dredge, Hales & Jamal, 2013; Dredge and Jamal, 2015).

This paper has considered how scenario techniques can be made more tractable and relevant to public policy decision-making and to strategic tourism planning, focusing on the development of a methodological framework for scenarios applied to tourism planning.

Hence, scenarios must outline plausible pathways between the present and a given future, as far as possible, connecting these pathways to decisions at the policy and planning levels. Thus, it is not neither an easy task nor a consensual one.

In conclusion, all decisions regarding policy and strategic tourism planning will be embodied in the territories, since it is there that are present the agents that will make the policy and planning for the tourism activity viable, because this is the stage where tourist actions take place.

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# Tourists' safety in Cape Town Townships, South Africa

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## **Abstract**

*Cape Town townships, important tourism destinations in South Africa, have earned a reputation for being high crime ridden areas. This research explored tourist safety perceptions in prominent tourist townships of Gugulethu, Khayelitsha and Nyanga areas in Cape Town. A quantitative approach (questionnaire survey) was employed and collected data from 171 respondents (tourists) in Cape Town Townships. This research undertook a non-probability sampling approach following a convenience sampling procedure. Correlation test and regression analysis was performed on the data for analysis. Cronbach Alpha's coefficients were used to test reliability of the data. Tourists attributed high crime rate in townships mainly to poverty, high unemployment, drug addiction, formation of gangs and a lack of basic education. It is important to note that tourists in general hold a positive perception of Cape Town townships. These results will aid tourism destination management organisations and marketers to plan and deliver satisfactory services that also assures tourist safety as a sustainable approach in township tourism. Similar research can be conducted in other major townships in South Africa where tourism is contributing significantly to the local economy, and in other major townships in the African region, especially sub-Saharan Africa, to check for similarities and differences in findings.*

**Keywords:** Townships, Township Tourism, Poverty, Crime, Tourists

## **1.Introduction**

Township tours in South Africa represent the anti-apartheid struggle in the country (Rogerson, 2004). The South African townships are unique from other deprived slum areas of the world based on their apartheid social and economic exclusion (Booyens, 2010). However, since 1994, township tourism has been evidently developed targeting mostly foreign special interest visitors (Booyens (2010). Township tourism products are regularly cultural and heritage attractions including monuments and museums, traditional cuisine, historical insights and local arts and crafts (Booyens, 2010). According to George and Booyens (2014) township tourism in South Africa represents poverty tourism. Township tours typically involve taking visitors to areas of poverty to see how people live and to symbolic struggle sites associated with apartheid (Booyens, 2010). According to George and Booyens (2014) townships have become spaces of leisure consumption in the context of urban tourism. Furthermore, George and Booyens (2014) state that even though township tourism has received international criticism, poverty tourism is unmistakably gaining in importance both economically and as a tourism product offering. Barros

and Gupta (2017) add that South Africa is well known for being the most unequal income distribution country in the world and is also the most unevenly developed country in the world (Todes and Turok, 2017). The unequal income distribution poses a substantial policy challenge to policy makers as it affects socio-political stability and economic development (Barros and Gupta, 2017). Townships in the urban areas of South Africa are evidently amongst the poor areas of the country. Mawby (2015) articulates that crime is overwhelmingly an urban phenomenon. Furthermore, Mawby (2015) indicates that in cities, offenders are disproportionately drawn from amongst the poor and unemployed, and areas of deprivation are the setting for high levels of crime as well as being home to large numbers of offenders and victims. Townships being the poor areas of the urban areas are highly criminal oriented, poverty appears to be among the causal factors that may lead to criminal engagement. Statistics South Africa (2013/14) articulate that majority of criminal offenses in the country are committed by people in the same areas. Chili (2018) makes known that safety and security challenges in South African townships are aggravated by visible lack of job opportunities accompanied by persistent infrastructure problems. Expatcapetown (2015) adds that areas such as Khayelitsha, Gugulethu and Nyanga remain the most dangerous townships according to murder statistics of the last years, with burglary, robbery and theft of private property as the most reported crimes. Accordingly, destinations need to ensure that their visitors will have a safe and secure stay (Amir et al. 2015). From the extant literature reviewed, studies on tourists' perceptions of certain destinations and their satisfaction are rife, but more studies are needed, especially in developing nations, on tourists' perceptions of township tourism, especially with regard to safety and security. George and Booyens (2014) state that investigation into visitor safety and security is an important factor for township tourism product development. If the issue of safety and security is not addressed with seriousness, it has the potential to derail both social and economic prosperity (Western Cape Government, 2016). Consequently, this research aimed at exploring the tourists' perceptions of safety whilst visiting prominent tourist townships of Gugulethu, Khayelitsha and Nyanga areas in Cape Town. The purpose of this research is to uncover and recommend ways of maintaining tourists' safety whilst visiting Cape Town townships (Gugulethu, Khayelitsha and Nyanga). The next section will present an overview of literature review around this study.

## **2. Literature review**

Related to issue of safety and security concerns among tourists are crime such as snatch theft, assault, rape and other possible high-profile crimes (Amir et al. 2015). Places that have high crime rates will bring negative effects to its image, reduce tourists' intention to travel and spread negative word of mouth (Amir et al. 2015). Townships in South Africa are recorded to experience the highest crime rates albeit of their increased tourism developed since the democratic independence of the country in 1994.

### *2.1 Dawn of townships in South Africa*

Rueedi (2015); Todes and Turok (2017) state that South African population was racially categorised under the apartheid legislation. The Whites previously dominated the country although they were a minority group and brought apartheid (racial and hostile discrimination) towards the Black majority and other racial groups in the country. Millstein (2014) articulates that the Coloured population received preferential treatment compared to Blacks under the

apartheid regime as they were classified as descendants from mixed races. Nauright (1997) states that under the Group Areas Act of 1950 many urban areas occupied initially by Black people were designated as Whites only areas. For example, in the 1950s and 1960s, Sophiatown in Johannesburg, District Six in Cape Town, Cato Manor in Durban and Top Location in Vereeniging suburbs were demolished, and Blacks were forcibly removed to townships and segregation policies were created. These situations led to so many uprisings and violence.

### *2.2 Crime in Cape Town*

Most South Africans believed that the events of the post-apartheid era in the country will eradicate violence however, different forms of interpersonal violence emerged (Shields et al., 2008). Community violence especially in Cape Town is problematic as this city experience much higher violent crimes compared to most reputable crime ridden countries such as Detroit and Michigan (Shields et al. 2008). An estimation of 5% of the population (100 000 people) in the Western Cape belong to approximately 280 gangs. Shields et al. (2008) substantiate that there are no official records on gang composition and membership due to constant change in composition. The unavailability of data in this group makes it difficult to estimate the level of their activities.

According to George (2010), during 2007 there were thirty reported crime incidents in the area of Table Mountain National Park. Most of these incidents were muggings that resulted in the theft of visitors' personal belongings. These and numerous other 'mountain muggings' have been highly publicised in the local and international media and have been condemned by national and local tourism authorities. These crime incidents along with the associated publicity may have led to negative perceptions about the attractions and may have affected tourists' decisions to return to the attraction or to Cape Town in future. Tourism is known to have significant positive and negative economic, environmental, and social impacts upon a tourist destination. Crime incidents occurring at tourist destination will have some degree of negative effect on affected areas and the tourism industry.

### *2.3 Crime in Cape Town townships*

Dolly (2017) mention that the province of Western Cape police stations ranks third where most killings are recorded when compared to other South African provinces. The author adds that Nyanga Township in the Western Cape is South Africa's longstanding murder capital. The area has been recorded to have experienced 281 murders in 2017 while the previous year 2016 recorded 279 murders. Although the area is notorious for being a murder capital, home robberies decreased to 16.1%. Gugulethu, also a Township in Cape Town received a decrease in murder cases during the same period of 2017 with 136 murders when compared to the previous year 2016 with 184 murder cases. Although Gugulethu murders decreased; the area is still ranked number 9 in the top 30 murder stations in South Africa. These statistics show that Cape Town Townships are amongst the high crime areas in South Africa.

Dolly (2017) highlights that murder vary according to the criminal act that led to such brutality. There are many scenarios in which people get killed for in South Africa for example, love affairs, rape, jealousy, and robbery among others. Substantial evidence in South Africa shows that a number of people lost their lives through robbery. Numerous death cases where robbery was the main objective of the killing are brought to the police attention/records. There are also some

cases in which tourists find themselves being victims of such circumstances in Cape Town. For example, the case of a domestic tourist Tiny Elizabeth Themani who was killed in Gugulethu for her cell-phone (Dano, 2014); the alleged kidnapping and subsequent murder of Anni Dewani, a British honeymooner whilst in Khayelitsha a township in Cape Town (George and Booyens, 2014); and the murder of Amy Biehl, an American exchange student, in Gugulethu, Cape Town in 1993 (George and Booyens, 2014). Brown (2015) says that a crime or murder towards a tourist can be devastating to countries that rely on tourism as the economic driver, based on media storms which often follow such occurrences. Ragavan et al. (2014) add that tourists' choice of a destination is based on limited knowledge, hence they rely on media or social groups as the source of information about a destination prior to visiting. Thus, this research focused on exploring the tourists' perceptions of safety whilst visiting Gugulethu, Khayelitsha and Nyanga areas in Cape Town. The methodological approaches in obtaining the primary data of this research is presented in the next section.

### 3. Research Methodology

According to the Cape Town Tourism Annual Report (2017/2018) between year 2017 and 2018 a total population of 5, 333, 799 (4, 096, 251 domestic, 1, 125, 705 international & 106, 511 regional arrivals) tourists were received in Cape Town. However, the total number of visitors to the townships remain largely unknown (WESGRO – Cape Town and Western Cape Tourism, Trade and Investment, 2016).



Figure 1: Geographical location of the study areas (Gugulethu, Khayelitsha and Nyanga)

Source: <http://www.worldfootynews.com/article.php/20090905171220333>

According to Veal (2011) there is a general misconception among researchers that the size of a sample should be decided based on its relationship to the size of the population (say 5% or 10% of the population). He however, posited that the criteria for sample size selection should be

determined based on the level of precision in the results, the level of detail in the proposed analysis, and the available budget. Moreover, a carefully selected sample size that is relatively small is more representative than a relatively larger sample that is not carefully selected (Veal, 2011; The Research Advisor, 2006). This study considers Veal's (2011) arguments and also mimicked the probability sampling method although actual sampling used the non-probability approach in a convenience sampling procedure (Creswell, 2016; Quinlan, 2011; Zikmund, Babin, Carr and Griffin, 2013). There was no available information on the tourists' population visiting the study areas, probability sampling would not be possible for this study. This study therefore targeted respondents who were available at the time of research and who were willing to take part in this study. This research employed a quantitative approach (questionnaire survey) to obtain quantified data. The study collected data from 171 respondents (tourists) in Cape Town Townships. This research targeted a total of 400 questionnaires from visiting tourists. However, due to low tourists' numbers in the townships, at the time this study was conducted, this research did not reach large enough sample size planned for tourists' respondents. Due to this relatively small sample size (171) the results obtained from data analysis may not have yielded irrefutable findings regarding tourists' perceptions. However, being that this study is more exploratory than conclusive, this sample size (171) yielded results that capture tourists' perspectives, adequate enough for the regression analyses performed, and on which more conclusive research can be done. A structured questionnaire format was designed and was divided into two sections: Section A, covered the general questions and respondents' profiles (mostly nominal or categorical variables). Section B, covered safety related variables ranked in a five-point Likert-scale formatting of questions. Safety related variables used in section B emanated from previous related studies (such as Adam, 2015; Amir et al., 2015; Booyens, 2010; Chew and Jahari, 2014; George, 2004; George and Booyens, 2014; Rogerson, 2004) to increase the reliability and validity of research findings. Data for this research were collected over a period of nineteen months (March 2018 till October 2019) from Gugulethu, Khayelitsha and Nyanga townships in Cape Town. The field study (data collection) was conducted by a total of ten fieldworkers including the researcher. Nine fieldworkers were recruited for this research; the fieldworkers were distributed as follows: 1.) three fieldworkers were from Gugulethu, 2.) two fieldworkers from Nyanga and 3.) four fieldworkers from Khayelitsha; as a result data was collected in stages. For example, 1.) the first phase of data collection occurred at Gugulethu township. 2.) The second phase of data collection was at the Nyanga township. 3.) The last phase of data collection was done at Khayelitsha township. It was important that the research uses people that were familiar with the areas as they can easily blend with the local community members and identify tourism hotspots in these localities; more so, there are safety concerns in these areas. From the reviewed literature and the researcher's personal experience; it is generally known that perpetrators of criminal activities in a particular place are individuals residing in the same area, hence the study was viewed as high risk in these communities (an outsider may not be aware/familiar with people around and may end up asking a dangerous criminal the kind of questions related to his/her activities; putting the field worker at risk). The obtained data were analysed using Stata Data Analysis and Statistical Software version 15 (StataCorp, 2015). The first stage of data analysis employed univariate descriptive analysis (frequencies, mean and standard deviation). The second stage of data analysis was multivariate analyses using Correlation test and Regression analysis. Due to the small number of tourist respondents (171), this study employed a non-parametric

form of correlation among factors (Spearman Rho instead of Pearson r correlation). Multicollinearity test was performed on the data in order to validate the regression analysis. The existence of multicollinearity was diagnosed using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The final stage of data analysis employed Cronbach's Alpha coefficient test on the Likert-scale using variables in Section B part of the questionnaire in determining the reliability of the data. This study therefore considers a Cronbach Alpha score of 0.5 and above to be acceptable due to relatively small numbers of items used in each subset analysis (safety factors in townships). George and Mallery (2003) accepted this cut-off point. The research findings are presented and analysed in the next section.

#### 4. Findings and analysis

This study surveyed 171 respondents (tourists) from Gugulethu, Khayelitsha and Nyanga. Majority of tourists' respondents were non-South African (63%), mostly Africans (39%), Europeans (21%) and North Americans (38%). Majority of respondents were females (71%), travelling in a group (90%) who were the first-time visitors to townships (62%). These groups mostly visited the townships based on word of mouth recommendations (59%); the visitors mostly hold a college/university degree (83%) and are between the ages of 21-31 years old (65%). Tourists attributed high crime rate in townships mainly to poverty, high unemployment, drug addiction, formation of gangs and a lack of basic education. High level of poverty, drug abuse and related crime deter tourists from visiting the study areas, while the knowledge of contributing to the economic development of the study areas encourage tourists to revisit. It is important to note that tourists in general hold a positive perception of Cape Town townships, irrespective of their reputation of being crime ridden.

Non-probability correlation test was done between the dimension of safety perception outcomes (level of visit satisfaction; feeling of safety in the township; re-visit intention) and other dimensions, as can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Non-Parametric correlation among factors (Spearman Rho Correlation Analysis) (N=171)

	Safety outcomes	Perception of tourism development	Safety related to crime whilst visiting the townships	Perceptions of factors leading to crime in Cape Town Townships	Safety related to Socio-Political status whilst visiting the townships	Safety related to epidemic diseases and food security in township	Perception of police officials
Safety outcomes	1.0000						
Perception of tourism development	0.5096*	1.0000					
Safety factors related to crime whilst visiting the townships	-0.2398*	0.4650*	1.0000				



Perceptions of factors leading to crime in Cape Town Townships	-0.3448*	-0.2394*	0.0664	1.0000			
Safety related to Socio-Political status whilst visiting the townships	0.3368*	-0.4363*	0.3356*	0.0664	1.0000		
Safety related to epidemic diseases and food security in townships	-0.3064*	0.4294*	0.4161*	-0.1436*	0.5146*	1.0000	
Perception of police officials	0.1210*	-0.3823*	-0.2352*	0.0542	-0.1698*	0.3179*	1.0000

\* Correlation is significant at the 5% level (2-tailed).

The results show that when tourists consider that they are valued in the development of local communities, they are likely to revisit (safety outcome). There is a positive correlation with Spearman rho =0.5096, statistically significant at 5% interval. When tourists consider drugs and related problems to be leading to crime and poverty, they are less likely to come to that area as indicated by a negative correlation coefficient of -0.2398, which is significant at 5%. Higher crime related issues in the area result in less intentions to revisit as tourist consider the area unsafe, not satisfying. The Spearman rho correlation coefficient of -0.3448 was found to be significant at 5% interval. Socio-political stability makes tourists want to return to the area, as they will be considering it safe and satisfying. Correlation show a positive Spearman rho correlation coefficient of 0.3368, statistically significant at 5%. Unhygienic and unclean environment prone to diseases outbreak scare off tourists, as shown by the negative correlation coefficients of -0.3064 which is statistically significant at 5%. If the police are considered reliable, responsive, and are always present; tourists are more likely to consider the area favourably and therefore return as they feel safe and satisfied. The correlation coefficient of 0.1210 was found which is statistically significant at 5%.

Correlation depict association whether two variables are related, the pattern (positive versus negative) of the relationship, and the strength of relationship (magnitude of the coefficient). It is however, of importance to ascertain the effect of one variable on the other, in essence if one variable score changes by 1, what happens to the dependent variable. This is depicted with a regression analysis in Table 2.

Table 2: Regression Analysis

Safety outcomes	Coef.	Std.Err.	T	P>t	(95% Conf. Interval)	
Perception of tourism development	.2119303	.0574437	3.69	0.000	.325506	.3983539

Safety factors related to crime whilst visiting the townships	-.0840471	.04188	-2.01	0.047	.0012428	.1668514
Perceptions of factors leading to crime in Cape Town Townships	-.0884215	.0318848	-2.77	0.006	-.0253795	.1514635
Safety related to socio-political status whilst visiting the townships	.1475784	.524169	2.82	0.006	.0251215	.2543940
Safety related to epidemic diseases and food security in townships	-.0750042	.589736	1.27	0.206	-.041597	.1916055
Perception of police officials	.126308	.0783462	0.16	0.872	-.1422736	.1675352
Origin						
Non-South African	.7418202	.6123412	1.21	0.228	-.4689055	1.952509
Gender						
Male	-.0906184	.3309282	-0.27	0.785	-.7449223	.5636854
Group travel						
No	.570366	.4515896	0.13	0.900	-8.8358363	.9499095
Prior visitation						
No	-.1120973	.2853155	-0.39	0.695	-.6762167	.4520221
Continent of Origin						
Asia	-.4815774	1.777138	-0.27	0.787	-3.995295	3.03214
Europe	-.5335809	.6752994	-0.79	0.431	-1.868768	.801606
North America	.390554	.6546437	0.60	0.552	-.9037915	1.684902
South America	1.242459	1.140796	1.09	0.278	-1.013097	3.498015
Destination stimulation						
Internet	.1426399	.398275	0.36	0.721	-.6448205	.9301003
Media	1.292658	1.04826	1.23	0.220	-.7799391	3.365255
Tour Operator/Guides/ Travel ent	-1.372572	1.22509	-1.12	0.264	-3.794794	1.049649
Other	-.2736674	.3838591	-0.71	0.477	-1.032625	.4852903
Highest Education						
High School	-.6790228	1.309556	-0.52	0.605	-3.268248	1.910203
College/University	-.1681686	1.281039	-0.13	0.896	-2.701011	2.364674
Age Group						
21- 30 Years	.7496763	.8445228	0.89	0.376	-.9200954	2.419448
31- 40 Years	.7882023	.8401065	0.94	0.350	-.8728375	2.449242
41- 50 Years	.0871539	.9910458	0.09	0.930	-1.87232	2.046627
51- 60 Years	-.4746277	1.16471	-0.41	0.684	-2.777466	1.82821
More than 60 Years	-.3940382	1.20613	-0.33	0.744	-2.778772	1.990696
_cons	12.31418	1.689174	7.29	0.000	8.974387	15.65398

-Number of obs= 165; F (25,139) = 4.44; Prob >F=0.0000; R-squared=0.442; Adjusted R-squared =0.3431; Root MSE=1.5036

The results show that perceptions of tourism development and safety factors related to socio-political status whilst visiting the townships have a positive and statistically significant impact on

safety outcome, while safety factors related to crime whilst visiting the townships and perceptions of factors leading to crime in Cape Town townships have negative and statistically significant impact. Safety related to epidemic diseases and food security in townships and perception of police officials are not statistically significant in this regression. All the demographics have no impact on the decision of tourist to revisit the area or their general view of safety nor their satisfaction. This is critical for policy and tourist's attraction strategies as the study reveals the destination factors that matter most for the tourists. The variables included in the model explain over 34% of the variability in the Safety outcomes variable (see Adjusted R-squared in the model), from the 165 respondents (see number of observations in the model).

## **5. Discussion**

The study found that tourist respondents have been informed by friends (81%) and media (74%) that visiting Cape Town townships is dangerous. The results however show that 57% of tourists' respondents are not worried about their safety whilst in townships. This may be due to visitors' perception of Cape Town townships being unsafe just like other destinations (70%). Only (20%) of respondents view these areas as unsafe, while other respondents (48%) do not perceive these areas to be unsafe.

Results showed that when tourists consider that they are valued in the development of local communities, they are likely to revisit (safety outcome). The findings also show that when tourists consider drugs and related problems to be leading to crime and poverty, they are less likely to come to that area. Higher crime related issues in the area result in less intentions to revisit as tourist consider the area unsafe and not satisfying. Socio-political stability makes tourists want to return to the area, as they will be considering it safe and satisfying. Unhygienic and unclean environment prone to diseases outbreak scare off tourists. If the police are considered reliable, responsive, and are always present; tourists are more likely to consider the area favourably and therefore return as they feel safe and satisfied. The Cape Town Tourism Department needs to disseminate information regarding safety to the industry stakeholders. The safety information sharing by all the tourism industry stakeholders will help tourists to make informed decisions when deciding to visit townships. Being knowledgeable about safety issues in townships will enable tourists to be more vigilant in these areas. This will also help tourists to be aware of the safe areas in townships and identify and possibly avoid the crime hotspots areas in townships. In the following section conclusions of this study are drawn, limitations of the research are also brought to light and recommendations are provided.

## **6. Conclusions**

Tourists' safety perceptions in Cape Town Townships, is not alarming. However, tourists need to ensure that all their valuables are not left unattended in the car or just held in the hands while walking in the townships. It is important to visit the townships with a guide or a person that is familiar with the areas and the people around. Tourists should not venture into other parts of the township without a person from that area or a knowledgeable guide. The study limitations include the practicable non-probability sampling method (convenience sampling) that was used to collect data from tourists. Non-probability sampling method does not give equal chance to

every member of the research population to participate in the study, therefore limiting generalisability of findings. Hence, the findings of this study relate strictly to the study areas, at the time the study was conducted; and care should be taken not to overgeneralise the findings in South Africa and beyond. Also, due to tourists' numbers in township, at the time this study was conducted, this study did not reach large enough sample size planned for tourists' respondents. Due to this relatively small sample size, the results obtained from data analysis may not have yielded irrefutable findings regarding tourists' perceptions. However, being that this study is more exploratory than conclusive, a sample size of one hundred and seventy-one (171) yielded results that capture tourists' perspectives, adequate enough for the regression analyses performed, and on which more conclusive research can be done.

This study was limited to areas where most tourism activities took place in all three townships (Gugulethu, Khayelitsha and Nyanga). However, at the time of this research, not much tourism activities were occurring at the other areas excluded from this study, within the three townships. Further studies (with adequate budget) can perhaps be done all year round to achieve larger sample size from tourist respondents and take care of low and peak tourism seasons, and include the other Sections of Gugulethu (such as Section 1 and Section 2); Sections of Nyanga (such as Mau Mau, KTC, Old Location, Lusaka, Black City, Zwelitsha, White City, Barcelona, Kanana and Hostels) and other sections of Khayelitsha (Site B, Site C, Green Point, Mandela Park, Tembani, Washington Square, Graceland, Makaza, Makhaya and Harare) in testing tourists' safety perceptions in these parts of the township. Also, similar research can be conducted in other major townships in South Africa where tourism is contributing significantly to the local economy (such as townships in Durban and Johannesburg), and in other major townships in the African region, especially sub-Saharan Africa, to check for similarities and differences in findings. Perhaps, one day, a book can be written to discuss, compare and contrast all these African models of tourist safety.

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# Gastronomic Tourism and New Paths

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## Abstract

*The present study was carried out within the scope of the Master's Degree in Tourism Management with the purpose of establishing the relationship between the concepts of tourism and gastronomy. Furthermore, the study aims to understand the types of motivation and tourists' profiles, focusing on the senior segment. This study is based on a literature review, including the most relevant international scientific contributions in the field of gastronomic tourism, tourists' motivation and profile, and also the senior segment. Regarding the empirical results, it should be noted this is a conceptual work. The gastronomic tourism has been developing along the last decade (Ellis et al., 2018), but it is not a decisive factor in choosing the destination (Berbel-Pineda et al., 2019). Sie, Patterson and Pegg (2015) value the senior segment, since they have more time available and high purchasing power to travel. The study emphasises the relevance of the senior segment for Gastronomic Tourism Destination management in order to provide effective communication and marketing strategies. For future research, it would be interesting to broaden the topic of slow food in the senior segment, in order to promote the importance of gastronomic consumption needs and expectations.*

**Keywords:** *Tourism, Gastronomic Tourism, Seniors.*

## 1. Introduction

The relationship between tourism and food has been the subject of study in tourism in the last three decades and its growth and popularisation have been addressed in recent years (2008-2015), in international publications, academic books, as well as international conferences (Ellis et al., 2018). The art of making food has been assumed as a differentiating cultural factor among people, resulting in an expansion of the concept of food that goes beyond what is restricted to a form of subsistence of man (Gimenes, 2011). From the perspective of international tourists, gastronomic tourism represents an escape from their daily lives and the use of concrete experiences consisting of learning (Jong & Varley, 2017). It should be noted that gastronomic tourism has shown significant growth both globally and in Europe, which translates into increasing awareness of destinations and tourist companies for the importance of gastronomy as

a diversification of tourism in local, regional and national economic development (UNWTO, 2012). In fact, there has been an increase in academic studies on gastronomic tourism; however, it is consensual among researchers that there is content worthy of research and analysis in order to combat the literary gap that still exists (Ellis et al., 2018).

Therefore, and taking into account the relevance of gastronomy as a factor of identity and tourist attraction, through this article, it is intended to make an analysis of gastronomic tourism to strengthen the relationship between the motivations of tourists and their profile, as well as to obtain an understanding of the senior segment.

In this sense, this article is as follows: "Literature Review" that includes "Conceptualization", "Motivations", "Gastronomic Tourists" and "Gastronomic Tourism and Senior Segment"; "Research Methodology"; "Findings and Analysis"; "Discussion"; and "Conclusions". Firstly, the gastronomic tourism concept is framed. Then, several studies are analysed which make it possible to understand the motivations of these tourists. Subsequently, several models are presented that allow to outline the tourist profile. Finally, the last topic briefly addresses the senior audience as a possible public target for gastronomic tourism.

## **2.Literature Review**

### *2.1 Conceptualization*

The connection between gastronomy and tourism was first addressed in 1983, however; the origin of the term culinary tourism as a literary reference dates back to 1998, having been introduced by an assistant professor of cooking and culture, Lucy Long (Sandybayev, 2016). This first definition is based on exploratory and intentional participation in the eating habits of the "other", including consumption, preparation and presentation of a dish, kitchen, meal system or food style belonging to a gastronomic system other than itself (Long, 1998). Over time, several denominations were acquired to portray the food-tourism relationship: food tourism (Hall & Mitchell, 2001), gastronomy tourism (Hjalager & Richards, 2002), tasting tourism (Boniface, 2003), gourmet tourism (Mitchell & Hall, 2003) and gastronomic tourism (Horng & Tsai, 2012). Gastronomic tourism means visiting primary or secondary producers, gastronomic festivals, restaurants or other places which purpose is to taste delicacies or experience a gastronomic specialty (Hall & Mitchell, 2001). However, it cannot be defined in isolation as a simple visit to a certain restaurant or cellar (Hall & Sharples, 2003). In this type of tourism, food is the main motivation of travel (Bertella, 2011) and applies to visitors who plan their trip, in whole or in part, to try local cuisine or to participate in gastronomic activities (UNWTO, 2012).

### *2.2 Motivations*

Gastronomic tourism has been affirming itself as a new tourist product. According to Sandybayev (2016), one-third of the travel budget is spent on food. In fact, this type of tourism is easy to develop, assuming that the tourist eats three meals a day at the destination (Gheorghe, Tudorache & Nistoreanu, 2014). In this follow-up, local gastronomy is a relevant aspect in the quality of the holiday experience and in choosing the tourist destination (Sandybayev, 2016). On the one hand, if tourists are attracted by local products, on the other hand the destinations have bet on the development and marketing of their products. This enables rural communities to benefit from a competitive advantage in the face of rapid urbanisation, as it values the endogenous products of the region, it provides local job opportunities and, at the same time,



provides other sectors of the local economy (UNWTO, 2012). There is evidence that several destinations have been successful in using gastronomy to create niche markets and associate them with the image of the destination, such as: Australia, Singapore, Taiwan, Shanghai, China, Bali, Indonesia, Japan, Macau, New Orleans, New Zealand, Spain and Greece (Kivela & Crofts, 2015) and also India, Italy and France (Sánchez-Cañizares & López-Guzmán, 2012). In a study carried out in Hong Kong by Kivela and Crofts (2015), 21% of the sample indicated that the main reason for travelling was food, thus, it has been estimated that about 2.8 million tourists travel to Hong Kong just to taste its gastronomy. In the case of Seville, the gastronomic experience positively influences the satisfaction of tourists and their intention to return, resulting in loyalty with the destination. The enrichment of the gastronomic offer is a strategy to position the destination in the mind of the tourist (Berbel-Pineda et al., 2019). In an investigation conducted in Portugal, only 3 out of 261 respondents identify gastronomic tourism as the main motivation for travel. However, tourists recognize codfish, wine, olive oil and Pastel de Belém as Portuguese gastronomic products (Cunha, Barroco & Antunes 2019). Also, in the study developed by Cunha (2020), 79.4% of international tourists surveyed name cultural tourism as the main motivation to visit Portugal and only 1.2% elected gastronomic tourism. In a study conducted in Texas, the results show that gastronomic tourists travel, not only because they seek new experiences and cultures, but also to escape their routine, acquire knowledge and socialize. According to these tourists, eating and drinking is the perfect combination to gather friends, new acquaintances and enjoy life at the moment (Sohn & Yuan, 2013).

The World Tourism Organization (2012) considers that the promotion of gastronomic tourism has been carried out insufficiently, in the sense that gastronomy is not yet considered a real motivation of travel, occupying the third place of the travel motivations, followed by cultural interest and nature (Berbel-Pineda et al., 2019). This may be explained by the fact that gastronomic tourism is associated with cultural tourism as an element of contribution (Robinson & Clifford, 2012), considered one of its subcategories (Updhyay & Sharma, 2014). Although tourists wish to try traditional and authentic food, they may also have an aversion to unknown food, as it triggers a feeling of insecurity in changing eating habits. This is a paradoxical scenario that destination managers face (OCDE, 2012). Any other way, local food continues to play a fundamental role in the tourist experience, both for food lovers and for those who adopt a more casual attitude (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2014). Consequently, this experience greatly contributes to the satisfaction of tourists and their behaviour in the destinations (Sánchez-Cañizares & López-Guzmán, 2012), because it is characteristic of novelty and tends to become memorable (Keinan & Kivetz, 2011). Even if the tasting experience was not positive, the cultural contrast remains the variable with the greatest impact on the intention to revisit the destination (Antón et al., 2019). In this context, restaurants also play a key role in valuing local gastronomy, in economic development and building the identity of the destination. According to a study developed in Finland by Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen (2014), tourists, during their gastronomic experience, are influenced by what is served, where it is served and how it is served. All the aesthetics and dining environment gives tourists time to sit back and enjoy the food slowly. In fact, the study sample valued "relaxation" in the holidays, which shows to be agreeing with this issue of slowing the pace to eat.

### *2.3 Gastronomic Tourists*

There are several studies that allow to trace the profile of the gastronomic tourist. Bernier (2003) stresses three essential points in understanding these tourists: spending, quality and interest. Gastronomic tourists have high average expenses, derived from their high standard of living, which makes them excellent catering customers, since the price does not cause any concern. As a result, these tourists prove to be more demanding in their gastronomic experiences, putting quality and authenticity at the top of the list of their priorities, and express their displeasure when the meal does not correspond to what they expected. Finally, they also show a high interest in the gastronomic offer and have the initiative to inform themselves about the activities by the most diverse means of information, giving importance to the mouth-to-mouth experience.

In another perspective, gastronomic tourists can be grouped according to their level of interest at the time of choice of destination: high interest, moderate interest, low interest and very low interest/ no interest (Hall & Sharples, 2003). The first group is directed to Gourmet Tourism, Gastronomic Tourism or Cuisine Tourism which integrates tourists whose main reason for travelling is to visit a particular restaurant or cellars to carry out activities related with beverages and food. The second group is attributed to The Culinary Tourism which incorporates all those whose main curiosity is to visit the local market, a festival, a restaurant or wine cellar as one of the activities to be carried out upon arrival at the destination. The third group is granted to Rural or Urban Tourism which aggregates tourists visiting the local market, gastronomic festival, restaurant or wine cellars as an activity distinct from those that have previously defined. Finally, the fourth group agglomerates all tourists who just visit the restaurant to satisfy the basic need for food. Similar to this latest model, also Hall et al. (2003) identify four groups of tourists: gourmets, indigenous foodies, tourist foodies and familiar foods. Gourmets have a high level of interest and involvement, extensive research on local food, and love to try various dishes. Indigenous foodies expose a moderate interest and involvement; they prefer to eat out in ethnic restaurants, and are enthusiastic about cooking courses, local restaurants, local food and local markets. Tourist foodies manifest a low level of interest and involvement. They like to cook pre-prepared food, avoiding to eat out and when they do, they prefer conventional restaurants. Familiar foods also have a low level of interest and involvement, and prefer to eat at home before their trip and rarely eat out.

However, Shenoy (2005) argues that gastronomic tourists are people who eat out often, opt for local food and drinks, and prefer fine establishments rather than those operating under a franchise system. These can be divided into five distinct groups: gastronomic tourists, have a high level of knowledge and are critical in the matter; gastronomes, have a high interest in high-quality food, local producers and seasonal products; interested shoppers, understand food as an added complement to holiday pleasure and are not enthusiastic about tasting of local food; not involved, do not attribute value to food in the context of their holiday, and finally, slow consumers have no interest in new foods on their travels. For Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen (2016), it is possible to identify three types of tourists according to their behaviour towards food: Experiencers, Enjoyers and Survivors. Experiencers consider food a decisive factor in the choices of the destination and usually seek information about the gastronomy before the trip. Enjoyers are food appreciators, but they do not see it as an important aspect of their holiday. Survivors understand that food is part of their daily routine and understand it as a satisfaction of their physiological needs. Therefore, Experiencers' value originality, novelty, authenticity in

gastronomic experiences, while Enjoyers and Survivors rate traditional, local and healthy food. The World Food Travel Association (cited by Cunha, 2020) defined gastronomic tourists as travellers who participate in an experience or activity related to food and beverage in the last 12 months. The possible activities are: food tour; shopping at a local grocery store; visit food and drink factories; participate in tastings of spiritual delicacies; eat at local restaurants or visit a chocolatier, bakery or ice cream shop to taste something unique in their destination.

#### *2.4 Gastronomic Tourism and Senior Segment*

The world is aging at the fastest pace in history. According to the United Nations (2015) (cited by Balderas, Patterson & Leeson, 2019), the aging of the population is one of the most significant social transformations of the 21st century, and the limits of ageing will continue to change as seniors take good care of their health and have a higher average life expectancy. Seniors, unlike young people and young families, have not been a segment of focus of the tourism industry, as it is considered unattractive (Alen, Losada & Carlos, 2017). However, there are some researchers who expose the increase in the senior segment in countries such as China (Hsu, Cai, & Wong, 2007), the United States (Hudson, 2010) and Australia (Horneman, Carter, Wei, & Ruys, 2002) and stress their importance in the tourist market. It is relevant to remember that the current senior segment will be the largest consumer group in the upcoming decades (Meiners & Seeberger, 2010). Note that older travellers have been responsible for higher spending on holidays or weekends in low season. These are tourists with greater availability of time and greater purchasing power, due to retirement (Sie, Patterson & Pegg, 2016). For these reasons, this is a segment that contributes to combating seasonality in tourism, increasing revenues and the use of the superstructures of destinations throughout the year (Alén, Domínguez & Losada, 2012).

Foodies, gourmets and other people associate meals and dinners with values such as pleasure, well-being, positive feelings and even happiness when dining with other people or celebrating special meals (Yiengprugsawan et al., 2015). The focus of gastronomy is to ensure the quality of food as flavour, taste and texture during eating, but also considering traditions, culture, habits and beliefs as well (Aguilera et al., 2019). In addition, the gastronomy recognizes the contribution of the environment during a meal to make eating a pleasant and enjoyable experience (Arboleya et al., 2012). Kim, Eves and Scarles (2009) found that older respondents with a higher level of education are interested in meeting new cultures through gastronomy. They consider that local food is not only a way to feed, but one of the only attractions to travel during a holiday. Already Ignatov and Smith (2006) concluded that the taste for gastronomy and wines is evident in older people, namely men, with more educational qualifications and with a medium/high salary. Also, Mgonja et al. (2016) found that tourists aged 50 years or older showed a greater interest in the consumption of local Tanzanian food than those under age. Lee, Scott and Packer (2014) maintain that slow food members, regardless of their age, want to experience local culture in its most real aspect. They prefer to try the local food of small producers, read the menus of the restaurants, participate in gastronomic events and cooking classes if they have time. It should be noted that all members share very similar values with regard to their relationship with food and apply them in their daily routine, including respondents over the age of 60.

However, the aging process impairs physiological functions that often include impaired sensory perception: hearing loss, altered change in taste and flavour perception. It is common for the

elderly to complain that their food is tasteless and the appearance of meals is not attractive or even lacking variety (Costa & Jongen, 2010). Tse and Crotts (2005) reveal that there is a negative relationship between age and gastronomic experiences. This can be justified by the decrease in sensitivity, both taste and smell in senior tourists (Khan & Hackler, 1981), leading to a preference for foods familiar to them than experiencing a different gastronomy from the one they are used to, in order to avoid changing their diet and controlling health problems (Balderas, Patterson & Leeson, 2019). Even so, recent developments in legislation support the provision of convenient information to help consumers make appropriate and safe food choices, considering conditions such as food allergies. In particular, in the European Union (EU), in accordance with the EU Regulation 1169/11, it is mandatory to provide detailed information on content or potential contamination during elaboration with any of the 14 allergens: as peanuts, tree nuts, mollusks, sulfites or lupin, by the catering sector. In the near future, precisely in nutrition, nutrigenomics and nutrigenetics will be useful to provide personalized advice about specific intolerances or contraindications (Pérez-Rodrigo & Aranceta-Bartrina, 2020).

From another perspective the elderly wait to enjoy their meals, so as to be able to contribute for their health and well-being (Aguilera et al., 2019). In addition, the elderly usually eat their meals on their own, adding to eating in solitude and boring meals. When this becomes the usual situation, the risk of vulnerability multiplies. Thus, the food provided to the elderly should be nutritionally adequate, but also presented in an appropriate and attractive way, and served with special care to enrich gastronomic experiences that can contribute to improve the quality of life of the elderly who live alone or who live in nursing homes (Edfors & Westergren, 2012). In this sense, there are several approaches used to provide adequate and attractive food for the old ones in different countries. In China, based on traditional medicinal cuisine, the combination of herbs with traditional cuisine ingredients is common for the preparation of tasty meals (Fu, 2011). In South Korea, chewing problems are common among seniors. So molecular cooking techniques (gelation and spherification) are being used to produce soft foods, which are their preference (Kim & Joo, 2015). In some establishments, pureed foods are mixed with thickeners to create attractive shapes such as the original food when it is served (Reilly et al., 2013). Some research indicates that 3D printing can be promising to design personalized food for seniors with chewing and swallowing problems (Liu et al., 2017). Sharing meals with others and talking about what is eaten can draw attention and increase awareness of the pleasure of eating (Cornil & Chandon, 2015). Eating in company is particularly relevant for seniors as it helps to avoid the negative consequences of loneliness during meals, and it also contributes to mental well-being (Fulkerson et al., 2014). Recent research has explored the opportunities that new digital technologies can bring in the context of meal times, for example the tele-dining (Spence et al., 2019). But there are other digital examples that make it possible to eat along with someone, such as using websites (Eatwith, 2021) or simply connecting via Skype with a friend or relative who is away during the meal (Spence, 2017).

In a way, it is notorious that the senior segment deserves greater attention from the tourism industry and that tourist destinations should promote the development of gastronomic tourism in this emerging niche (Balderas, Patterson & Lesson 2020).

### **3. Research Methodology**

This article results from academic work within the university environment and therefore during the elapse of a semester. Since November 2020 to May 2021, this article has undergone changes for a better understanding of the topic addressed. For this conceptual article, empirical articles, book chapters and reports about gastronomy and gastronomic tourism as well as individual topics were read to support the theoretical subject. Subsequently, case studies were gathered and interpreted to understand the combination of the topics mentioned above and to grasp what is happening in the market. The case studies addressed in the context of the tourists' motivations were at a national level, specifically Portugal, and also at an international level such as in Asia (Hong Kong, Shanghai, Japan, Macau, Singapore, Taiwan, Indonesia and India), the United States of America (Texas, New Orleans), Europe (Spain, Finland, Greece, Italy and France) and Oceania (Australia, New Zealand). The case studies mentioned in the context of the senior segment focused in the Northern and Southern America (Argentina and Canada), Africa (Tanzania), Europe (Italy and the United Kingdom), Asia (China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Korea) and Oceania (Australia).

This study is based on an extensive literature review, including the most relevant international scientific contributions in the field of tourism about gastronomic tourism, tourists' motivation and profile. Initially, the relationship between tourism and gastronomy is presented using the most recent research articles, based on the authors Ellis et al. (2018) and Sandybayev (2016), while to study the motivations, several case studies are presented, namely the one that focuses on Portugal in 2020 according to Cunha (2020). Additionally, it also refers to the senior segment as a sector to be developed and explored by tourism markets, which is defined by Alén, Losada and Carlos (2017). It is clear that the senior segment deserves greater attention on the part of the tourism industry and that tourist destinations should promote the development of gastronomic tourism in this emerging niche (Balderas, Patterson & Lesson, 2020). Regarding the empirical results, it should be noted that this is a conceptual work. Therefore, its significance covers the generalized literature on the subject, narrowing into a relevant subtopic with perspectives for future investigations.

### **4. Findings and Analysis**

Gastronomic tourism has shown growth worldwide, which translates into an increase in the awareness of destinations of gastronomy as a mean of diversifying tourism and national economic development (World Tourism Organization, 2012). In addition, it means visiting producers, gastronomic festivals, restaurants, which purpose is to taste fine delicacies (Mitchell & Hall, 2003).

There have been successful destinations that are using gastronomy to create niche markets and associate them to their image, such as: Australia, Singapore, Taiwan, Shanghai, China, Bali, Indonesia, Japan, Macau, New Orleans, New Zealand, Spain and Greece (Kivela & Crotts, 2015) and also India, Italy and France (Sánchez-Cañizares & López-Guzmán, 2012). However, Portugal is an example of a tourist destination, whose image is not associated with gastronomic tourism, since there are few tourists who recognize it for this reason, being the main reason for travel the culture of the country (Cunha, Barroco & Antunes 2019). According to The World Tourism Organization (2012), gastronomy has not been considered the prime travel motivation, followed

by cultural interest and nature (Berbel-Pineda et al., 2019). This is due to the fact that gastronomic tourism is associated with cultural tourism (Robinson & Clifford, 2012). Any other way, local food continues to play a fundamental role in the tourist experience (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2014), which contributes to the satisfaction of tourists (Sánchez-Canizares & López-Guzmán, 2012) and their intention to revisit the destination (Antón et al., 2019).

There are several studies that allow to trace the profile of the gastronomic tourist: according to spending, quality and interest (Bernier, 2003); to their level of interest at the time of choice of destination (Hall & Sharples, 2003); to their involvement in the experience (Hall et al., 2003); to their level of knowledge (Shenoy, 2005); or according to their behaviour towards food (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsäne, 2016). Nevertheless, the World Food Travel Association (cited by Cunha, 2020) defined gastronomic tourists as travellers who participate in an experience or activity related to food and beverage in the last 12 months.

The aging of the population is one of the most significant social transformations of the 21st century (United Nations, 2015; cited by Balderas, Patterson & Leeson, 2019); and it is important to remember that the current senior segment will be the largest consumer group in the upcoming decades (Meiners & Seeberger, 2010), because they have more time available and greater purchasing power, due to retirement (Sie, Patterson & Pegg, 2016); which are important characteristics considering the times of low tourist influx, so they can contribute to combating seasonality in tourism, since they have a preference for traveling in low seasons (Alén, Domínguez & Losada, 2012). However, the aging process impairs physiological functions such as: hearing loss, altered change in taste and flavour perception (Costa & Jongen, 2010); so, they prefer familiar foods instead of trying a new one, in order to avoid changing their diet (Balderas, Patterson & Leeson, 2019). In addition, the elderly usually eat their meals alone, adding to eating in solitude and boring meals. Thus, the food provided to the elderly should be nutritionally adequate and presented in an appropriate and attractive way, and also served with special care to enrich gastronomic experiences (Edfors & Westergren, 2012). In this regard, there are several approaches used to provide adequate and attractive food for the old ones in different countries, for example in China (Fu, 2011) and in South Korea (Kim & Joo, 2015).

## **5. Discussion**

Gastronomic tourism is becoming an important area of interest to tourism, which is being supported by governments in an attempt to increase the number of local and international tourists. Therefore, gastronomy plays an important role in promoting the tourism sector, not only because food is vital to the tourist experience, but also because the hospitality and gastronomy sector offers new opportunities to meet the growing expectations of the tourist market.

Many older travellers are showing greater willingness to travel during the low season, since it is cheaper, and they stay for longer periods of time than previous generations. Since senior travellers have greater purchasing power due to increased income, they value the quality of services provided. The most experienced and sophisticated elderly traveller wishes to enjoy authentic and memorable experiences. This was corroborated by the study by Antón et al. (2019), who concluded that the intention to return to that destination is influenced by the perception of a memorable experience. Gastronomic tourism is a special interest or niche tourism market that is becoming popular as far as industry promotes local and regional products. There are studies that point out to decreased sensitivity of taste and smell of older tourists, and a preference for

familiar foods, instead of trying the local gastronomy to avoid any negative effects of a change in their diet or to control any existing health problems.

Gastronomic tourism has been developing along the last decade, but it is not decisive in the choice of the destination by tourists. On the other hand, not much literature is available regarding the seniors in this context. It is hoped that this article will contribute for the development of Science in the areas of gastronomic tourism, and that it may constitute a framework for future investigations.

## **6. Conclusions**

Gastronomic Tourism has been potentially evolving over the last decade, although gastronomy does not represent, for many tourists, a decisive factor in choosing the destination. There has also been a change in behaviour on the part of tourists. They are increasingly informed and experienced, consequently they are more demanding and destinations have to be prepared to respond. In addition, a new segment is beginning to emerge: a senior segment, and it is time for destinations not to consider it a niche market, but rather a segment of market expansion, which can bring numerous benefits to tourism, particularly with regard to combating seasonality.

As the population gets older, their needs, desires and consumption patterns also change significantly (Costa & Jongen, 2010). This means that our decisions on travel and tourism are also changing. Although there are many studies on gastronomic tourism, the difficulty in collecting information on the senior segment which has been previously highlighted, has been justified by the existence of a gap in the literature in this context. This is still an area with very few studies, but it is imperative to continue prospects on gastronomic tourism and for tourism providers to acquire a complete understanding of this market segment and how it will change consumption patterns, both today and in the near future. Regarding the empirical results, it should be noted that this is a conceptual work. Therefore, its significance covers the generalized literature on the subject, narrowing into a relevant subtopic with perspectives for future investigations.

The study emphasizes the relevance of the senior segment for Gastronomic Tourism Destination management in order to provide effective communication and marketing strategies. Thus, the study contributes for destination management and marketing and also for tourism literature development in Gastronomy and Tourism.

It would be interesting to apply questionnaires or conduct interviews with the elderly in the context of gastronomic travel which would allow a better analysis of their motivations. For future research, one might consider to broaden and deepen the topic of slow food in the senior segment: to understand what they value most in enjoying a gastronomic experience; to investigate whether changes of their five senses influence their satisfaction with the experience; realize if they are influenced by opinions reported by friends and relatives, and also comprehend whether their health issues may influence their choices.

Knowing that this is a conceptual article and in order to continue this study, it would be interesting to apply a survey or conduct interviews with the elderly in the context of travelling motivated by gastronomic tourism.

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# Destination Management in the Region of Central Macedonia (RCM) in Greece: Proposing a new model of DMO

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## **Abstract**

*This paper explores the practical functionality of the principles of Destination Management in Central Macedonia, Greece and the prospects of creating an organization that will include all regional tourism stakeholders, presenting structures and functionalities of a proposed DMO (Destination Management Organization) model. A secondary research was carried out followed by a structured interview in an effort to investigate the existence of tourism promotion initiatives in the region and the level of cooperation between the regional tourism bodies. As a result, the contribution of a DMO to the tourism development, management and promotion of the region is questioned, as well as its proposed structure, the bodies that will be involved and the type of their responsibilities. According to the research results, the establishment of a new DMO in Central Macedonia will contribute to the sustainable management and organization of the tourism product in a professional manner. All related tourism bodies will be represented by the proposed models of administration and financial structure, according to their special individual characteristics. As a future research, it would be interesting to explore how a DMO would contribute in tourism impact management.*

**Keywords:** *Destination Management, Sustainable Tourism Development, Destination Management Organization, Stakeholders Involvement*

## **1. Introduction**

The reasons why Central Macedonia was chosen as a tourist destination to discuss the importance of Destination Management Organizations, has to do with the high level of increase in incoming tourism flows during the recent years, the problems of organizing and managing the tourist product and the need for synergies with all the stakeholders involved. Also, according to international literature, many researchers (Stickdorn and Zehrer, 2009) have highlighted the importance of Destination Management for the effective promotion and organization of regional tourism. The destination of Central Macedonia has a diverse, thematic tourism product (cultural, religious, gastronomic, etc.) and an organized management would directly contribute to the extension of the tourism season. It has a very significant tourism resource potential. Its main comparative advantage is the environmental, natural and cultural capital. The coastline is of a great variety, from the endless sandy beaches in Pieria to the lacy coasts in Chalkidiki. The coastline of the region is estimated at about 945 kilometers, of which 680 are considered suitable

for tourism development. The peculiarity of the terrain and the constant alternation of the bays and peninsulas make the coasts of Central Macedonia particularly attractive for tourist activities, as they are well protected from severe weather, maintaining comparatively high temperatures. A significant number of rivers create fertile valleys and unique ecological value for wetlands in their lakes and estuaries. Considering this significant variety of landscapes and habitats stretching from dry rocky areas with little vegetation to the alpine meadows and snow-capped peaks of the mythical mountain Olympus, the natural richness of Central Macedonia is a valuable resource. Most of the areas can attract tourist interest, not only because of their natural beauty and high environmental value, but also because of the presence of valuable cultural resources within or near them.

## **2. Literature Review**

Tourist destinations are amalgams of tourism products, offering an integrated experience to consumers (Buhalis, 2000). The definition of the concept of tourism in relation to Tourism Destination Management Organizations should include the following (Pike, 2004):

- Promote the economic and social benefits of tourism to a community and include the process of finding government resources to promote the destination.
- Promote the development of tourism at the level of business investment.
- To highlight potential negative environmental impacts while developing an area.
- Report negative socio-cultural impacts on a destination.

If a destination is considered as a single organization, a self-contained multi-functional enterprise, it could be said that the management of tourist destinations is a system of coordinated management and rational exploitation of all the natural and anthropogenic elements that make up the identity of a destination. According to Butler (1998), sustainable tourism exists when tourism is developed and maintained in an area, considering community and environment issues, in such a way and such an extent that it remains viable over an indefinite period. Moreover, sustainable tourism does not misquote or alter the human or physical environment in which it exists, to such a degree that it prohibits the successful development and well-being of other activities and processes (Christou, 2000). In this case, the role of a DMO becomes a challenge since it needs to create consistent brand associations across all stakeholders and continuity throughout their attitudes and actions (Zouganeli, Trihas, and Antonaki, 2012). Destination management is seen as an advanced form of collaboration between interested tourism operators linked together by a Destination Management Organization (DMO), which is essentially a network of partners. Network partners are not completely dependent on each other as they remain independent and each partner contributes some of its core competence (Palmer and McCole, 2000).

The World Tourism Organization (2004) defines DMOs as the organizations responsible for the management and/or marketing of destinations and in general, which fall into one of the following categories:

- National Tourism Authorities or Organizations responsible for the management and marketing of the tourism product at national level

- Regional, provincial or state DMOs responsible for managing and / or marketing the tourist product in a geographical area designated for this purpose, such as the county or province, and
- Local DMOs responsible for managing and / or marketing the tourist product in a smaller geographical area or city.

A DMO is an organization that implements a standardized process to promote a destination, attracting the right number of tourists. In the near future, a Destination Management Organization will be the dominant and most important body to manage a destination and will develop as a contact center. The lack of a management organization at a destination will have a negative impact on the destination's development and on the overall visitor experience and will ultimately lead to the perception that destinations cannot obtain a recognizable identity (Morgan, Pritchard, & Piggott, 2002). The role of the Destination Management Organization is to guide and co-ordinate the activities of all its members in a collective strategy, rather than controlling the activities of its joint members in the scheme. Moreover, according to Chatzigeorgiou and Christou (2018), DMOs can develop trust in the destination by using marketing communications to strengthen the destination's image. Morrison, Bruen, and Anderson (1998) distinguish five main functions of a DMO:

1. Creating new incomes and jobs that contribute to a more diversified local economy
2. Create a more appropriate image of the destination by displaying the sights and infrastructure in selected visitor markets.
3. Coordinate and plan clear guidelines to encourage partnerships to share the growing benefits of tourism
4. Creating a serious image of destination management that gives credibility to the local tourism industry
5. Improving the quality of life of the local community.

Heath and Wall (1992) argue that the very important role of DMOs has been recognized, which enhance and maintain the competitiveness of the destination and note that their tasks are:

1. Strategic planning that covers the interests of all stakeholders in a destination,
2. Marketing and promotion of the destination, and
3. Coordination of specific activities

The DMO organizational structures are different. Various authors (Franch and Martini, 2002; Brent and Crouch, 2003) have described various DMO organizational structures, including a government service or government department, a public, private or non-profit organization, and private organizations. A DMO should be independent of the private tourism service providers and act as a single entity on behalf of all those involved in the tourism sector of an area with the aim of promoting and selling the destination's key tourism products (Ryglova, 2008). Funding DMOs may stem from a variety of sources, but generally reflects the organizational structure as well as the context in which the DMO operates. Examples include government grants, special tourism taxes or levies such as hotel / room taxes, gambling and lottery levies, membership fees paid by tourism agencies, sponsorship and advertising by destination promotions, booking fees, room sales and contributions (Sheehan and Ritchie 1997).

Although tourism is a dynamic development vehicle that contributes to addressing the economic crisis, a Destination Management Organization has not been established in Central Macedonia to date. The bodies involved in the tourism sector of Central Macedonia are as below:

1. Tourism Directorate of the Region of Central Macedonia
2. Various departments and agencies of the local Municipalities
4. Regional Development Companies and Chambers of Commerce
5. Halkidiki Tourism Organization
6. Tourism Development and Promotion Organization of Pieria
7. Thessaloniki Tourism Promotion and Marketing Organization
8. Local Associations of Hoteliers and Tourist Agencies

### **3. Research Methodology**

The contribution of this paper concerns the prospect of creating a new body that will have the role of managing the tourist destination of Central Macedonia, involving all relevant stakeholders in shaping the overall tourism product. It explores the existing destination management model and proposes a new one which will address a unified management and promotion approach through the involvement of all stakeholders. Thus, the main research objectives of this paper are to investigate the current situation in Central Macedonia regarding the organization of tourist destination, to record the extent to which tourism professionals are involved in the management and organization of the tourism product and to highlight their contribution in the effective development of tourism in the region in general and, finally, the prospect of creating a single Destination Management Organization (DMO).

As a result, the following research targets were set:

- a) To clarify the contribution of tourism and its importance to Central Macedonia
- b) To investigate the existence of DMOs or related initiatives in Central Macedonia.
- c) To highlight the tourism promotion activities implemented by the Region of Central Macedonia and the level of its cooperation with other tourism development and promotion agencies.
- d) To study the contribution of a Central Macedonia Destination Management Organization to the tourism development, management and promotion of the region.
- e) To propose what the structure of this Organization will be, what bodies will take part and what kind of responsibilities it will have.
- f) To identify the potential benefits of the operation of such an Organization, as well as the priorities it should have to achieve the maximum benefit for visitors and residents of the area.

First of all, the identification and specification of the research objectives were determined, as they were the basis for the formulation of the questions (Rondos and Papanis, 2005). The following procedures are necessary to investigate the above objectives:

- Listing of the main axes of the activities and structure of representative agencies of Central Macedonia involved in tourism.
- Investigating the level of cooperation of the tourism operators of the region with each other.
- Identifying the reasons why it is necessary to create a single Destination Management Organization (DMO) for Central Macedonia.
- Determining the organization and structure of this DMO.
- Identifying the benefits of the operation of such an organization and its priorities.

Initially, a secondary research was carried out using the bibliographic review process, followed by 10 in-depth structured interviews. For the structured interview procedure, the sample size does not need to be large, since after 15 interviews it is found that the answers are repeated, without providing a substantially differentiated picture. Their number is judged by the researcher, depending on the sample size and the variety and range of questions (Cohen, Manion, and Morisson, 2011). Therefore, a total of ten interviews were selected. Also an important parameter for a comprehensive survey is the portion of the population from which respondents were selected (Zafiroopoulos, 2015). That is why representatives of the largest organizations in Central Macedonia directly related to tourism were selected. For the purposes of the interview, a suitably formulated questionnaire was formed during meetings in February and March 2018, based on the principles of qualitative research.

The interview question plan was formulated, then the plan was tested to its final form and the final questions were compiled and coded (Javeau, 1996). The questionnaire plan consists of the first section containing questions about the demographic and social characteristics of the respondents (gender, age, educational level, etc.), the second section (questions 1-4) which includes questions about the activities and the structure of the organization represented by each respondent, the third section (questions 5-6) which includes questions on the activities of the Region of Central Macedonia and the level of cooperation with tourism professionals, and finally the fourth section (questions 7-10) about setting up and operating a Destination Management Organization in Central Macedonia. To ensure that all interview questions were clear and comprehensible, a small sample pilot study was conducted in the presence of the researcher.

The sample of respondents was selected based on their knowledge, relationship and experience in the particular research topic. Respondents worked in public and private organizations and agencies, had sufficient work experience in the field of tourism, active participation in various tourism activities and partnerships and an understanding of the management of tourism destinations. In this context, the participants were executives of ten (10) tourism organizations operating in Central Macedonia. Four of the participants were men and six were women. All participants were graduates. Four of the participants had more than 10 years of experience in the tourism industry. Regarding the profile of the respondents, four executives were between 31-40 years old and the other six were over 41 years old. It should be noted that the responses showed no differences according to the gender, level of education and years of work experience.

## **4. Discussion**

### *4.1. The importance of tourism in the Greek economy and the region*

All respondents praised that for the Greek economy tourism is a key tool for growth and productive potential. Specifically, for the region of Central Macedonia, respondents believe that tourism has contributed greatly to the local economy both directly and indirectly owing to the continued investments made. It enhances and supplements income and therefore stimulates the local economy and thus the local community. There is a continuous upward trend in the relevant tourism indicators. In fact, it was reported that according to recent statistics, Central Macedonia will be Greece's second most tourist-friendly region in the next five years.

#### *4.2. The main pillars of the activities of the existing organizations and bodies*

The main pillars of the tourist organizations and agencies represented by respondents are mainly concerned with developing and executing strategic plans for the promotion and marketing of tourist destinations in which they operate. Specifically, online promotion of the destination through their website and social media, participation in various international tourism fairs, conferences, road shows and B2B's, promotion and networking through public relations offices abroad in specific target markets, organization of familiarization trips for tourism professionals, production of tourist maps, audiovisual material and applications, organization of conferences and events and marketing support of air carriers.

#### *4.3. The structure of the existing organizations and bodies*

The research findings show a great deal of heterogeneity, as other organizations are purely public and belong to Local Government, such as the Region of Central Macedonia and the Municipalities, others being public-private partnerships, such as Tourism and Marketing Organization of Halkidiki, and others are purely private, such as the Thessaloniki Hoteliers Association. In general, the public sector entities are represented by an elected person (e.g. Vice-Mayor), his associates and the corresponding public administrative structure (usually a Directorate or Department of Tourism), while the other entities are usually represented by a Board. The organization chart and funding of these bodies also vary according to their type, with public administrations consisting of more complex schemes and being financed solely by public funds, while the private ones are being represented by more flexible and simple schemes and being financed either exclusively from private funds, or from a combination of public and private funds.

#### *4.4. The range of activities of the organizations and bodies*

Most respondents replied that their activities focus mainly on the promotion of the destination, but this does not mean that their actions do not have a positive impact on the wider area as well, while, sometimes they take part in joint initiatives with the Region of Central Macedonia Tourism Directorate for the whole region.

#### *4.5. Tourism development related initiatives of the Tourism Directorate of the Region of Central Macedonia*

The majority of respondents replied that they were aware of and were monitoring the tourism promotion activities of the Region of Central Macedonia, such as marketing support, familiarization trips, participation in tourism international fairs, B2B's and workshops, etc, which in turn have a positive impact on their own tourist destinations. While most acknowledge the Region's contribution to the tourism promotion of the destination, some of the respondents emphasized the fact that the Region's central actions do not have a significant impact on the least developed tourism areas.

#### *4.6. Level of cooperation between the local bodies and the Tourism Directorate of the Region of Central Macedonia*

According to the responds, cooperation with the Region of Central Macedonia Tourism Directorate is of great importance, but there is a need to change the existing model of



cooperation and communication. Some mentioned the need to reduce bureaucratic procedures in order to achieve such cooperation, while others asked for the combination of the actions to jointly promote and manage their tourism products.

#### *4.7. Developing a DMO for the destination of Central Macedonia with the tourism stakeholders' involvement*

A Destination Management Organization for Central Macedonia region representing all tourism stakeholders in the region was considered by many respondents to be a positive first step towards a unified and integrated promotion of the destination. However, there are many concerns raised by the respondents about the success of it:

- The need of less public bureaucratic procedures for the success of such an initiative
- The new body's actions have to consider any developed or undeveloped tourist area of the region and represent fairly and universally all the tourism entities of Central Macedonia.
- Such an Organization must focus not only on large central actions but also consider the specifics of tourism products of all Regional Units.
- The need to measure and control the tourist impacts on the region and consider the carrying capacity issues at any individual regional destinations.

#### *4.8. Structure of the organization*

The vast majority of the respondents stated the universality of the tourism stakeholders who would be involved in this organization, but in an organized and fair manner.

#### *4.9. Potentials of operating a DMO in Central Macedonia region*

Most of the respondents agree that a destination management organization for Central Macedonia would operate successfully and would have multiple benefits for the promotion of the common tourism product in addition to sustainable tourism development of the region. Scale economies would be achieved and the destination would be presented in the target markets in a more organized and uniformed manner. A common branding and a common strategic plan widely accepted by all involved in the tourism sector would be formed, synergies would be initiated and more effective management practices of the destination would be implemented.

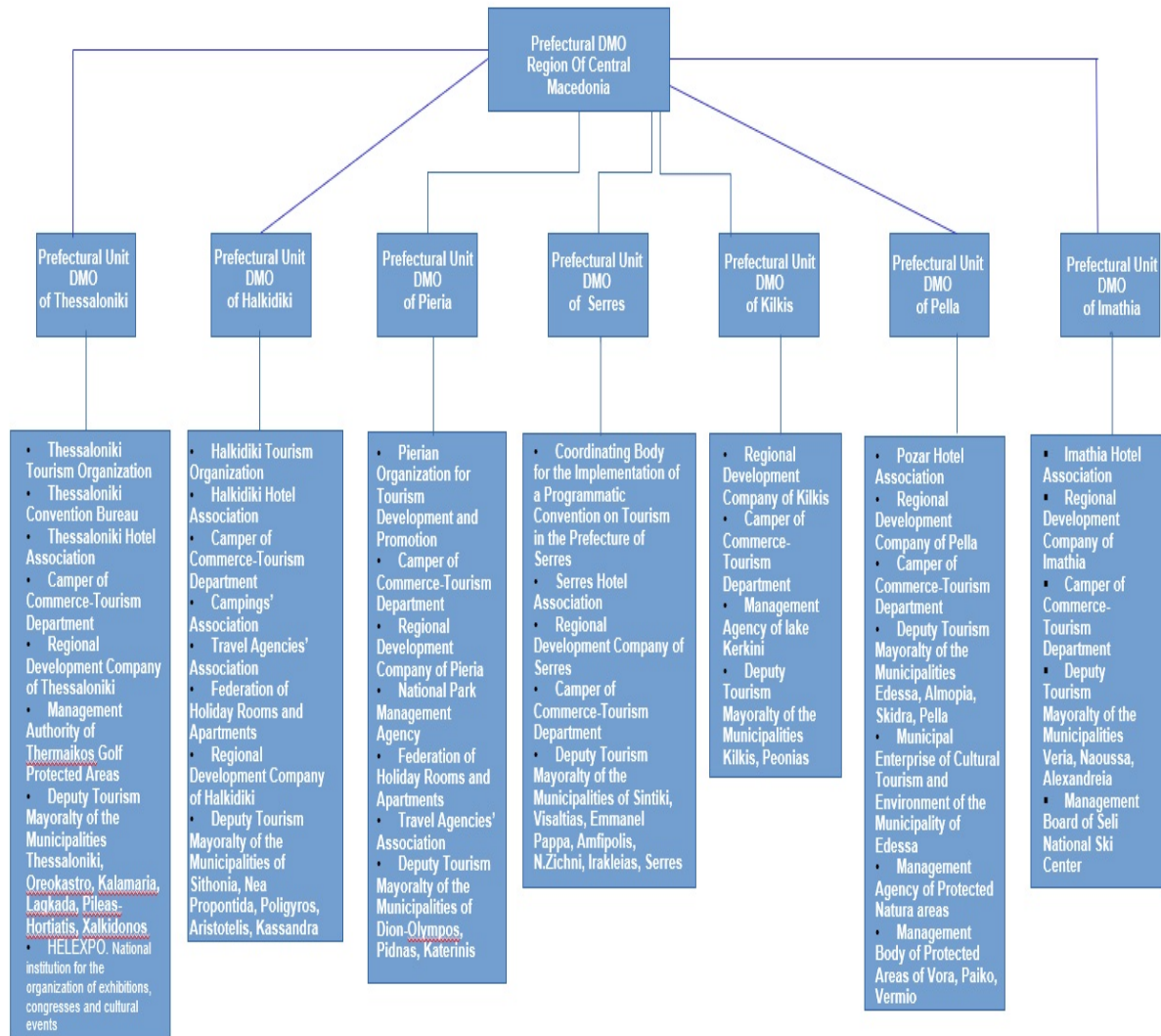
#### *4.10. Priorities for such a DMO to achieve maximum benefit for visitors and locals*

Respondents' answers converge on the key priorities such a destination management organization should have, especially during the first years since its establishment. They agree on the need to draw up a single strategic plan for the next five years, listing priorities and proposals for the promotion of Central Macedonia's thematic tourism products and involving all stakeholders through a broad consultation. They also consider the importance to establish networking and contacts to develop synergies with third parties involved.

#### *4.11. Suggested Model's Structure of the DMO in Central Macedonia Region*

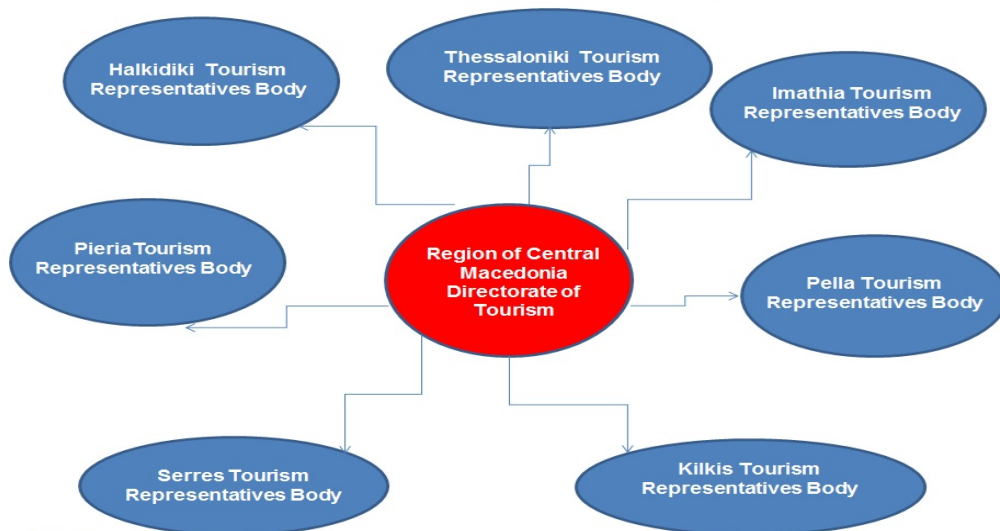
Based on the above analysis of the aims and findings that emerged from the responses to the interviews and considering similar examples from the international experience, the following depiction of the new Central Macedonia Destination Management Organization is suggested.

Region of Central Macedonia has an umbrella role and directly cooperates at the first level with the seven representatives of the seven Regional Units, which at the second level are cooperating with all stakeholders involved in the tourism sector from each Regional Unit (Graph 1). At this model, any local community and professional body can be involved, public sector bodies such as Directions of Education, Ministry of Culture, Natural Protected Management Bodies and any other body that could contribute or benefited in a sustainable tourism development manner.



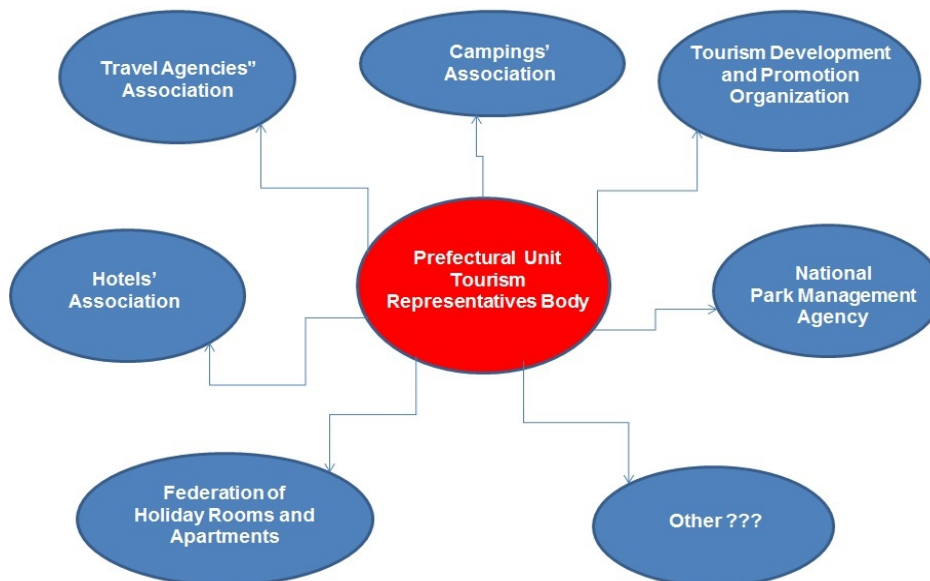
Graph 1. Region of Central Macedonia proposed DMO structure

A different schematic representation of the new Destination Management Organization would be as below (Graph 2):



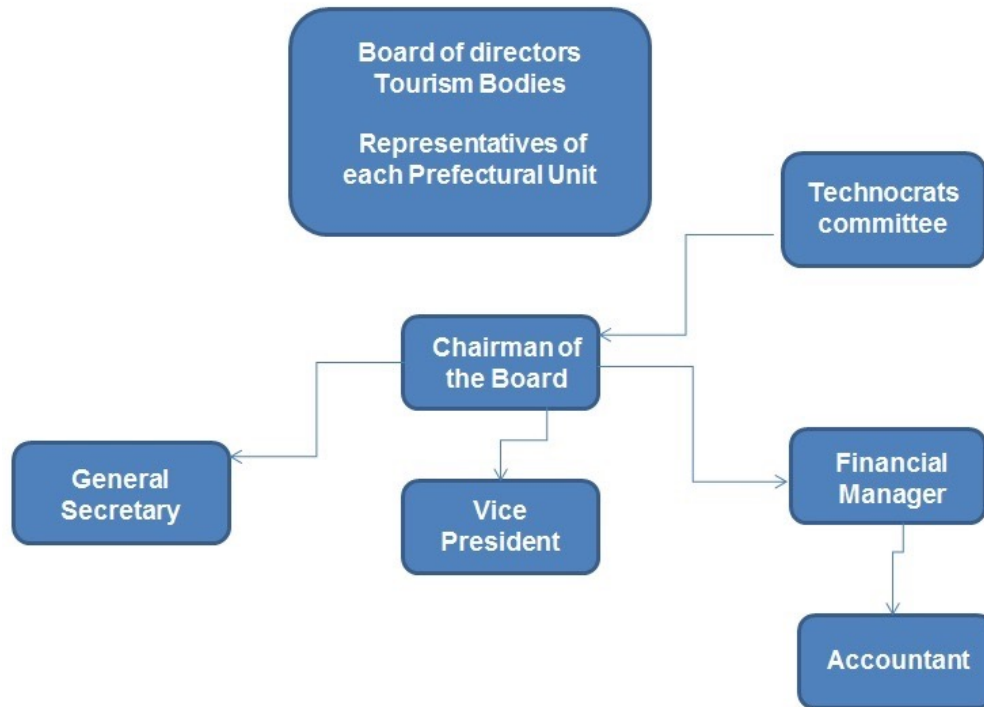
Graph 2. Alternative schematic representation of the new DMO

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Graph presents the Prefectural Unit DMO Organization Chart Proposal that can be adapted in any individual Prefectural Unit, according to its special characteristics, private and public tourism bodies.



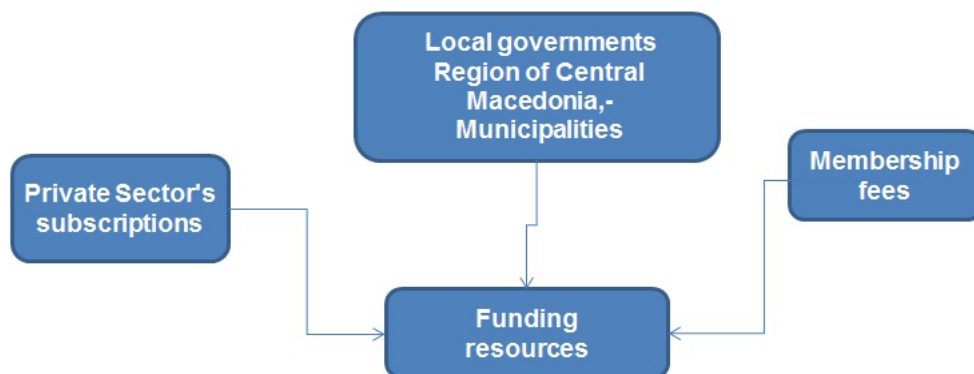
Graph 3. Prefectural Unit DMO Organization Chart Proposal

The respondents' proposals for the new Agency's administrative structure are generally summarized as below (Graph 4).



Graph 4. Proposed administrative structure.

According to the research findings, the Board of Directors is proposed to be composed of one representative of all the tourism stakeholders of each Regional Unit, namely a total of seven members. Some have suggested that a committee of independent technocrats with a deep knowledge on tourism issues should also operate, consulting, advising and recommending to the Board specific ways of planning and implementing the DMO's strategic plan. Concerning the financing of the DMO, they all agreed that its main financial source would come in an annual basis from the Region of Central Macedonia, and secondly from the Municipalities and the other bodies and private sector's subscriptions, as following (Graph 5).



Graph 5. Proposed Funding Recourses Structure

## 5. Conclusions

Based on the objectives of this research study and the responses of the representatives of the tourism stakeholders of Central Macedonia region, it could be argued that not everybody agrees with the prospect of establishing a single Central Macedonia DMO. The reasons are mainly due to the fear of non-uniform and fair representation of all the individual tourist destinations within the region and the prospect of the abolition of existing tourism organizations, some of which have been operating for many years and have succeeded in achieving a good level of cooperation between their members, representing successfully their tourist destination. In order to eliminate such objections and given the fact that the majority of the respondents find this establishment very encouraging, if not necessary, it is very crucial to set up and operate a DMO in Central Macedonia that will adequately represent all tourism players and promote the tourism product in the region in an organized manner. Before the decision to set up such an organization, it will be needed to be widely consulted with all those players directly and indirectly involved.

With the formulation of the new DMO, the following results are expected to be achieved:

- Identification and visibility of the specific geographical tourism area.
- Promotion of the region's tourism product in a unified manner.
- Cooperation between all related tourism bodies of the region
- Better marketing and sustainable tourism management practices

The communication strategy of the DMO should focus mainly on:

1. The wider recognition of the region (branding-positioning) as a tourist destination.
2. The promotion campaign to be on the form of thematic tourism products or destinations.
3. The specific tourism promotion actions to be included in the Strategic Plan and to be selected as most appropriate and effective.

Since the sample of this work was limited, future surveys may include more interviews with executives from other tourism organizations in Central Macedonia and also from different private sector companies related to tourism. Further research may investigate the role of Destination Management Organizations in promoting other destinations or comparing their role in different destinations and quantitative research approaches that will allow the measurement of the results of this work. Tourism impact management (e.g. environmental or local capacity level) is also a topic that hasn't been examined in this paper. It would be interesting to explore ways in which the creation of a DMO for Central Macedonia would contribute positively or negatively to managing these impacts. Finally, it would be very interesting to explore the reasons why some bodies have reservations with the creation of this new DMO and whether their arguments raise serious issues and need to be considered in future planning, or whether they should be rejected on the basis of international practices in relevant cases or not.

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# COVID- 19: Challenges and Prospects for the Future in the Tourism Industry. Case Study Albania

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## Abstract

*The outlook of this paper is to examine COVID- 19 challenges and prospects for the future in the Albanian tourism industry For data collection, secondary data has been collected through extensive literature reviews. The statistical data from the renowned and authentic data sources have been collected to understand the impact of Covid-10 on hospitality and tourism industry. We have used quantitative and qualitative questions which have arisen during the interviews of the tourist agencies that are in Tirana and Durres. Last year Albanian government used the slogan `REST ALBANIAN` and based on INSTAT the number of Albanian-speaking tourists coming across the borders was satisfactory. Even the data the tourism industry in Albanian should supported by the government because is one of the sector which contribute much more than others. However, a return to `business as usual` is unlikely.*

**Keywords :** Domestic, Tourism, Mitigate, Covid-19, etc

## 1.Introduction

Albania has great tourist potential. This is related to the geographical position in which it is located, the rich natural and cultural history and a diverse demographical heritage. Tourism represents one of the most significant alternatives for sustainable and long-term use of these values, and generally the social-economic development of the country. This is especially needful in times of unfavorable economics. The tourism industry occupies a key place in the economy and is an important source for the development of the country. Tourism can make a significant contribution to three dimensions of sustainable development:

- a. *create jobs,*
- b. *generate trade opportunities to recognize needs and support tourism activities*
- c. *create important capacity that promotes environmental conservation priorities and cultural diversity.*<sup>1</sup>

Albania as a developing country, is supporting the tourism development, because tourism should transformed their economies from traditional agricultural economy, in the industrial economy and this development process has begin since 2000 year. Tourism has also become more diversified in recent years and now consists of three main product areas:

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<sup>1</sup> Instat

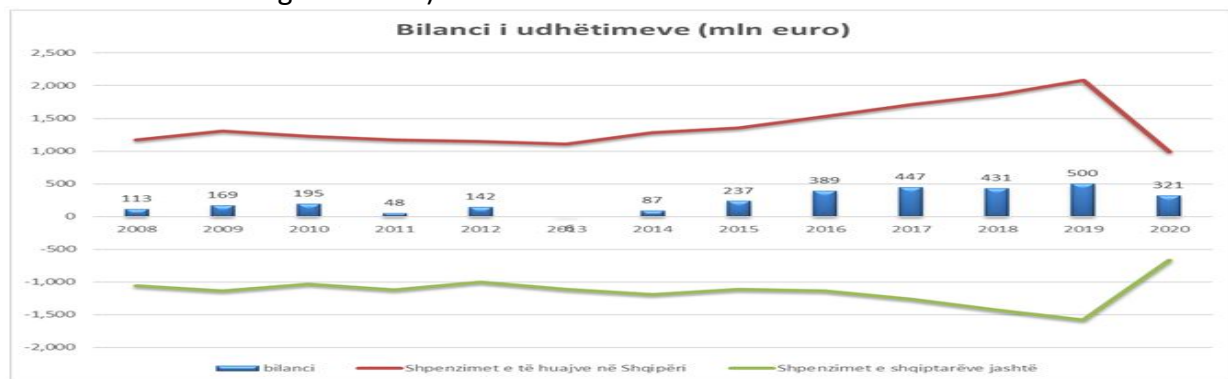
- **Coastal Tourism**, where it has been developed as the main product that focuses on "beach and sun" tourism
- Cultural Tourism, although it was not the main focus, the resources and history of Albania in archeology, heritage and culture, offer considerable potential.
- **Natural tourism-rural-ecotourism**,

Natural and rural areas in Albania offer opportunities for the development of rural tourism, ecotourism, based on nature the activities such as (river rafting, paragliding, mountain biking, fishing, trekking, climbing, hiking, horseback riding, study trips, etc.

## 2. Tourism development before the COVID-19

We have started to analyze regarding tourism since 2013 when the direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP in 2013 was ALL 68.1bn (4.8% of GDP). In 2014 the contribution was 5.5% to ALL 71.9bn. According with WTTC the contribution of tourism to GDP in 2016 was 8.4% and on 2019 the contribution of tourism to GDP in 2019 was 21,2 % or ALL358.3BN (USD3,264.5MN). So in this year the contribution of travel and tourism to employment was around 22.2% of total.2ALL 71.9bn. Albania is increasingly recommended as a tourist destination by various tour operators and international travel guides.3 The tourism sector has generated economic growth, employment and self-employment opportunities. In terms of employment generation, tourism estimated 7.7% of total national employment in 2016 or 85 500 jobs. Indirectly, tourism accounts 23.9% of employment in 2016 or 267,000 jobs. The total number of foreign visitors has increased significantly in recent years, with an increase around 80% in 2016 compared to 2011 (4.58 million visitors in 2016 versus 2.53 million visitors in 2011). In 2016, was register a record of 16% of foreign tourists who visited Albania compared to 2015. Revenues in tourism reached 1.528 billion euro, in 2016 compared to 13% in 2015. Below the graphic show the travel balance from 2008-2020

Figure 1: Travel Balance ( foreigners' expenses in Albania with a red color, Albanian expenses outside Albania with green color)



Source: National Bank of Albania, 2020

2 WTTC reporting , Albanian 2020www.wttc.org

3 Ministry of Tourism, Albania 2019



### 3. Tourism and the impact of COVID- 19

Tourism has been the hardest hit sector in 2020. The pandemic, which started in mid-March, blocked all trip for several months, but even then they remained limited and continue to be so. According to the Bank of Albania which show that the costs of foreigners traveling in Albania were halved, around 989 million euro. In total, around EUR 1.1 billion less, as a result of missing tourists spending. The contraction was strongest in the second and third quarters<sup>4</sup> Other INSTAT data show that the number of foreign tourists entering the country in 2020 fell around 58.5%, compared with the previous year which it had been the best in the history of Albanian tourism. Reservations during the summer season from foreign agencies in Europe, from Poland, Czech Republic, Nordic countries, Germany, etc. were canceled

Tourism was held up in the region, mainly with citizens from Kosovo, who saved the hotels from falling even deeper revenue. In 2020, tourists from Kosovo accounted for 52% of the total, up from 34% a year earlier. The balance of tourism (the difference between the expenditures of foreigners in Albania and Albanians abroad) in 2020 was positive around 321 million Euros, but the lack of income from tourism has significantly damaged the domestic industry.

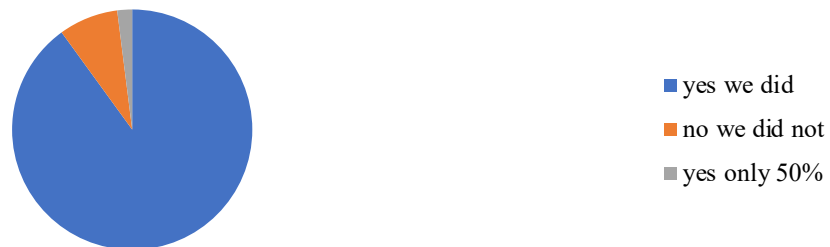
Reduce the number of tourists and their expenses led to the crisis of the Albanian hotels activity. According to INSTAT, the volume of activity on this sector, fell around 63% during the lock down period. Restrictions on travel and tourism activities, which are still ongoing, have made travel agencies more affected by the pandemic in the country. This sector is failing to recover.

After the fall of activity with 86% in the second quarter, the period of quarantine, the summer season continued with a contraction of 57%, according to INSTAT. While in the last quarter, the decline accelerated again to -66.4%, as neither foreigners nor Albanians traveled abroad for the holidays. Regarding travel agencies, we realized a monitoring in three main cities

### 4. Research Methodology

This paper contains qualitative and quantitative data. To realized this paper we based on national and international literature. Regarding the quantitative data, we based on data received from INSTAT, National Bank, Tourist Association and some interviews realized with administrators and some travel agencies in the main cities of the country, such as Tirana, Shkodra, and Durres.

Figure 2: Did you gave customers a full refund when they canceled vacations due to the Covid-19?

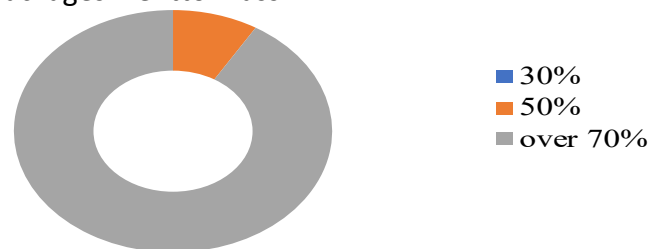


A part of them refused to give the name of the agencies afraid of punishment by the state institutions to reflect reality truthfully expressing concern that the situation is quite different

from what it is announcement by media and social networks and also by the central and local government

The interview contains 10 question but we would like to share with other readers based on answer, 2 of them reflected in the graphics unemployment rising and the financial health of businesses deteriorating.

Figure 3: Cancellations of reserved packages went to mass



The first package adopted on March 19 through a normative act had support measures of national Currency 23bn (1,4% of GDP) through a combination of spending reallocations, spending increases and sovereign guarantees to support affected businesses

From both packages of financial assistance by the government, benefit around 3641 entities in the field of tourism, specifically: a) 2694 Accommodation structures; b) 148 Tour operators; c) 536 Travel agencies; d) 245 Tourist guide; e) 18 Agro-tourism subject

## 5. The economy forecast scenario after the COVID -19

Together, last year's earthquake and this year's COVID-19 pandemic are likely to drive Albania into recession and expose its external and fiscal vulnerabilities. In the baseline scenario, 2020 will drive Albania into recession. The country's growth was expected to rebound to 3.4 percent because of reconstruction and a return to normal energy production, but the cost of COVID-19 and related restrictions are projected to cause GDP to contract by 5 percent. Total real exports are projected to fall by 25 percent, based on less activity in tourism, extractives, and manufacturing; imports would decline by 9.5 percent. Less economic activity and higher uncertainty would also reduce private investments and consumption.

The government is expected to make a major contribution to domestic demand because of reconstruction and the COVID-19 packages. In 2021, growth is expected to rebound to an estimated 8.8 percent, driven by base effects on exports, consumption, and investments. In the downside scenario, Albania must deal with a more severe recession as GDP contracts by almost 7 percent. Major domestic demand shocks are expected to results from a longer interruption and downsizing of activities and a sharper contraction of manufacturing and extractive exports. In this scenario, consumption contracts more severely, by about 2.2 percent in 2020 as employment and wages fall further and as containment measures prevent nonessential retail trade. Liquidity concerns would further deter private investment. Compared to the baseline scenario, medium-term growth prospects would dim, with unemployment rising and the financial health of businesses deteriorating.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendation

The tourism industry it's very important for the Albanian economy. This sector generate almost 21% of young generation employment Short-term policy priorities for the tourism sector. Although Covid-19 left great consequences on the Albanian economy, the recovery of the tourism sector can be achieved by implementing these policies recommendation.

### *a. Establish efficient cooperation mechanism between the government, private sector and civil society*

A whole-of-government approach that harnesses synergies across relevant sectors, such as transportation and health, is more important than ever to set strategies to support industry recovery. The current situation also underlines the need to collect timely data in order to inform decision-making and better plan for the type and scale of the immediate impact of the current crisis and the tourism recovery planning.

### *b. Promote the domestic demand for tourism In the short-term*

The economy of Albania can foster domestic tourism through the provision of incentives for citizens to spend their holidays in their own economies, such tourism vouchers. Our Ministry of Tourism started to used the slogan since 2020 ` Rest Albanian

### *c. Introduce targeted marketing campaigns promoting ecotourism*

Given the current health and safety requirements induced by the current pandemic, a shift away from mass tourism can be expected in the short to medium-term. Therefore, the tourism agencies across the country can promote alternative travel destinations, allowing for experiences for individuals/ small groups.

### *d. Reconsider their current tourism policies and define tourism products aligned with new trends*

The Albanian economy need to diversify its offer and disperse further tourism development to new destinations while emphasizing the principles of sustainable tourism development. The country has high potential (natural and cultural heritage) for tourism development, from mass tourism with overcrowded destinations to green and sustainable destinations, offering unique tourism experiences.

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# Mining textual and imagery Instagram data for the top Greek national hotel chains

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this study is to highlight the tourism sector activity on social media platforms and more specifically Instagram, one of the most popular image and video sharing applications. The study focuses on national chains' 5-star hotels in Greece excluding international and local chain. Research aims to discriminate between the eight top national chains both quantitatively and qualitatively, on textual and imagery data levels. Relevant Instagram posts for the top eight national chains' accounts are retrieved, including photos, videos, captions and other metadata. Different descriptive statistics metrics are calculated initially, in an automatic manner, by means of a developed script that acts on metadata text files. Subsequently, three deep convolutional neural network models are employed to recognize objects (and scenes) in respective post images. Results are reported on the two different levels, i.e. textual and imagery data levels, highlighting the differences in uploaded content between the top eight national hotel chains.*

**Keywords:** Instagram, Communication, Object Recognition, Post Statistics, National Hotel Chains

## 1. Introduction

Social media allow people to interact with each other affecting the way that society consumes information (Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2013; Olanrewaju, Hossain, Whiteside, & Mercieca, 2020). Social media is another channel that marketers can use to communicate with consumers through advertising (Appel, Grewal, Hadi, & Stephen, 2020) as consumers are becoming increasingly hesitant to messages directly (Gelli, Uricchio, He, Bimbo, & Chua, 2018). What social media do is that they change communication between brands and customers (Gallaughar, & Ransbotham 2010).

The purpose of the study is to highlight the tourism sector activity on social media platforms and more specifically Instagram, one of the most popular image and video sharing applications. The study focuses on national 5-star hotel chains in Greece excluding international chains and local hotels. Research aims to discriminate between the 8 top national chains both quantitatively and

qualitatively, on textual and imagery data levels. In a more formal manner, the following research questions are posed:

- RQ1: Are there any differences between the eight top national chains, with respect to their Instagram behaviour and the textual data they upload?
- RQ2: Are there any differences between the eight top national chains, with respect to their Instagram behaviour and the imagery data they upload?

Towards this, research methods used in this work are:

- Automatic extraction of all time Instagram posts including photos, videos, captions and other metadata from the top eight national chains' accounts.
- Automatic calculation of descriptive statistics metrics by means of a developed script that acts on metadata files.
- Instagram image object recognition using three particularly popular, deep convolutional neural network models.

Extraction of data from the eight official hotel accounts has been performed with Instaloader, an open source tool. Each post is retrieved as a compressed file comprising a text file, one or more photos and/or videos and other post metadata.

A Python script has been developed that iteratively processes all posts' metadata files and extracts various post statistics. The use of regular expressions in metadata files' text, enables the retrieval and reporting of comments, likes and other post-related information. Post data and metadata are collected and structured in a Pandas dataframe with different attributes for, e.g., the date and time of the post, the text body and other metrics that we automatically compute. These include the number of characters and words that each post contains, as well as hashtags, user likes and comments, the number of images and videos. There are also three attributes that are reserved for the predictions made by the three pretrained, deep neural network models: VGG16 (Simonyan, & Zisserman, 2015), InceptionV3 (Szegedy, Vanhoucke, Ioffe, Shlens, & Wojna, 2016) and ResNet50 (He, Zhang, Ren, & Sun, 2016). These models are leveraged for object recognition on Instagram photos.

## **2.Literature Review**

### *2.1 Social Media*

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p. 61) social media is "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content".

People increasingly look at social media applications as an important part of their daily life, i.e., Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter, as there are moving their everyday activity from real to virtual world (Alalwan, Rana, Dwivedi, & Algharabat, 2017). Table 1, redrawn from Statista (2021) lists the most popular social media platforms and their registered users. Brands are also present on social media in many forms such as including paid display advertising (paid media), brands participating in social networks as a brand persona, (Ashley, & Tuten, 2015). Companies

and organizations have adopted social technologies but have generated only a small fraction of the potential value they can create (Bughin, Chui, & Manyika, 2012).

With the use of social media, hotels and airlines are able to anticipate to changes in consumers' shopping behaviour and examine socio-demographic profiles of consumers (Bedard, 2000; Chatzigeorgiou, & Christou, 2020). Most successful hotels and businesses are looking for innovative ways to integrate social media into traditional marketing methods and integrate it into their own (Lanz, Fischhof, & Lee, 2010).

Table 1. Social media platforms and registered users in July 2021 (millions)

Facebook – 2,853	YouTube – 2,291	WhatsApp – 2,000	Instagram – 1,386
FB Messenger – 1,300	WeChat – 1,242	TikTok – 732	QQ – 606
Douyin – 600	Telegram – 550	Sina Weibo – 530	Snapchat – 514
Kuaishou – 481	Pinterest – 478	Reddit – 430	Twitter – 397

## 2.2 Instagram

First launched in October 2010, Instagram is all about visual sharing, so everybody's intention is to share and find only the best photos and videos and upload the image, together with a short caption, to its social networking website (Zappavigna, 2016). Instagram's interface strongly emphasizes physical place and users' locations (Hochman & Manovich, 2013). Every user profile has a "Followers" and "Following" count (Moreau, 2017). In order to view the posts of Instagram users, there is a need to click the "follow" button on that particular Instagram user's page to access the photos or videos that were posted by that particular Instagram user (Agam, 2017; Cheung, 2014). Hashtags is an important factor that it can be used when a user shares a photo as it helps other users find the photographs (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016), as Instagram is the best place for image sharing (Patel 2019).

In 2016, a new social sharing feature was introduced, branded as Instagram Stories. It was launched as a photo sharing application with a series of filters that could be applied to photos allowing the user to share its story or stories with his/her followers (Villarspesa & Wowokowych, 2020; Bradford, 2017). Instagram Stories only last for 24 hours before they disappear from a users' profile and the user can check who has viewed the story (Amanatidis, Mylona, Mamalis, & Kamenidou, 2020; Li, Scott, Naraine, & Ruihley, 2020).

Instagram is important as a medium because it will help its users, with the power of image to create deep insights about social, cultural and environmental issues about people's activities (Hu, Manikonda, & Kambhampati, 2014), as its popularity is increased (Sashi, 2012). Marketers believe that it can be used as a marketing and communication tool in order to exhibit products with visual descriptions (Fatanti, & Suyadnya, 2015; Nedra, Hadhri, & Mezrani, 2019). Photo sharing is an innovative practice in marketing as photographs and images can influence the consumers' mood and encourage users' engagement (Serafinelli, 2018).

Photographs are means of "capturing" reality (Stepchenkova, & Zhan, 2013) and they are used as a point of reference, as users can also make comments, likes and sometimes sharing (Budge, & Barnes, 2017). Images and photographs is a factor that influences the destinations that tourists visit (Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2014). In most cases this accounts positively, as studies have shown that there is a strong relationship between destination image and tourist satisfaction (Bigne, Sanchez,

& Sanchez, 2001; Huete Alcocer, & López Ruiz, 2019). Posting a photo, sharing an experience and getting feedback via comments and discussion, significantly impact the creation of a destination's image (Iglesias-Sánchez, Correia, Jambrino-Maldonado, & Heras-Pedrosa, 2020). Instagram as is, deals with the power of images and is based in visual communications giving the opportunity to tourists to share their experiences with others by uploading photos and sharing their experience (Fatanti, & Suyadnya, 2015).

### *2.3 National Hotel Chains*

Hotel chains play a crucial role in the hospitality industry as they share the attributes of multinational enterprises and still have their specific characteristics as service industry organizations (Ivanova, & Ivanov, 2015). The process of chain's expansion involves two parties, namely the hotel chain and the individual hotel, but it is possible that a third party, or hotel operator is involved in the process (Ivanova, & Ivanov, 2014). Advertising is very important for the consumers in order to be informed about hotel chains in Greece. The affective reaction to hotel advertisement is very important and its likeability leads to less hotel brand confusion (Christou, 2013).

O'Gorman and McTiernan (2000) in their research about Irish hotel chains that invest in organizational capabilities, was more important than international experience and their finding was a high level of satisfaction by the visitors. A research conducted by Yoram and Herstein in 2007 published their work about hotel chains. They emphasized that an active participation of all internal stakeholders in the building of a corporate vision enhances the corporate reputation and contributes to customer satisfaction. A more recent research about hotel chains in Bulgaria in 2014 (Ivanova, 2014) showed that foreign chains put an emphasis on non-equity entry modes (marketing consortium, management contract, franchise), while domestic chains prefer ownership, either full or partial.

### *2.4 Similar studies*

There is a lack of studies about Instagram use in the hotel industry. Akin, Kipkaz and Dinckol (2016) in their work investigate how the tourism sector uses the social media, especially Instagram. The aim of this paper is to make a comparative analysis of 19 different hotels' communication with their clients over Instagram. Taking the Instagram accounts which have been analyzed comparatively, it has been observed that boutique hotels use their Instagram accounts actively, thus constituting an open, direct and close communication with their followers.

Virtanen, Björk, & Sjöström (2017) in their work tried to measure the effects that practices like following potential customers and liking and commenting on their posts on Instagram, can create and increase awareness of the company's business and gaining followers for the company's Instagram accounts. The results indicated that following potential customers' Instagram accounts is needed to gain more followers.

Högberg (2017) in his research investigates how social media were used in 14 hotel organizations in seven European countries within an international hotel chain. The hotels mostly use social media for marketing activities, information sharing and collecting information and knowledge. Facebook and Instagram were the most commonly used social media platforms.



Asanbekova and Maksudunov (2018) in their study about Instagram’s use in five and four star hotels in Kyrgyzstan examine all the official Instagram pages of the hotels. According to their findings, majority of posts are in image format and published in Russian language.

A more recent study in 2019 (Niemelä, 2019) comparing the brand management strategies of Marriott International and Hilton Worldwide in social media, found that both brand’s presence and activity on Instagram to find out how strong the brands are online and how their brand message comes through on that platform.

Moreover another study conducted in Cyprus in 2020 tried to evaluate the activity and influence of social media in the hotel industry. The study found that hotels haven't understand the importance of image in order to promote their activity, as there is a limited use of Instagram (Papageorgiou, Marneros, & Efstathiades, 2020).

Han and Lee (2021) in their study investigate the key attributes of a steadily growing hotel sector (lifestyle hotels), which has shown great success in the global competitive market, by analyzing user-created content on Instagram. The dataset used in this study was prepared from a total of 20,999 lifestyle hotel posts and 24,262 boutique hotel posts created from 2013 to 2020 and retrieved using a Python web crawler. The results demonstrated that lifestyle hotels share key attributes that differentiate them from others in terms of physical, geospatial and experiential contexts.

### 3.Methodology

According to GBR consulting agency, there are eight National, 5-star hotel chains in Greece. By this term, we exclude international chains such as Thomas Cook and Tui. The eight national chains as listed in their review are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. National Chains Hotels in Greece

#	National chains	No of hotels	No of hotel rooms	Avg. size per hotel
1	Greotel	32	5,802	181
2	Mitsis Hotels	17	5,442	320
3	Aldemar Hotels & Spa	7	2,643	378
4	Blue Lagoon Group	6	1,714	286
5	G-Hotels	6	1,592	265
6	Helios Hotels & Resorts	7	1,553	222
7	Zeus Hotels	6	1,532	255
8	Kipriotis Hotels	5	1,483	297

Using Instaloader, we extracted all posts from the seven official hotel accounts (shown on Table 2), as Helios Hotels do not maintain an active Instagram account. Our Python script iteratively processes all posts’ files enabling the extraction of various post statistics (Amanatidis, Mylona, Kamenidou, & Mamalis, 2021). The script utilizes regular expressions in metadata files to extract information on comments, likes and other features. Post data and metadata are structured in a Pandas dataframe with attributes: DateTime, PostText, PostChars, PostWords, HashTags, Likes,

Comments, Images, Videos and three columns for the model predictions: VGG16, InceptionV3 and ResNet50.

The three models are available on Keras and can be downloaded pre-trained on ImageNet, a large visual benchmark database. In order to be used as standalone classifiers in our case some preprocessing has to be performed. The steps are as follows (Amanatidis, et al 2021):

- Load and resize each colour image according to model and convert it to a Numpy array
- Combine the three colour channels and flatten to a single one dimensional array
- Scale pixel RGB intensities into a suitable interval, according to model
- Calculate model output probabilities for all classes
- Mark the highest probability as the final model prediction

We have run the script for the seven official Instagram accounts and results (top five rows only) are shown in Figure 1, as an example for the Grecotel chain. No model optimization or tuning has been performed. The models, as shown later, occasionally disagree on the predicted class.

DateTime	PostText	PostChars	PostWords	HashTags	Likes	Comments	Images	Videos	VGG16	InceptionV3	ResNet50
1 2014-08-28_16-45-36_UTC	If only it was just us and the #sunset... #grecotelwhitepalace #grecotel #crete #greece #luxury #luxurytravel	110	15	7	0		1	1	0 ['seashore']	['seashore']	['seashore']
2 2014-08-29_10-39-55_UTC	The Caramel Grecotel Boutique Resort: where the essence of #luxury, elegance and hospitality lies! #crete #luxuryresort #grecotelcaramel #boutiquehotel	178	20	7	0	0	1	0 ['four-poster']	['studio_couch']	['four-poster']	
3 2014-09-11_10-18-07_UTC	Indoor and outdoor #Grecotel living... #WhitePalace #Crete #Rethymnon	105	13	9	0	9	1	0 ['studio_couch']	['mosquito_net']	['quilt']	
4 2014-09-18_16-23-03_UTC	Colors bursting! #Grecotel #CaramelBoutiqueResort #Crete	92	9	7	0	0	1	0 ['tub']	['lakeside']	['lakeside']	
5 2014-09-22_11-20-48_UTC	#Rethymnon #luxury #travel #Greece Defining the endless #blue #Grecotel experience... #Amirandes #Crete	96	11	7	0	2	1	0 ['pier']	['boathouse']	['boathouse']	

Figure 1. Grecotel account posts' metadata

#### 4. Findings and Analysis

By manual inspection of the results, we can confirm that there are cases where all three models agree in their ImageNet class predictions, cases where two of them agree and others where there is disagreement between them. There are also cases where all three models fail to correctly identify the image objects. As an example, the following figure depicts images in posts where: a) there is correct classification by all three models; b) there is disagreement by one model; and c) all of the models disagree, while at the same time we obtain a partially correct classification, with models focusing on different objects or parts of the image.

The models' prediction for the object classes were structured together in a new dataframe to facilitate the quantitative assessment of results. The models' responses were merged in a single prediction in cases of total agreement (3/3) and partial agreement (2/3) with a simple voting scheme. For the cases of complete disagreement, we have opted to keep the prediction made by the Resnet50 model as it slightly outperforms InceptionV3 in accuracy for the ImageNet classification task (<https://paperswithcode.com/sota/image-classification-on-imagenet>). By accounting for multiple-image posts, we end up with a dataframe having:

- 934 predicted image classes for aldemar

- 397 predicted image classes for bluelagoongroup
- 511 predicted image classes for ghotels.halkidiki
- 404 predicted image classes for grectel
- 105 predicted image classes for zeushotels
- 751 predicted image classes for mitsishotels
- 1332 predicted image classes for kipriotis



(a) all three models agree on “seashore” (correct classification)



(b) two models (VGG16 and ResNet50) classify as “four-poster”, InceptionV3 classifies as “studio\_couch” (partially correct classification)



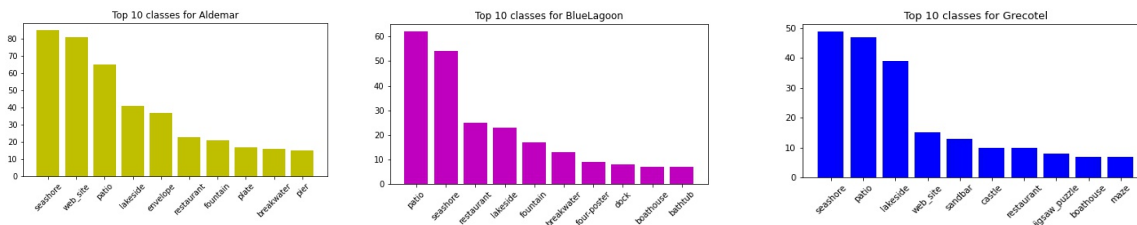
(c) three models disagree: “tub”, “sliding door” and “patio” respectively (partially correct classification)

Figure 2. Examples of models' predictions level of agreement.

Creating dictionaries for the images' classes, we can plot the top-10 most common encountered classes for the seven companies, as shown on Figures 3 and 4.



Figure 3. Top-10 classes for the Kipriotis chain



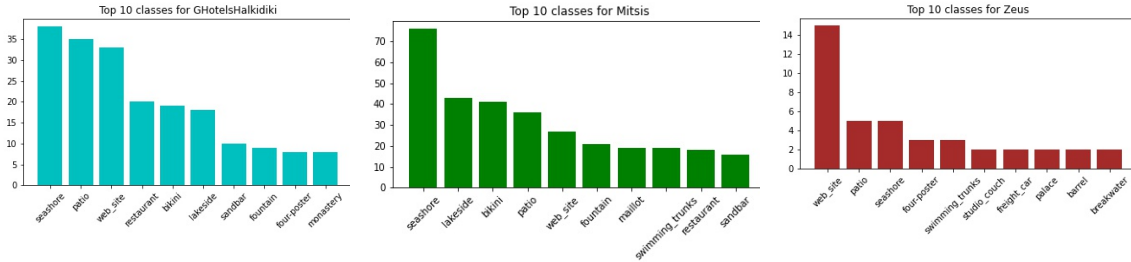


Figure 4. Top-10 classes for the rest hotel chains

We can infer that Kipriotis for instance (Figure 3), mostly post beach photographs (‘sea shore’), followed by synthetic images with some text superimposed, thus classified as ‘web\_site’, while ‘patio’ is in third place. The same applies to Aldemar and GHOTels-Halkidiki, with results however following a flatter distribution. BlueLagoon, has ‘patio’ in first place, ‘seashore’ in second and ‘restaurant’ in third place. The number of posts with ‘boathouse’ and ‘bathtub’ objects are significantly lower.

With respect to textual data, Table 3 displays the mean and standard deviation (in parentheses) values for the seven hotel datasets. For the first two chains (in number of total posts), it can be observed that while Aldemar Resorts is less active in posting than Kipriotis Hotels, they usually post longer messages. Their messages also contain slightly more hashtags, receive significantly less likes and comments and are slightly richer in images and videos. Interestingly, while Zeus Hotels do not post very frequently (last in place), their posts receive the second largest number of comments. All seven accounts usually post one or two (mostly one) images on average and do not upload videos that much.

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation (in parentheses) values for the seven hotel chains

Hotel (posts)	Characters	Words	Hashtags	Likes	Comments	Images	Videos
aldemar_resorts (761)	<b>328.2 (202.0)</b>	<b>39.6 (28.7)</b>	12.4 (10.0)	1.4 (11.6)	1.7 (2.2)	1.2 (1.1)	0.1 (0.2)
bluelagoogroup (375)	109.6 (68.7)	14.6 (9.1)	4.1 (3.4)	2.8 (16.2)	1.3 (1.9)	1.1 (0.6)	0.0 (0.1)
ghotels.halkidiki (504)	288.1 (132.5)	33.7 (14.6)	<b>14.3 (8.2)</b>	71.7 (163.2)	1.0 (1.7)	1.0 (0.3)	0.0 (0.1)
greotel (364)	206.3 (127.4)	28.5 (18.1)	5.1 (3.5)	15.4 (88.7)	3.6 (6.1)	1.1 (0.7)	0.0 (0.2)
kipriotishotels ( <b>1292</b> )	243.1 (149.8)	28.3 (15.8)	11.6 (9.5)	62.2 (28.2)	2.2 (2.9)	1.0 (0.3)	0.0 (0.1)
mitsishotels (494)	284.2 (127.6)	36.7 (20.4)	8.6 (6.1)	<b>612.8 (552.8)</b>	<b>11.2 (15.1)</b>	<b>1.5 (1.6)</b>	<b>0.1 (0.3)</b>
zeushotels (79)	206.9 (115.8)	27.0 (17.2)	7.0 (3.5)	8.2 (21)	4.6 (37.3)	1.3 (1.2)	<b>0.1 (0.3)</b>

The official hotel chain accounts posts are a means to gain insight about how their social media strategy expresses their policies and the ways they choose to inform and promote their products and services. Some degree of user perception can be measured with likes and comments, as these are the most user-familiar ways of passive and active interaction. The number of likes does

carry an inherent positive sign; comments however do not necessarily do so (Amanatidis, et al 2021).

Figure 5 depicts an excerpt from Kipriotis hotel chain's posts. We can see from figure that the post language is mainly English and they try to advertise the idyllic location of the hotel as well as their services and facilities. We also notice that they make extensive use of hashtags so that their posts are discoverable across different user searches. With a similar study (Amanatidis, et al 2021) that we have carried out in the context of COVID-19 vaccination, where, apart from the companies' posts we also downloaded users post, we can infer that companies naturally employ a more formal language, correct in syntax and grammar, while users adopt informal and natural speech using many abbreviations, correct in syntax and grammar, while users adopt informal and natural speech using many abbreviations, emoticons and GIFs. At this point, we downloaded the respective seven hashtags posts, filtering out the official account posts and proceeded with a similar analysis (on user level) as the one we have performed on the COVID-19 vaccination process.

```
204 During this month join us at National Wedding Show in London (20-22 February, Stand K36) or Birmingham (27 February - 1 March, Stand K24), take part in our competition & get the chance to win a
complimentary Elegant Wedding Package from #KipriotisHotels! Visit us & make your dreams come true in this #Kos island! Discover more by clicking the link in our profile page. #Kipriotis #Kos2015
#KosIsland #Greece #Greece2015 #SummerInGreece #ReasonsToVisitGreece #InstaGreece #Insta_Greece #GreeceStagram #VisitGreece #GreeceIsland #GreeceIslands #Ig_Greece #Gf_Greece #Wu_Greece #Igers_Greece
#LoveGreece #IPromoteGreece #Greece_Is_Awesome #GreeceTrip #GreekFood #GreekCuisine
205 Visit us at the London National Wedding show until tomorrow and get inspired for your upcoming wedding in Greece! A lucky couple will get the chance to win complimentary an Elegant Wedding Package!
Discover more by clicking the link in our profile page. @thenationalweddingshow #TNWS #KipriotisHotels #Kos2015 #KosIsland #Greece #Greece2015 #SummerInGreece #ReasonsToVisitGreece #InstaGreece
#Insta_Greece #GreeceStagram #VisitGreece #GreeceIsland #GreeceIslands #Ig_Greece #Gf_Greece #Wu_Greece #Igers_Greece #LoveGreece #IPromoteGreece #Greece_Is_Awesome #GreeceTrip #GreekFood #GreekCuisine
206 Sun illuminating... Temple of Apollo, #Rhodes Island! #Kipriotis #KipriotisHotels #Kos #Kos2015 #KosIsland #Dodecanese #Greece #Greece2015 #SummerInGreece #ReasonsToVisitGreece #InstaGreece
#Insta_Greece #GreeceStagram #VisitGreece #GreeceIsland #GreeceIslands #Ig_Greece #Gf_Greece #Wu_Greece #Igers_Greece #LoveGreece #IPromoteGreece #Greece_Is_Awesome #GreeceTrip #GreekFood #GreekCuisine
207 A summer flashback to #Kipriotis Panorama Hotels/Suites to cure our #WinterBlues! A great capture by @salbox via Instagram. #KipriotisHotels #Kos #Kos2015 #KosIsland #Greece #Greece2015 #SummerInGreece
#ReasonsToVisitGreece #InstaGreece #Insta_Greece #GreeceStagram #VisitGreece #GreeceIsland #GreeceIslands #Ig_Greece #Gf_Greece #Wu_Greece #Igers_Greece #LoveGreece #IPromoteGreece #Greece_Is_Awesome
#GreeceTrip #GreekFood #GreekCuisine #SummerIsComing
208 Is it Caribbean Sea? No! It's #Hefalos in #Kos island! © George Papapostolou via Facebook #Kipriotis #KipriotisHotels #Kos2015 #KosIsland #Greece #Greece2015 #SummerInGreece #ReasonsToVisitGreece
#InstaGreece #Insta_Greece #GreeceStagram #VisitGreece #GreeceIsland #GreeceIslands #Ig_Greece #Gf_Greece #Wu_Greece #Igers_Greece #LoveGreece #IPromoteGreece #Greece_Is_Awesome #GreeceTrip #GreekFood
#GreekCuisine #SummerIsComing
209 Dreaming of getting married somewhere in the Greek islands? Visit #KipriotisHotels until tomorrow at Birmingham National Wedding show (stand K24) for your chance to win a complimentary Elegant Wedding
Package & turn your wedding in #Kos into an unforgettable experience. Discover more by clicking the link in our profile page! #Kipriotis #Kos2015 #KosIsland #Greece #Greece2015 #SummerInGreece
#ReasonsToVisitGreece #InstaGreece #Insta_Greece #GreeceStagram #VisitGreece #GreeceIsland #GreeceIslands #Ig_Greece #Gf_Greece #Wu_Greece #Igers_Greece #LoveGreece #IPromoteGreece #Greece_Is_Awesome
#GreeceTrip #GreekFood #GreekCuisine #SummerIsComing
210 Happy Spring everyone from #Kos! Summer is just around the corner...can you hear its echo? Photo credits @Irina_Ithera #Kipriotis #KipriotisHotels #Kos2015 #KosIsland #Greece #Greece2015 #SummerInGreece
#ReasonsToVisitGreece #InstaGreece #Insta_Greece #GreeceStagram #VisitGreece #GreeceIsland #GreeceIslands #Ig_Greece #Gf_Greece #Wu_Greece #Igers_Greece #LoveGreece #IPromoteGreece #Greece_Is_Awesome
#GreeceTrip #GreekFood #GreekCuisine #SummerIsComing
211 These golden sunsets are hard to forget... An astonishing capture of #Fsalidi beach in #Kos just after the storm by Konstantine 2015! #Kipriotis #KipriotisHotels #Kos2015 #KosIsland #Greece #Greece2015
#SummerInGreece #ReasonsToVisitGreece #InstaGreece #Insta_Greece #GreeceStagram #VisitGreece #GreeceIsland #GreeceIslands #Ig_Greece #Gf_Greece #Wu_Greece #Igers_Greece #LoveGreece #IPromoteGreece
#Greece_Is_Awesome #GreeceTrip #GreekFood #GreekCuisine #SummerIsComing
212 Are you attending ITB in Berlin? Join us in Hall 22 at Stand 123 to meet our holiday advisors and let us make your dream come true during your next escape to picturesque #Kos island! Discover more by
clicking the link in our profile page! #Kipriotis #KipriotisHotels #Kos2015 #KosIsland #Greece #Greece2015 #SummerInGreece #ReasonsToVisitGreece #InstaGreece #Insta_Greece #GreeceStagram #VisitGreece
#GreeceIsland #GreeceIslands #Ig_Greece #Gf_Greece #Wu_Greece #Igers_Greece #LoveGreece #IPromoteGreece #Greece_Is_Awesome #GreeceTrip #GreekFood #GreekCuisine #SummerIsComing
213 With summer on its way, get ready to enjoy the best of #Kipriotis Maris Suites from above! © @gaylorrainehodge #KipriotisHotels #Kos #Kos2015 #KosIsland #Greece #Greece2015 #SummerInGreece
#ReasonsToVisitGreece #InstaGreece #Insta_Greece #GreeceStagram #VisitGreece #GreeceIsland #GreeceIslands #Ig_Greece #Gf_Greece #Wu_Greece #Igers_Greece #LoveGreece #IPromoteGreece #Greece_Is_Awesome
#GreeceTrip #GreekFood #GreekCuisine #SummerIsComing
214 Nights in #Kos island are just magical... Enjoy your weekend! © @ George Papapostolou via Facebook #Kipriotis #KipriotisHotels #Kos #Kos2015 #KosIsland #Greece #Greece2015 #SummerInGreece
#ReasonsToVisitGreece #InstaGreece #Insta_Greece #GreeceStagram #VisitGreece #GreeceIsland #GreeceIslands #Ig_Greece #Gf_Greece #Wu_Greece #Igers_Greece #LoveGreece #IPromoteGreece #Greece_Is_Awesome
#GreeceTrip #GreekFood #GreekCuisine #SummerIsComing
215 Kalispira from #Kos! How do you say good afternoon in your language? Photo credit @viola_sordi #Kipriotis #KipriotisHotels #Kos2015 #KosIsland #Greece #Greece2015 #SummerInGreece #ReasonsToVisitGreece
#InstaGreece #Insta_Greece #GreeceStagram #VisitGreece #GreeceIsland #GreeceIslands #Ig_Greece #Gf_Greece #Wu_Greece #Igers_Greece #LoveGreece #IPromoteGreece #Greece_Is_Awesome #GreeceTrip #GreekFood
#GreekCuisine #SummerIsComing
216 Sea or pool? If only all choices in life were this easy! #Kipriotis #KipriotisHotels #Kos2015 #KosIsland #Greece #Greece2015 #SummerInGreece #ReasonsToVisitGreece #InstaGreece #Insta_Greece
#GreeceStagram #VisitGreece #GreeceIsland #GreeceIslands #Ig_Greece #Gf_Greece #Wu_Greece #Igers_Greece #LoveGreece #IPromoteGreece #Greece_Is_Awesome #GreeceTrip #GreekFood #GreekCuisine
#SummerIsComing
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Figure 3. An excerpt from Kipriotis hotel chain posts

Thus, in order to measure users' perception we subsequently downloaded posts containing the seven respective hashtags. We opted to download these posts only for May 2021 (up to 23/5/21), as it is the month when tourism sector was set free from lockdown. We also opted to download posts from both public and private accounts and filtered out posts made by the official accounts, keeping only user posts. The total number of anytime hashtag-containing posts are (as of 14 May 2020); 27,069 for #greccotel, 28,561 for #mitsishotels, 9,727 for #aldemar, 2,112 for #kipriotishotels, 1,708 for #ghotels, 612 for #bluelagoongroup and 434 for #zeushotels. For May 2021, we ended up with the following public posts: 366 for #greccotel, 178 for #mitsishotels, 19 for #aldemar, 16 for #ghotels, 3 for #zeushotels, 2 for #kipriotishotels and 1 for #bluelagoonhotel. With a similar Python script as before, we constructed a single dataframe, consisting of all seven hashtag-containing user posts text, i.e., 585 rows. Examining user posts we observe that there are different post languages and that some text-cleaning preprocessing is deemed essential.

Using Google’s Python module CLD2 (Compact Language Detection) we detected posts’ language, and results are shown in Figure 6:

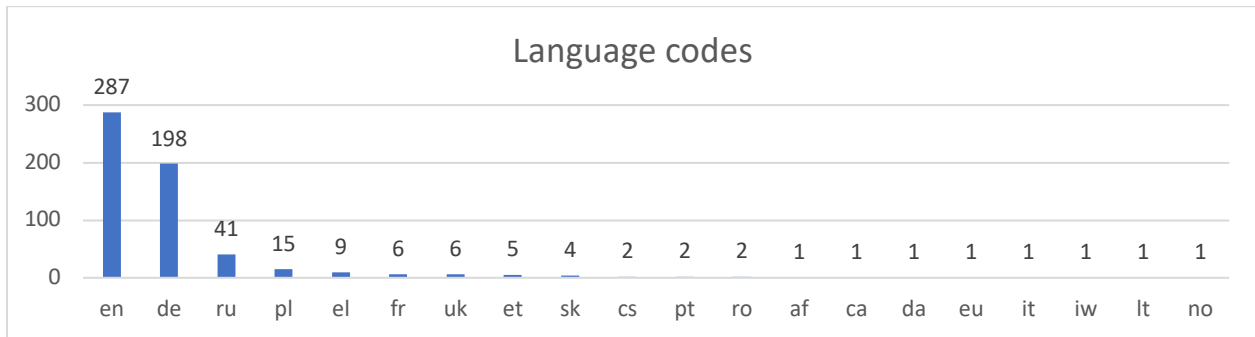


Figure 4. Posts’ language codes

We can see that the majority of user posts are written in English, followed by German and Russian. Other languages in the top ten places include Polish, Greek, French, Ukrainian, Estonian and Slovakian.

## 5. Conclusions

In this paper, we performed an analysis of textual and visual features regarding all-time Instagram posts of the seven chain hotels in Greece. Our results can be compared with other studies, e.g. (Yunhwan & Kim, 2020) as in our case we did not find out that the hotels post images of people; they prefer images of hotels facilities and services (rooms, patios, pools, restaurants) and their hotels’ location scenery (seashore).

After downloading a total of 3959 posts of the seven hotel chains’ accounts, we have created seven respective data frames having as features: date and time, text body of the post, number of hashtags, likes and comments, number of images and videos and the image classification output from three pre trained CNN models.

Results are reported on two different levels, i.e. textual and imagery data levels. For the imagery data level, we perform object recognition by means of the three pretrained deep neural network models. As there may be more than one images for a single post, we classify all of them where applicable, thereby generating a possible list of objects. These lists were initially visualized by word clouds (not shown in this work), giving a rough hint as to what images do the hotels choose to post. At this point, it would be particularly interesting to employ a more challenging visual scene description approach, e.g. automatic caption generation. Some initial experimentation has been carried out, showing promising results but nevertheless, it has not been pursued here and left as future work. For the textual data level, we report useful statistics on hotel accounts’ posting behaviour and report on the user-level post language. The above findings constitute the originality of our contribution, at least to the best of our knowledge.

Our research showed that hashtags are important as they follow the image and attract more users in case the hashtags used are the most popular ones (trending). On the textual level, a model could help hotel owners to find out the needs of the consumers and to help them develop more creative posts. The model developed in this study provides information to specialists and could also aid marketers to create a digital marketing plan for the hotels that they are working.

A potential real-world application could be leveraged to offer insight regarding users' perceptions on hotels images and captions and automatically classify new posts from rival chains as they are uploaded and predict the posts intent. This application could be of significant value to hotel managers and owners (for smaller-sized hotel enterprises), as it would aid them gain insight on market features from both their rival hotels and own users. The latter of course, would require acquisition of users' post data and as such constitutes future work.

Our research has shown that only seven chain hotels have an active account on Instagram. Possible future enhancements/extensions to this work may include: proceeding with a similar analysis as in our recent work (Amanatidis, et al 2021), which implements user intent classification and performs also sentiment analysis on user level; investigation of other social media platforms and employment of automatic caption generation to retrieve the textual description of the image scene rather than mere object classification; experimenting with model parameter tuning. Finally in the future we are planning to perform sentiment analysis on other affects as well, rather than just polarity.

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# Tourism Issues in North Macedonia in Conditions of Global Pandemic (Tour Guiding Challenges)

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## Abstract

*The subject of the paper covers issues connected with the influence of the Covid 19 to the national tourism and hospitality turnover with a special focus to tour guiding as a very sensitive element of the tourism system. More specifically, the paper achieved the following individual theoretical goals in establishment of clarity in the distinction of terms related to safety operations in times of pandemic in tourism and hospitality. Countries where tourism plays an important role in the gross GDP, such as Croatia and Montenegro, announced at the beginning of the summer that they were Covid free destinations. Whereas the situation in North Macedonia was much different and the official authorities issued realistic reports. Measures were inappropriate; one can enter the country without a pcr test. Tour guiding and deadly pandemic don't go together. The majority of tour guides search other ways of providing incomes. Many of them, accepted any job just to be able to survive the health and financial crisis. Tour guides are smart people with universal knowledge and competences. They are able to seize any chance to be engaged and see opportunities where lots of people see risks.*

**Keywords:** Tourism, Hospitality, Tour Guiding, COVID19

## 1. Introduction

Tourism used to be a multidimensional phenomenon of the time before the breakout of the health crisis with the Covid 19 virus, including many different factors for its operational activities. An essential element for the sustainable development of tourism in any tourist destination is the participation of all active stakeholders with special emphasis on their mutual cooperation. One of the most specific stakeholders in the tourism system are the tour guides. Tourism is a diverse industry and therefore it involves many different stakeholders for its operational activities.

“An essential element for sustainable tourism development in any tourist destination is the participation of active stakeholders and the cooperation between them. Among all, the tour guides play a major role in the tourism industry since tourists need to have a clear picture of the country and its offer, laws, rules and regulations and other expected behavioral patterns” (Naumov, K., 2020, 1).

“The experts of tourist information, namely, the tourist guides, are a highly qualified professional class and in continuous training” (Carvalho, L., 2021, 46). They play a really active role by allowing tourists to get a clear picture of the country and the visited destination. “Their function in the

whole tourism story is the proper interpretation of the totality of all the aspects of the destination with all their features like laws, rules, customs, regulations and other expected patterns of behavior” (Naumov, K., 2020, 5).

The COVID-19 was declared as a pandemic by WHO on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March 2020. Since that moment it significantly impacted the global economic, political, socio-cultural systems. The health communication strategies and measures like the physical distancing as the most preferred one, furthermore the travel and mobility bans, community lockdowns, the stay at home - stay safe campaigns, the self - or mandatory - quarantine, curbs on crowding) have halted global travel, tourism and leisure. The year that passed has been a very sensitive period where the relationship between the pandemic and travel was interdependent.

“Until February 2020, the perspective of having the best tourism season ever prevailed amongst all stakeholders in the sector – more hotels were being built, more restaurants were opening, more events were being promoted, more people were planning to travel, and obviously the professionals were preparing themselves to give an appropriate response to the ever-growing tourism industry’s demands” (Brito & Carvalho, 2021, 1).

The positive scenario envisioned up to February 2020 happened to be only a mirage. “Suddenly, the hospitality industry started to see their reservations cancelled and many tourism professionals went home to work online, if they were lucky enough, because many of their counterparts simply lost their jobs” (Brito & Carvalho, 2021, 1). The sanitary crisis exalted with the creation of an army of unemployed hospitality professionals struggling with a high level of subsistence.

“The tourist flows of the Republic of N. Macedonia until the moment of the Coronavirus outbreak were at a crossroad waiting to be decided whether the tourism development should move in the direction of mass and devastating tourism or in the direction of selective and sustainable approaches with a pronounced development effect”(Naumov, K., 2018, 752).

The coronavirus pandemic is a great opportunity to slow down and to focus on the future tourism development and innovative solutions in terms of sustainability. “Many tourists want not only enjoyable but memorable and in some cases meaningful experiences, including the opportunity to co-create experiences that are customized and personalized to their interests and needs” (Weiler, B. & Black, R., 2015, 375). This implies the need for training programs to equip guides with the knowledge and skills to apply these principles, and many training programs may well do this. “However, the links between the teaching of specific interpretation principles and the guide's capacity to enrich the visitor experience have not been examined in any formal way” (Weiller & Walker, 2014, 93). The blank period during the coronavirus pandemic needs to be utilised for investment in knowledge and skills development by the tour guides in accordance with the scopes of action of the associations where they belong.

The World Tourism Organization called on innovators around the world to make cutting-edge solutions to accelerate the recovery of tourism. The Healing Tourism Solutions Challenge was launched by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) with the support of the World Health Organization (WHO) and aimed to identify startups with ready-to-implement ideas to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the sector.

“The initiative attracted more than 1,100 applicants from 100 countries. Of the 30 applications accepted in the shortlist, nine were selected by a panel of sectoral leaders, including WTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili. Those were applications for smartphones and computers

that would contribute to reducing the rate of spread of the virus. The general topic was the health of the World's population, because without it, there would never be tourism. Also as an option were specified websites where amazing photos would be placed from places around the world, in order to capture the touristy atmosphere of the places people would like to visit" (WTO, 2020). "But on the other hand many tourism professionals seem to have certain limitations in terms of using new technologies, since many of those, working today, were not born in the digital age" (Carvalho, 2021, 46). Many tour guides have been forced to accept these technologies and sometimes tend to look at these new ways of communicating in a sceptical way, mainly because they do not properly know how to use them. These professionals are constantly facing the need to learn how to use these new tools, which have become essential for both their personal and professional lives.

## **2.Literature Review**

It is not inherent for any disease to spread so rapidly anywhere in the world. Whenever there is a flu epidemic or other illness, one hemisphere of the planet is always spared. But with the corona virus this is not the case. It has spread to every point of the globe. "The world is in a deep and unrepeatably crisis that is thought to be far more terrible and with greater consequences than the great recession of the beginning of the last century" (Naumov, K., 2020, 251). Tourism is currently suffering the biggest losses as all tourist and catering facilities are closed to prevent further spread of the infection. Several days were needed to completely stop the tourist movements. The borders of almost all countries in the world are closed to foreign visitors, the airports are no longer functioning. Each country has individual measures to deal with the COVID 19 pandemic, and border closure is the first and most general measure taken by all countries in the world. The spread of the disease will be prevented only if the movements of the population Worldwide are stopped. In this case, tourism is the greatest enemy to the health of all mankind and is doomed indefinitely. Simply put, tourism has already failed because in the last two months no tourist movements have been observed, except at the local level, in countries where the measures are not too rigorous. Covid-19 is a disruption to the socio-technical landscape.

"The World Tourism Organization predicted that in 2020, international arrivals would have dropped by 70%, which is would be so far the largest drop ever registered, and only on an optimistic note that things really should start to get better from the middle of 2021; they predict it will take 2½–4 years to get back to the 2019 levels" (Widtfeldt, J.M. & Charlotte, B.K., 2021, 42).

Tourism workers faced job losses already in the first month of the propagation of the Coronavirus, hoping that restrictive measures would soon be eased and they could expect a restart. But the restart is a distant fantasy and as the time passes it seems impossible.

"Tour guides as tourism workers are the most impacted, because not only did they not have a job in the season 2020, it is assumed that the same situation will drag on for several more years. The world is entering deeper and deeper into an economic crisis and North Macedonia at an even faster pace" (Naumov, K., 2020, 252).

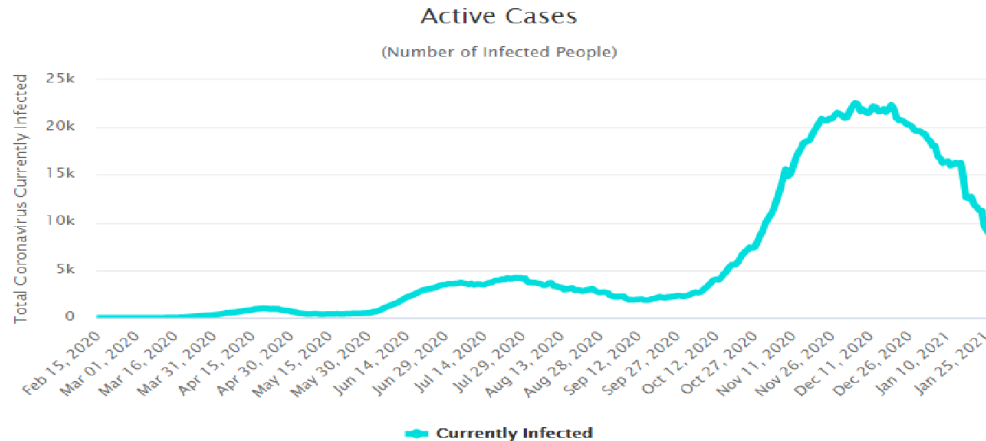
Tourist arrivals in the coming period will be very small, almost negligible. In fact, no one can predict what will happen next.

### 3. Research Methodology

Cabinet and field research was conducted with the appropriate application of a series of quantitative and qualitative methods based on different principles. A cabinet comparative analysis was made following the situation in terms of tourism and Covid19 protocols and reports during the period March- October 2020 in Republic of North Macedonia and Republic of Croatia in order to determine whether the authorities in both countries acted to improve the balance of tourist flow or reciprocally to mitigate the spread of Covid19. A research sample of 50 tour guides was questioned in order to bring a conclusion if they still saw themselves in the same role. In 2017 a research was conducted regarding the self-perceptions of tour guides with the same population. The research elaborates the willingness to continue being a tour guide. The location of the research is the Region of Ohrid, the country's major tourist destination.

“According to the official reports of the health and governmental authorities of the Republic of North Macedonia the peak of the contamination was reached in mid-December 2020, after which, the number of active COVID-19 cases have been steadily decreasing. On 25 January, the country had 420 active cases per 100 000 inhabitants and 91 555 cases in total (vs. 2 768 per 100 000 and 57 451 cases in total on 25 December). Since December 2020, the Government of North Macedonia has declared a state of crisis, somewhat slowing down the gradual deconfinement plan (in place since May 2020)” (OECD, 2021).

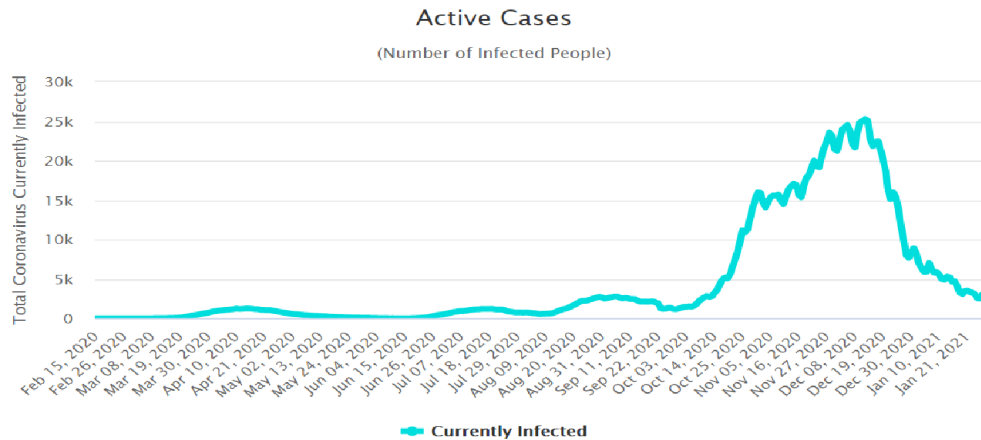
Figure 5 Evolution of active Covid19 cases in North Macedonia



Source 1 Worldometers.info

“After a sharp increase in the number of coronavirus infections in late October, the epidemiological situation in Croatia progressively worsened. The number of new cases reached record high levels mid-December, with up to 4 620 new daily cases. The situation began to stabilize towards the end of the year, and on 27 January, 857 new cases were recorded. The number of total cases up to date stands at 230 359. On 29 December, central Croatia was struck by a magnitude 6.4 earthquake, causing casualties and severe material damage. The earthquake was the second one to hit Croatia in 2020, after the Zagreb earthquake in March, and has added to the difficulty of tackling the pandemic” (OECD, 2021).

Figure 6 Evolution of active Covid19 cases in Croatia



Source 2 Worldometers.info

The Croatian officials announced on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May 2020 that for the first time there is no one infected with the Covid19 virus after the 9<sup>th</sup> of March. They immediately started issuing protocols for restarting the tourism and hospitality industry. After the 27<sup>th</sup> of May they allowed up to 100 persons in closed space within the HO-RE-CA objects and up to 300 in open space. Since the 30<sup>th</sup> of May 2020 they have allowed sport tournaments without the presence of spectators. After a two-month economic blockade brought the Croatian economy almost to the brink of collapse, it was decided that accommodation would not close in the event of a new wave of epidemics. This decision was brought by the Headquarters for Civil protection. The former minister of Tourism in the Croatian Government, Gari Cappelli in one of his interviews stressed out that Croatia practically invented the Covid-free pass. The strategy for the restart of the Croatian tourism according to him was very good and brought the tourist overnights to 50% in comparison to the previous year. The reduced number of flights was one of the reasons for the low number of visits. The Croatian authorities did their best to revive one of the most significant economic branches because everything was planned ahead for the exception of the transmission of the virus. Until the end of the main tourist season there were no restrictions. But every victory brings sacrifices that in this case would be called collateral damage. After the end of October they could no longer hide the numbers of people who contracted the deadly virus and the situation got out of control. The situation in Croatia was significantly more complicated compared to N. Macedonia, yet Croatia announced a Covid free situation just before the beginning of the summer season and the officials of N. Macedonia were not capable of doing the same.

#### 4. Findings, Analysis and Discussion

In order to gain a deeper insight into the current state of tour guides and the impact from the corona pandemic, a survey was prepared with structured questions about what affects guides the most. The survey was named A tour guide's future projection

Survey: A tour guide's future projection

1. What concerns you mostly about your future engagement as a tour guide?

*(please select one of the answers)*

- |                              |                                      |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. COVID19                   | 5. Losing contact with your partners |
| 2. Forgetting languages      | 6. Partners' bankruptcy              |
| 3. Forgetting stories        | 7. Replacement by technology         |
| 4. General quality reduction | 8. Other( <i>please specify</i> )    |

2. Would you guide groups despite the high risk of contracting Covid19?

1 YES                      2NO

3. If your answer about the previous question was "Yes" please specify if you would allow yourself to be vaccinated as a precondition to work as a guide.

1 YES                      2NO

4. On the scale from 1 to 10, where 10 is the most probable and 1 is the least probable, how would you rate the probability of the international tourism restart in N. Macedonia? \_\_\_\_

5. What is the most important in case of pandemics?

*(please select one of the bellow offered answers)*

- |                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1 To stay safe and healthy    | 5 To get vaccinated and continue working |
| 2 To earn money               | 6 To avoid being in contact with people  |
| 3 To be able to pay the bills | 7 To keep being in contact with people   |
| 4 To be able to travel abroad | 8 Other( <i>please specify</i> )_____    |

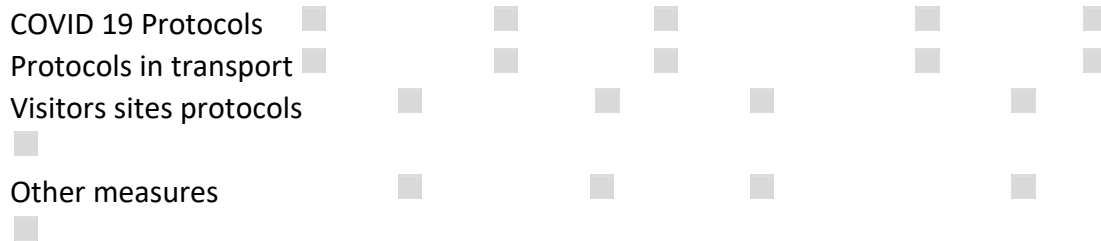
6. Do you still see yourself working as a tour guide in near future? *(please select one number on the scale of probability)*

Absolutely Not		I might work		Absolutely Yes
1	2	3	4	5

7. Does the government of the country make efforts to improve the situation of tourism in the country?

	Fell Below Expectations		Satisfactory		Exceeded Expectations
	1	2	3	4	5
Vaccination	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Financial measures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Restrictive measures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>





Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

8. Are the so far taken measures by the government in function to mitigate the dispersion of Covid19?

NOT AT ALL                      MIGHT BE                      VERY MUCH  
 1                      2                      3                      4                      5

9. How effective are the government’s measures in coping with the pandemic and helping tourism to restart?

Not Effective                      Neutral                      Extremely effective  
 1                      2                      3                      4                      5

10. What is your city of residence? \_\_\_\_\_

11. What age group are you in?

Under 18      18-28      29-39      40-49      50-60      61+

12. Are you male or female?                      M                      F

13. What level of education have you achieved?

High School                      College                      University                      Postgraduate Degree

Table 1 Characteristics of the research sample

Variable		Characteristics of the research sample	
		Frequency	%
gender	male	31	62.0%
	female	19	38.0%
Age	18-28	2	0.4%

	29- 39	17	35.4%
	40-49	14	29.2%
	50-60	13	27.0%
	61 +	4	0.8%
Educational level	High school	11	20.8%
	College	5	49.4%
	University	31	27.9%
	Post graduate degree	3	1.9%

### 1. What concerns you mostly about your future engagement as a tour guide?

Regarding the first question 47 out of 48 respondents or 98% chose COVID19 as a great concern for their future engagement as tour guides, probably knowing that recently 2 of their fellow colleagues lost their lives after being diagnosed with the disease. As for the second option 27 out of 48 or 56% of the respondents pointed out this concern. The pandemic resulted with lack of opportunities for language practice. Languages are a living matter that with absence of practice have a fast pace of deterioration. Before the coronavirus pandemic guides were able to speak foreign languages frequently and now with no engagements they are at danger of losing them at a rapid rate. The language will deteriorate in one's mind if one doesn't keep it active. Only 10% of the respondents or precisely 5 tour guides marked the third answer about forgetting stories. As for the 4th option the rate of concern was greatest and all the respondents stressed out the general quality reduction in all the spheres connected with their activities. 100% of the guides marked this answer as probably most concerning. Not being active for more than 1 year has a high price. The 5th option was also marked by 100% of the respondents and that is losing contact with the partners. During the precovid19 period the active tour guides had many clients who came to the destination via various partner organizations. The pandemic impacted the functioning of the travel agencies and tour operators bringing them to a state of bankruptcy, which is connected with the answer no. 6. Guides are probably not afraid to be replaced by the technology since only 2 respondents pointed out this option in the questionnaire. But the danger lies in ignorance. There are many attempts to replace the human factor with smart gadgets and softwares especially after the outbreak of the pandemic. Even the World Tourism Organization propagates these options for the sake of safe travel.

### 2. Would you guide groups despite the high risk of contracting covid19?

The opinion of the respondents was divided almost 50:50. The slight majority of the guides or 52,1% (25 out of 48) responded positively and answered Yes. The rest of the respondents 47,9% or 23 answered No. This makes people think that tourism workers are losing hope at a high rate.

### 3. If your answer about the previous question was "Yes" please specify if you would allow yourself to be vaccinated as a precondition to work as a guide?

At this point of the survey something very odd occurred, the question was answered by all the respondents and only 5 tour guides (10%) were in favour of vaccination. The rest of the respondents or 43 out of 48 (90%) answered negatively. There is a great deal of doubt in the

prevention of Covid19. As a result of this question, the suspicion is confirmed that tourist guides do not believe in mitigating the situation and a new restart of tourism. They even go so far as not to make their own contribution to the fight against this disease, which would result in the eventual normalization of tourist flows. Although this seems like a very selfish moment, deeper analysis needs to be made in terms of this attitude. The tourist guides were covered by only two packages of the total 6 package measures implemented by the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia. The help they received was minor and therefore they remain skeptical as silent protesters.

4. On the scale from 1 to 10, where 10 is the most probable and 1 is the least probable, how would you rate the probability of the international tourism restart in N. Macedonia?

The majority of the respondents expressed their personal opinion regarding the probability of international restart of the tourism flow in N. Macedonia as least probable. From the total number of respondents 20 marked the lowest grade of probability which is almost 42%, 7 guides or 14.5% marked the value 2, 1 respondent or 2% marked the value 3, 4 respondents or 8.3 % marked the value 4 and 2 guides or 4% of the respondents marked the value 5. In other words 71% of the respondents are not optimistic about the restart of tourism in the country and have equally lost hope about their future engagements as tour guides. Only 25% of the total respondents have a medium optimistic point of view regarding the future development of the situation in favor of the restart of international tourism in the country. And finally, just 2 of the respondents gave the highest score of probability for restarting tourism. The mean score is 2.82 on the scale of 1-10 and the prognosis is not bright at all. It is obvious that tour guides lost any hope of re engagement in near future.

Table 2 Probability rating for restart of the international tourism in N. Macedonia

	Frequenc y	%
Rating 1-5 (lowest probability)	34	70,8%
Rating 6-8 (medium probability)	12	25.0%
Rating 9-10 (highest probability)	2	0,4%
Total	48	100%
Mean value	2.82	

5. What is the most important in case of pandemics?

Upon this question the answers of the respondents were quite bizarre. All of the questioned tour guides marked the first option **To stay safe and healthy**. Further, only 31% or 15 respondents stressed out the option **To earn money**. The third option **To be able to pay the bills** was chosen

by 94% of the tour guides or a total of 45 respondents. The option no. 5 **To get vaccinated and continue working** was pointed out by only 5 respondents or 10%, which matches the 3rd question of the survey. There is no readiness on the side of tour guides to be included in the process of immunisation against covid19. The results are like this probably due to the lack of exact data on the success of vaccines. It is still early to see the effect of vaccination, but on the other hand there are constant rumors about possible harm to the health of those who would be vaccinated. The responses regarding the 6th option **To avoid being in contact with people** were staggering 87.5%. At this point it can be seen that there is a great amount of doubt on the side of tour guides whether to work again in the near future. And finally 12,5% of the respondents were in favour of the option **To keep being in contact with people**. At this point there is a deviation connected to the 3rd question of the survey of 2.5%. Guides can easily change their minds and take a health risk to earn money in near future. As for the 8th option the greatest majority of the respondents 46 or 96% specified that the government needs to subsidise them with financial support until the moment of the complete eradication of the pandemic.

6. Do you still see yourself working as a tour guide in near future?

This issue was covered for the needs of the paper because it covers the willingness to work as a guide in near future. For the third time can be noticed doubtfulness compared to the answers given in the previous questions of the survey. The majority of the respondents or 83.5% see themselves working as tour guides in near future. Only 12.5% have an indecisive answer and 4% answered negatively to this question. Again the moment of hope plays a significant role in the near planning of the future. Tour guides are optimistic regarding the mitigation of the pandemic and the soon re-establishment of the international tourism flow.

Table 3 Probability of keeping the profession as a tour guide in near future

	Frequency	%
Absolutely yes (5)	18	37,5 %
Yes (4)	22	46,0 %
I might work (3)	6	12,5 %
No (2)	1	2,0%
Absolutely not (1)	1	2,0%
Average mark (SD)	4,15 (0,83)	

7. Does the Government make efforts to improve the situation of tourism within the country?

This question covered the key moment of governmental action in terms of balancing public health with helping the business sector, in this case the tourism and hospitality industry. The 6 key components were brought into question regarding the tour guides point of view. The **Vaccination** as an issue was graded very negatively with 100% of the respondents marking the option **Fell below expectations**. It is evident that the vaccination rate in the country is the lowest in comparison to the countries in the region. Less than 9% of the total population have received at least one dose of vaccination and a double dose have received only 1,2% of its citizens by the 12th of May 2021. Regarding the **Financial measures** for mitigation of the Covid19 economic crisis the vast majority of the respondents making more than 85%, marked the option **Fell below expectations**, probably because of not receiving any financial help from the Government. Only 78 tour guides out of 1200 at national level received direct financial aid (sum of €:1050) from the government. The rest of the 7 guides (15%) chose the option **Satisfactory** regarding the financial measures probably because they were included in the fourth aid package of the government. As for the **Restrictive measures** 45 out of 48 guides or 94 % responded **Fell below expectations**. In addition to the question most of the respondents explained that they are not happy with the restrictions and the protocols issued by the government. The rest of the respondents or 0.6% marked the option **Satisfactory**. The **Covid19 Protocols** were assessed as **unsatisfactory** by the respondents with a total mark of 1.5. In addition to this point tour guides pointed out that the protocols are confusing or not existent. There is not a single protocol defining the work of tour guides and safe pedestrian movement of organized groups. The **Transport Protocols** were assessed as **Satisfactory** with an average score of 3.1, where 5 is the maximal value and 1 is the minimum. Probably this neutrality in the opinion of the travel guides is the lack of mobility and many periods of confinement with absence of traveling opportunities. The **Visitor Sites AntiCovid Protocols** were assessed as satisfactory with 100 % of the respondents choosing the number 3 on the scale from 1 to 5. What is additionally very interesting many of the tour guides specified the problems of finding closed tourism attractions with a notice: Closed due to Coronavirus pandemic. In other words the authorities failed in the attempt to implement safety protocols in the sphere of tourism.

8. Are the so far implemented measures by the government in function to mitigate the dispersion of Covid19? The answers of this question were with a very negative score bordering between 1 and 2 on the scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is extremely negative and 5 is extremely positive value. From the total respondents 83.3% chose the value 1 and the rest 16.7% chose value 2. There was not a single positive assessment. This is a confirmation about the nonchalant and negative attitude of the State in terms of Covid19 prevention and vaccination.

## 5. Conclusions

Tourism momentarily is on a long standby. People are not even able to save money for other means than the basic needs and therefore the tourism industry will continue to suffer. The whole world is in crisis with lots of job losses on a daily basis. Tour guides were the first tourism workers who lost their jobs and will be the last to restart their activities. Perhaps now it is the time for tour guides and other tourism and hospitality stakeholders to start working on improvement of skills and knowledge. In order to be able to restart tourism a special guarantee about safety is

requested. Thus, programs and itineraries must be adapted to the new reality, which will predominate until vaccines start working, or the virus suddenly disappears. Many guides saw their names on the list of unemployed people, although the state in many European countries granted them a subsidy. That was obviously not enough to keep the lifestyle most guides had before; some guides decided to change activity, working in a number of different sectors, from real estate companies to call centres, taking advantage of their communication and interpersonal skills. To overcome the present situation, those who stayed in the guiding business kept on studying to requalify themselves through further academic education, themed webinars, practical training, while also either creating their own walking tours or attending new walking tours planned and executed by their fellow colleagues. These sudden alternatives have become the positive side of the crisis. Previously guides were blamed for being very passive. Now they have the opportunity to reinvent themselves by becoming more creative, inventing new tours. Regarding the contribution of guides in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic the situation is not so bright in N. Macedonia. The majority of tour guides are anti vaccers, even though various tour guides associations in the country demand immediate vaccination for their members. Furthermore guides find the preventive measures rather repressive. In other words they want the crisis to stop but are not ready to do nothing about it.

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# The impact of COVID-19 on tourism education: The case of the University of Zagreb Faculty of Economics and Business, Croatia

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## Abstract

*This paper aims to answer the questions: “when and why did the changes in the tourism education appear?”, “how can the education system adapt to the changes caused by COVID-19?” and “what has been changed in the tourism education at the University of Zagreb Faculty of Economics and Business since COVID-19 affected Croatia?”. The exploratory online survey was conducted based on the methodology proposed by Tiwari, Séraphin and Chowdhary (2020). The deliberate sample consisted of tourism professors from the University of Zagreb Faculty of Economics and Business. The questionnaire was created in Google Forms containing questions about challenges in tourism education after the outbreak of COVID-19, and transformation of it in the post COVID-19 phase. Findings of this study reveal that there is a strong need to design new curricula and transform tourism education. To prepare students for the challenges caused by COVID-19 such as lack of coordination, communication, and students’ participation, both students and professors should gain digital skills and establish collaboration with different institutions and industries. This paper contributes to the future tourism development by standing out the importance of changing the perspective in tourism education and giving the real image of it.*

**Keywords:** *Tourism Education, Changes in Education, University of Zagreb Faculty of Economics and Business, Croatia, COVID-19*

## 1. Introduction

The pandemic of COVID-19 affected the whole world, each segment of society, economy and even ecology. Travel restrictions, which were conducted by the majority of countries, spread an impact on the tourism industry and all other industries. In the year of 2020, tourist arrivals worldwide fell by 74% in comparison to 2019 (The World Tourism Organisation, 2021) and the numbers in service activities and transport decreased as well. On the other hand, due to this unstable situation, new standards of living and limited mobility, tourist behaviour has been



dramatically changed. Considering the alterations in tourism supply and demand, it is important not to neglect tourism education, all the challenges it has been facing and the strong connection between the industry and education system. Hence tourism education is a backbone of future tourism development and some issues caused by COVID-19 need to be addressed. In countries where tourism is a significant economic activity, the pandemic crisis upset the different areas of the country's economy, so the adjustment of tourism education needs to become the priority. This paper focuses on the impact of COVID-19 on tourism education by referring to the largest educational institution in the Republic of Croatia, the University of Zagreb. It aims to examine the challenges and transformation of tourism education at the institution after the outbreak of COVID-19. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the impact on tourism education at the University of Zagreb Faculty of Economics and Business and to give a general overview in this situation as well as to consider some solutions on how the education sector can adapt since there was no research on this topic. This paper fills the research gap by examining the impact of COVID-19 at this institution in Croatia. In order to point out the possible guidelines for the future tourism education, this paper contributes to the development of the different industries, mainly tourism, hospitality and transport. The example of the University of Zagreb Faculty of Economics and Business will be presented by the Department of Tourism and its members, whose teaching methods and new improvements can raise the quality level of the tourism education and tourism industry and advancement as its result.

## **2.Literature Review**

### *2.1 The impact of COVID-19 on tourism and tourist behaviour*

The virus of COVID-19 was first detected in Chinese city Wuhan (Zhu et al., 2019) where it spread to other parts of the country and, in a few months, the pandemic was announced. This unexpected situation forced citizens to be responsible and stay at home, which resulted in the loss of 1 billion tourist arrivals and 1.3 trillion USD in tourism exports (The World Tourism Organisation, 2021). Due to the limited mobility and human safety, “opportunities to travel were reduced or totally eliminated by governments and transport providers” (Baum and Hai, 2020:2400). Majority of incentives, business meetings and events from the entertainment industry have been cancelled or postponed. As the number of virtual meetings and the popularity of online communication platforms have increased, business travel continues to shrink (Cetin, 2020). There are also some predictions that capacities will fall, so mass tourism and the shared economy will be less popular as well as services based on quantity. As a consequence of those movements, consumer psychology has been changed. According to Tengilimoglu and Hassan (2020), they will consider online channels as a preferred option of buying their future experiences, which will take place in the closer destinations in nature. Tourist behaviour and decision making will focus on the health and safety measures as well as the possibilities of cancellation and last-minute booking (The World Tourism Organisation, 2021). On the other hand, travel anxiety has been present among the majority of tourists. It is a subjective feeling of stress, fear, panic, discomfort and nervousness that occurs as a result of being exposed to a risk. (McIntyre and Roggenbuck, 1998). From 2020, the tourist environment faces a great shock and, if its speed and impact are considered, COVID-19 is the most serious crisis for tourism (Cetin, 2020).

Furthermore, Croatia is considered as one of the most popular European tourist destinations due to its touristic resources and natural predispositions. Since the tourism industry is a very important part of Croatian economy, the effect of COVID-19 appearance in Croatia affected the relations between industries and greatly affected its complementary industries such as hospitality and transport. In comparison to the previous year, in 2020 the number of tourist arrivals fell by 64.2% and tourist nights by 55.29% (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2021a). Therefore, the drop resulted in a decreased number of passengers in all categories of traffic in 2020. According to Croatian Bureau of Statistics (2021b), the transport of passengers in the road line transport fell by 44.2%, in railway transport by 33.9%, and in seawater and coastal transport by 42.1%. Furthermore, the greatest decline of 70.3% was recorded in air transport. During the pandemic, many hotels, restaurants and bars were closed, so the turnover from services has been falling for the twelfth month in a row which had an impact on the insecure labour market.

On the other hand, Croatian government and other responsible authorities responded to the new situation and tried to find the solutions for tourism recovery in order to promote Croatia as a safe tourist destination. Following the pattern of other European countries, Croatia started the process of vaccination but with a special focus on the tourism sector. In order to position Croatia as a secure destination, the Ministry of Tourism and Sport is carrying out the campaign titled "Stay safe in Croatia" in which different tourism and hospitality suppliers provide safety protocols by respecting global standards (Ministry of Tourism and Sport, 2021). Moreover, the new campaign dedicated to rural tourism in Croatia was launched in May 2021. As a good example of adapting to new trends and popularization of remote work, Croatia approved visas for "digital nomads" and The Croatian Tourism Board launched a campaign titled "Croatia, your new office" ("Over 8millions impressions", 2021). Although COVID-19 damaged the industry, it opened many ways to develop and recover tourism in Croatia. Optimistic numbers are for March 2021, when the number of tourist arrivals, increased for 27% and tourist nights for 24.2% only a year after the pandemic appeared (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2021c). The statistical relation between domestic and foreign tourists changed as the borders were closed or restrictively opened so the importance of domestic tourism was given another way of perspective. Due to all mentioned changing movements including tourist structure and behaviour, different approaches to the tourism market and challenging situations worldwide, creating a future tourism and its experts has become an imperative!

### *2.2The impact of COVID-19 on tourism education*

Every aspect of human life, including society, labour market and education, has been upset by the COVID-19 that created an unprecedented test on teaching and learning (Rajigare, 2021). It has been forgotten that whatever affects the industry impacts the education system and vice versa (Seraphin and Yallop, 2020), but nowadays COVID-19 emphasizes the importance of focusing on future education guidelines. The situation with altered, cancelled or postponed internships, unsecure recruitment and questionable career paths needs to be addressed by tourism students and graduates (Sigala, 2020). Nevertheless, modifications on the labour market create a challenging burden on tourism education that has been severely affected by the pandemic (Sigala, 2020). The online study conducted by Tiwari, Séraphin and Chowdhary (2020), highlights the findings regarding tourism education after COVID-19 appearance. The sample was represented by 22 respondents, professors teaching tourism and hospitality courses in different

institutes from 15 countries across the world. The lack of placement pressure and practical sessions as well as low level of participation among students were reported. Due to online forms of education and digital learning and teaching, there is a need to redesign the curriculum which should focus on health and safety measures in tourism, business stability, crisis and risk management and resilience for the tourism and hospitality industry. (Tiwari, Séraphin and Chowdhary, 2020). Since soft skills (language, communication proficiency, analytical and IT skills, creativity and social skills) can help to find their niche in tourism (Ayikoru et al., 2009; Cooper and Shepherd, 1997;), new curriculums should also point out their importance. During the pandemic, some of those skills have been gained or developed. Moreover, online learning provides high interactivity with industry professionals (Sipe and Testa, 2020) and provides flexibility in students' time and space (Goh and Sigala, 2020). Regarding lectures via the internet, there are some barriers that professors need to keep in mind and consider in the future (Ye and Law, 2021). Firstly, there are institutional, technical and personal barriers that delay implementation development (Goh and Sigala, 2020). Secondly, education methods in online environments may lead to failed expectations (Goh and Wen, 2020), as a consequence of poor communication and misunderstanding between faculty and students (Lunney and Sammarco, 2009). Thirdly, students that struggle with lower self-control and self-motivation might have issues and barriers with time management and their participation in online learning (Davis, Gough and Taylor, 2019; Lee et al., 2016). Finally, the tourism and hospitality professors should adjust traditional methods to provide the quality of online education at a reasonable level as well as consider the new evaluation criteria of academic and internship performances (Ye and Law, 2021).

Due to the pandemic situation and its restrictions in the tourism industry and education system, students and professors have faced many challenges, barriers and issues that need to be solved. In tourism, travellers are restricted to move and explore new destinations which influence their behaviour and habits. On the other hand, students and professors in the industry changed their educational media which affected communications and interactions which started to fade. As a result of both perspectives, tourism education needs to change its methods, evaluation criteria and curriculum in general with a focus on smart technologies.

### *2.3 The University of Zagreb and COVID-19: An overview*

The University of Zagreb is the largest and the most prominent university in Croatia that offers support to other universities in the country. It includes 70,000 students in 30 faculties, three academies of art or the University Centre for Croatian Studies (University of Zagreb, 2021). The Faculty of Economics and Business is the oldest Croatian institution of higher education and business and economics. There are university and professional study programmes in economics and business at under-graduate, graduate and post-graduate level. It is a community of more than 8,500 students and 260 professors and associates that teach students about different fields of economics and business, divided in 17 departments, including the Department of Tourism. The Department of Tourism is the only representative from Croatia in The World Tourism Organisation Education Council as its member, organises seminars for tourist guides and travel agency managers and issues the scientific journal *Acta Touristica*. The Department members are four Full Professors, four Associate Professors, three Assistant Professors and one Expert Associate, who will be observed in this research (Faculty of Economics and Business, 2021).

Furthermore, the COVID-19 affected every aspect of the University of Zagreb, its faculties and faculty members. Three days after the first COVID-19 patient was noticed on February 25, 2020, the University of Zagreb announced procedural recommendations and protective measures on its official website (unizg.hr), including information about self-isolation and medical supervision of students from particular countries and areas. On March 11, 2020 the University established a Crisis Headquarters for nCoV Diseases for monitoring the developing conditions regarding COVID-19 and advising the institution administration accordingly the current situation, who lately issued Instructions on management. Finally, on March 13 University of Zagreb announced the issued resolution which determines studying remotely for all University of Zagreb classes. From March 16, 2020 all the students switched the traditional approach they are used to with the digital one (Official website of the University of Zagreb, 2021).

Since the Faculty of Economics and Business is under the University of Zagreb, the regulations regarding COVID-19 entered force at the same time as at the other faculties in Zagreb and the nearby. This has an impact on students' teaching hours, internships, exchanges, conferences and other activities of many student associations based on the University of Zagreb Faculty of Economics and Business, including the Tourism Lab as an association with special interest in tourism. Therefore from March 2020, the lectures and majority of exams on the Faculty have been conducted via Google Classroom, Zoom, Webex and other online platforms. In order to manage the crisis situation at the Faculty, one of the tourism professors has been declared as the COVID-19 coordinator. On its official website (efzg.unizg.hr), the Faculty also published frequently asked questions, announcements about lectures and projects that refer to COVID-19. In September 2020, the e-index was set up, which contributed to the faster digitalization process at the Faculty (Official website of the University of Zagreb Faculty of Economics and Business, 2021). To sum up, the University of Zagreb Faculty of Economics and Business faced many challenges including studying and teaching remotely, organising lectures and events dedicated to COVID-19 crisis and implementing digital technologies in the practice.

### **3. Research Methodology**

As it was previously analyzed, at the Faculty of Economics and Business, which is the only educational institution of the University of Zagreb that has the Department of Tourism, many changes and improvements have been made since the virus appeared in Croatia. In this regard, the exploratory survey about the impact of COVID-19 on tourism education at the University of Zagreb, Croatia was conducted. It was the first research conducted in the whole country and much wider on this topic which highlights the importance of this research.

The research methodology is based on the methodology proposed by Tiwari, Séraphin and Chowdhary (2020). Based on their research, we created the online questionnaire aiming to find out what has been changed in tourism education at the Department of Tourism regarding students behaviour, teaching methods, and other elements in order to point out the possible guidelines for the future development in that field. As well, to answer the following questions: “when and why did the changes in tourism education appear?”, “how can the education system adapt to the changes caused by COVID-19?” and “what has been changed in the education of future tourism experts at the University of Zagreb Faculty of Economics and Business since COVID-19 affected Croatia?”.

Referring to the survey of Tiwari, Séraphin and Chowdhary (2020) the online questionnaire was designed in English language containing closed-ended and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first one examined institutional information, namely annual student enrolment per professor, number of courses they teach and the student programmes at the Faculty that they participate in. The second part examines challenges faced by the institution after the appearance of COVID-19 including questions about students' motivation to enroll in tourism-related courses and particular challenges in this situation as well as Likert scale about professors' opinion regarding the impact of COVID-19 on tourism education. Finally, the third part of the survey consists of four open-ended questions related to the transformation of tourism education at the institution, i.e. factors that may deter students to enroll tourism-related courses, key issues in tourism education that will radically change, key knowledge areas that students need to acquire in tourism education and suggestions to make tourism education robust in the post-COVID-19 phase.

The research population for this research included all professors of the Department of Tourism. Containing in total twelve professors. To their personal email addresses has been sent link to the questionnaire created in Google Forms platform, so the data were collected remotely and automatically in May 2021.

#### 4. Findings and Analysis

Out of the research population (12 professors of the Department of Tourism), ten of them made the deliberate sample and participated in the survey. Those are three Full Professors, four Associate Professors, two Assistant Professors and one Expert Associate of the University of Zagreb Faculty of Economics and Business that participate in mandatory and optional tourism courses and teach students enrolled in different study programmes. The sample consists of mostly females (7), aged from 36-50 years old (7 of them, while there is one from 21 to 35 and two from 51 to 65 years old).

Table 1 The most common answers according to particular criteria

Criteria	The most common answers	Number of respondents (n=10)
Tourism-related course which the majority of respondents teach	Tourism	7
Study programme that the majority of respondents participate in	Integrated under-graduated and graduated university study	9
Number of students enrolled in the course taught by the majority of respondents	More than 200	5

The questionnaire was divided into three parts. In the first part about the institutional information the results showed that 7 out of 10 respondents teach the course Tourism, while courses such as Marketing Management in Tourism, Selective Forms of Tourism, Transportation Policy in Tourism, Tourism Promotion, and Air Transport Management are taught by two professors each. Majority of the respondents (9) participate in Integrated under-graduate and graduate university study program, as well as Undergraduate professional study program, while three respondents participate in Specialist post-graduate study program and Post-graduate university study program in Business. More than 200 students are enrolled in the tourism courses that are taught by the majority of respondents (5), for four (4) professors the number of enrolled students is from 51 to 100, while one faculty member has less than 50 students enrolled per courses. The most common answers are listed by criteria in Table 1

In the second part of the survey, challenges in tourism education at the institution, after the outbreak of COVID-19, have been examined. According to the respondents, the reasons that motivate students for selecting the tourism-related courses are different and they could choose multiple answers. The majority of respondents think that one of the reasons is interest in the subject (9), while others are attractive job opportunities (4), qualifications that can be used elsewhere (4) and experience in the industry (4). The less common answers are international career in tourism and tourism as an alternative career, but none of the respondents thinks that students who select tourism-related courses are motivated by starting their own business.

Furthermore, respondents faced many challenges in tourism education after the outbreak of COVID-19. The most common answers are lack of students' participation (8), curriculum not for online classes (6), insufficient practical training sessions (5). Other challenges that are faced by the respondents are lack of coordination at various levels (3), lack of digital skills in professors (3), placement pressure (1), lack of students motivation, lack of communication (1) and students are passive listeners, not actively involved in the education process (1). One respondent has not faced any problem. Figure 1 presents the number of answers per each challenge.

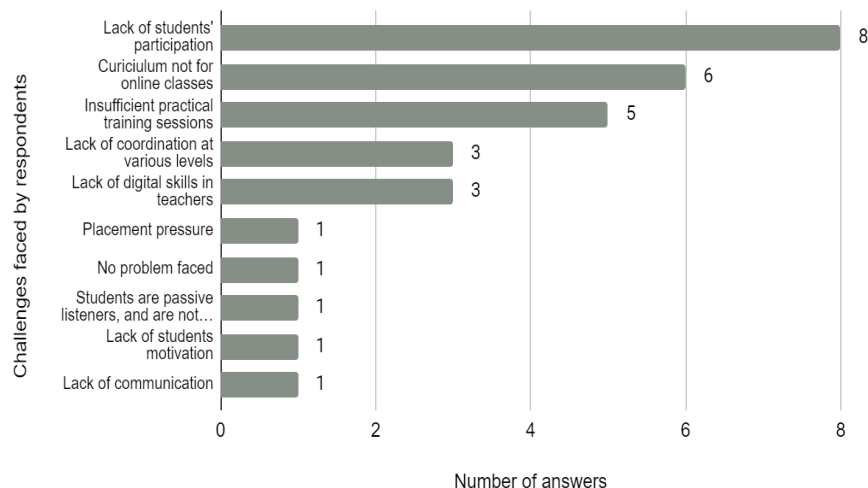


Figure 7 Challenges that the respondents faced in tourism education after the outbreak of COVID-19

By the use of five point Likert scale where one means “strongly disagree” and five “strongly agree”, most of the respondents (7) agree that “the adverse effect of COVID-19 on the tourism industry will have a negative impact on tourism education”. Only one respondent neither agrees, nor agrees and two respondents do not agree with this statement.

The third part of this survey consists of four open-ended questions that refers specifically to the transformation of tourism education in the post COVID-19 phase. According to the respondents, there are various factors that may deter students from applying for the tourism-related courses in that period. Some of the most common answers are describing insecure job opportunities, sensitivity and fragility of tourism which is emphasized in crises such as COVID-19 and the absence of clear strategy in dealing with consequences of the pandemic and adapting to the new situation. In Table 2, there are full answers given by the respondents.

Table 2 Answers on open-ended question: “What factors may deter students to apply for tourism-related courses in the post-COVID-19 phase?”

Employment opportunities in the sector whose recovery after COVID-19 will be encouraged by various state national policy measures.
There is lot of restrictions regarding the travel, so the students can think that there will be no travel industry in the future, and their opportunities for finding a job in this industry are poor.
Strong exposure of tourism to crises of this type, job insecurity, stronger demand in other industries.
The key factor might be the sensitivity of tourism business operations influenced by the global crisis, but with a short-term impact.
Job opportunities on tourism market.
Tourism is prone to crisis and as such represents unsecure employment opportunities inability to find employment in the profession.
Fragility of tourism in total and rather insecure job opportunities.
Lack of jobs in tourism, uncertainty, no clear strategy in dealing with consequences of the pandemic and adapting to the new situation.
Tourism will very soon recover once the pandemic is over. Tourism-related courses must adapt to the new situation and increase the focus on resilience, communication and crisis management.

According to the respondents, key issues that will radically change in tourism education in the post-COVID-19 period are sustainability and attitude towards postcovidial tourism, informatics skills and innovations, time-flexibility and the relationship between professors and students as well as teaching methods and online courses. On the other hand, one respondent thinks that

there are no major changes that will appear in this field and the other partially agree because the key issue that might be of increased interest for online tourism programmes. Table 3 contains full answers to the second question.

Table 3 Answers on open-ended question: “In the post-COVID-19 period, what key issues will radically change in the field of tourism education?”

Attitude towards the new postcovidial tourism, where the focus will no longer be on as many tourist arrivals as possible, but on building a quality and competitive tourist product aimed at achieving long-term sustainable tourism development for each tourist destination.
We will all have much more experience in informatics skills, and in the use of various programs and platforms for sharing knowledge. I am sure that we are more flexible than ever before, we listen students needs, and we are not just their professors but also psychologists and friends.
Strong need for change, stronger importance of innovation, turning to sustainability and nature-rooted tourism.
I think that there won't be any radical changes, but the recent improvement of online way of teaching might increase the interest for online tourism study programmes. Another reflection of the Covid crisis will emphasize the need for more digital content in tourism study curriculum.
Some courses will go online.
N/A
There will be no major changes.
Tourism is among most affected economic activities and therefore teaching methods will have to be adjusted to the new circumstances.
Tourism programs will need to include specific knowledge and skills in coping with new conditions in tourism market in order to enable students to understand the changes in tourism market and to prepare them to adapt to the new conditions as soon and as good as possible.
There will be a greater focus on tourist psychology/behaviour, on the one hand, and crisis management, on the other hand.

Due to the changes and challenges in tourism, students will need to acquire some key knowledge areas while entering the industry in the post-COVID-19 phase. Respondents expressed that knowledge capabilities should focus on crisis management, special forms of tourism, social responsibility, digitalization and interdisciplinary skills, strategic thinking, consumer psychology and flexibility. Responses are presented in Table 4.



Table 4 Answers on open-ended question: “What are the key knowledge areas/capabilities that students entering the industry in the post-COVID-19 phase will need to acquire in their education?”

Crisis management of tourism, external changes and their impact on tourism, sustainable tourism development, specific forms of tourism, the importance of international and national organizations in tourism development.
They will need to learn that every day is unpredictable and that you can't plan a future. Now is COVID-19, tomorrow can be something else that can also affect tourism industry. They will need to learn how to be flexible and quickly react to new situations.
innovation, social responsibility, digitalization, personalization of services, ...
Market segmentation, Visitor motivation and behaviour, Consumer psychology, Digital skills (promotion, sales, networking), Tourist attractions design
Same as before COVID 19.
N/A
Wide range of interdisciplinary knowledge and skills, ability to adapt to unforeseen situations, ability to quickly adapt to new trends
Crisis management
Flexibility, ability to adapt to new conditions, online skills, knowledge of entrepreneurship in tourism and specific forms of tourism
Strategic thinking

Respondents suggested guidelines on how to make tourism education robust in the post-COVID-19 phase. Some of those are adjustment of teaching methods and new curriculum with more hand-on cases on contemporary issues, knowledge in crisis management and qualitative transformation of tourism in the postcovidial period as well as investments in promotion of tourism education. More detailed answers on the fourth open-ended question are listed in Table 5.

Table 5 Answers on open-ended question: “What are your suggestions to make tourism education robust in the post-COVID-19 period?”

Adapt the teaching process at the faculties to the needs of the field (with tourism service providers). Learning about crisis management, qualitative transformation of tourism in the postcovidial phase
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Emphasize the importance of tourism for economy in general, highlight the job opportunities in tourism and implement all new teaching methods that we gained through COVID-19 period in our teaching.
Adapting to the identified challenges and requirements facing the industry globally and locally.
Adjustments of curriculum and teaching methods inline with the 'new normal' business environment and demand patterns.
I believe that a lot has been done in order to adjust the teaching process to the new circumstances, but suggestions for improvement should be based on detailed analysis of pre and post COVID period and effects of teaching processes during those times
To invest in a promotion of tourism education, to highlight niches or specific forms of tourism that could benefit in the post covid-19 phase
More hands-on cases on contemporary issues

Results in this survey can contribute to the significant development at this and other education institutions that are dealing with tourism and other related areas. In the following chapter, the findings will be discussed.

## 5. Discussion

Due to the fragility of tourism, different tourist behaviour and online studying after the outbreak of COVID-19, the focus should be on tourism education including its promotion, guidelines and future development. In order to make a sustainable tourism education strategy, each tourism-related education institution should conduct a study about the impact of COVID-19 on tourism education. This research is the first at the University of Zagreb Faculty of Economics and Business that examines COVID-19 and how it affected tourism education. Regarding institutional information collected by the survey, those findings showed that the number of professors is not proportionally distributed and the majority of them teach to more than 200 students. In order to have a sufficient and sustainable quality level, create new curricula and adjust teaching methods to the new circumstances, the Department of Tourism needs more teaching staff and professional experts. The survey of Tiwari, Séraphin and Chowdhary (2020) conducted in 15 countries, found out that tourism-related courses are present at the undergraduate and postgraduate level, while at the University of Zagreb Faculty of Economics and Business those are mostly undergraduate and graduate level. Moreover, the respondents from 15 countries (Tiwari, Séraphin and Chowdhary, 2020) and the respondents from the University of Zagreb Faculty of Economics and Business chose common reasons that motivate students for enrolling in the tourism-related courses and those were attractive job opportunities and multifaces use of the degree, i.e. qualifications that can be used elsewhere. This comparison shows that students are motivated by attractive employment chances and the interdisciplinary nature of tourism which needs to be used in promotion of tourism education. The results of those two researches show that tourism professors noticeably faced the same challenges after the outbreak of COVID-

19 such as insufficient practical training sessions and lack of students' participation, that could be connected with students' lower self-control and self-motivation. Furthermore, there are challenges that can be overcome and tourism education curricula in higher education institutions have to follow current trends in digital transformation (Çınar, 2020) in order to reduce these issues. Informatics courses for the Faculty members can contribute to advanced digital skills in professors and better coordination at different levels, on the other side, can prevent poor communication and misunderstanding. It is important to point out that, if those adjustments start to be implemented, both students and professors should participate in. Moreover, the professors' attitudes towards the impact of COVID-19 on tourism education is important in order to observe the objective situation in tourism education at the institution and to consider the approach of bringing new teaching methods, curricula and teaching content. At the University of Zagreb Faculty of Economics and Business, due to the results of this research, professors are willing to adapt to the new circumstances.

In comparison to the previously conducted research (Tiwari, Séraphin and Chowdhary, 2020), respondents emphasized common dissuading factors in the process of enrollment for tourism-related courses in the post-COVID-19 phase. Poor and insecure job opportunities, unemployment and lack of jobs in tourism may deter students, who were mainly motivated by this reason from applying for tourism-related courses. The risk of entrepreneurial venture in tourism can be one of the reasons why none of the respondents think that students are motivated to enroll in tourism-related courses because of starting their own businesses. This issue can be solved with cooperation of business and educational institution as well as collaboration between different, complementary departments at the Faculty.

Since most of studying activities became digital after the outbreak of the COVID-19, the common results in the previously analysed surveys regarding the particular issues are recorded. Both at the University of Zagreb Faculty of Economics and Business and at other tourism education institutions, respondents expressed the opinion that students' knowledge and skills in crisis management, consumer psychology and digitalization are crucial in gaining adequate capabilities for entering the industry in the post-COVID-19 period. Professors from different tourism education institutions including the University of Zagreb Faculty of Economics and Business suggested new curricula, better relationship between tourism stakeholders and more cases based on contemporary issues from the industry as well as continuous detail research. This research is the beginning of the further development of tourism education and it contributes to the creation of new generations of tourism experts in Croatia and in the other countries as well.

## **6. Conclusions**

Due to the COVID-19 and its consequences on human health, many travel restrictions and mobility limitations have been established. Since the physical contacts, meetings, events and trips were reduced, the virtual environment became more popular as the primary option. All the mentioned circumstances had an impact on the tourist behaviour which faced travel anxiety characterised by the fear of travelling. Because of that, tourists take care more about health and safety measures, last-minute bookings and possibilities of cancellation while choosing near, safe tourist destinations. In Croatia, tourism as its economic driver deals with many challenges in different aspects of the economy such as transport, accommodation and tour operators activities. In order to become a safe tourist destination, Croatian authorities launched different

campaigns as a response to the crisis. Furthermore, significant effects on the industry have left a mark on the education system which is closely connected to the real sector. At the University of Zagreb more than 70,000 students from 30 faculties, three academies of art and one university centre have been affected by COVID-19. One of that faculty is the Faculty of Economics and Business, which is the only educational institution that has a special Department of Tourism whose members were examined in this research. According to the respondents in this and previous studies, new curricula and digital transformation of tourism education needs to be a priority in order to prevail challenges and dissuading factors noticed. Some of those are insecure job opportunities and flexibility to the new unexpected situations, no clear strategy, lack of students' participation, insufficient practical training sessions and lack of digital skills, coordination and adjusted teaching methods. The authorities should focus on the transformation of tourism education since the majority of respondents think that COVID-19 will have a negative impact on tourism education. Moreover, the professors expressed the opinion that there is a lack of coordination at the various levels and that students should gain interdisciplinary skills based on actual cases. Thus the cooperation between authorities, industries, professors and students needs to be implemented as well as mutual projects of different departments, faculties and universities. This paper's conclusions can be implemented in future collaborations in order to exchange more ideas for tourism education which represent a new solution of sustainable tourism education development that contributes to the advancements in the industry.

Regarding managerial implications, the conclusions from this research are to modify curricula and adjust it to the new circumstances, modern trends and different behavior of tourism stakeholders, students and professors. The future strategies of this and other educational institutions should motivate students to participate and express their opinion as well as give opportunities to gain soft skills and digital and psychological knowledge. On the other hand, there are few limitations of this research. Firstly, all the professors from the research population are not included in the sample. Secondly, the challenges are not surveyed detailly and there are still some conclusions missing regarding the methods on how to execute the guidelines. Finally, the answers are given by professors, not by students as well. In the future, this research should be conducted by more detailed examination of each issue and challenge that hinder development in this crisis in the COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 period. Thus, future surveys should be continuously conducted, including students' opinion and detailed examination of the mentioned issues. Those should focus on the University of Zagreb Faculty of Economics and Business as well as on the other educational institutions with tourism-related courses from Croatia in order to compare the results and to conclude with mutual solutions, opinions and guidelines that can be shared with the educational and government authorities. It is inefficient to plan tourism after the crisis if the tourism education, teaching methods and curricula content are not adjusted to the new perspective of future tourism.

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# Key performance indicators before and during/after the “COVID-19 times” in the Hungarian hotel sector

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## Abstract

*The main aim of the research is to define the key performance indicators in connection with the wellness hotel sector in the popular Hungarian town, Hévíz. The goal of the study is to make a comparison between the two time periods: before COVID-19 and nowadays. According to the hypothesis during this global recession the non-financial KPIs have become more significant comparing to the financial ones. The research contains a theoretical summarizing and an analyzing procedure in connection with the most recent publications about the KPIs. There are in April 2021 four in-depth, structured interviews conducted with the GMs of the wellness hotels in Hévíz. The sample is determined by the number of the rooms in the wellness hotels (four hotels with the total room capacities of 895 rooms). The interviews show that the financial KPIs like ADR and RevPAR are not significantly losing their relevance. The leaders are not optimistic in connection with the staff problems, several team members left also the sector definitively. The results are strictly connected to the practical side of the hotels' operating. The authors' experience suggests that the employee's satisfaction and loyalty will be relevant in the future.*

**Keywords:** Hotel sector, Key Performance Indicator, COVID-19, Hotel employees, Loyalty.

## 1. Introduction

Tourism in Hungary is a very important sector from the financial aspect as well in case of the contribution to the GDP of the country and the number of employees who are/who were working in this sector. The year 2019 was a record year for the tourism sector, which is presented in the report of the Hungarian Tourism Agency: the international tourist arrivals increased by 4.8% compared to the worldwide average growth plus 3.6% (MTÜ, 2019). One other important data is the contribution to the GDP, here in Hungary it takes 13.2% with 418 000 person as employment in the sector (MTÜ, 2019). Not only the number of the international guests but also the number of domestic guests was higher (plus 3.7%) compared to the year before (MTÜ, 2019). Hévíz is the second most popular and visited town after the capital Budapest in Hungary: has the second place in the number of the total and international guests' nights (2019/2018), besides the number of domestic guests was also higher and higher from year to year (MTÜ, 2019) – before the negative effect of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The novelty of the research stands in the sample – wellness hotels in Hévíz, Hungary – and because of the up-to date database of the financial and non-financial key performance indicators (furthermore KPIs) and of course of the current topic which influence the performance of tourism all over the world. The objective of the paper is to collect the theoretical background of the definitions for KPIs and to create a useful set of the factors which ones will be measured from the view of their importance. The research questions are complex: what kind of KPIs are relevant for the wellness hotels in the Hungarian town Hévíz, which ones are usually and on a daily basis measured and controlled, which ones are prioritized by the General Managers and the owners of the houses. The main question is to define the importance of the KPIs before the COVID-19 crisis and after this hard economic and social period in the examined town with the world-famous thermal lake. It is also a further question, if the financial indicators are losing their relevance or not, and if the non-financial KPIs – especially the employees’ satisfaction and loyalty - are becoming more and more important.

There has not been a research comparing the importance of hotel performance indicators before and after the pandemic. One of the inspiring journal papers in the sub-theme “employee loyalty” in the Hungarian hotels is Elizabeth M. Ineson, Eszter Benke and József László (2013), which contains useful information about the status of the sector and the opportunities for enhance the loyalty level of the hotel employees. This was one of the basic articles in the secondary research, strictly connected to the results of the primary interviews.

## **2. Literature review**

The literature review session concentrates on the definition of the KPIs and the most important features from the theoretical aspect. After that the role of the indicators as a management tool is detailed according to the referred articles, first of all as a quality and a controlling measurement tool. Last but not least the connection between KPIs and job/employment satisfaction is also detailed based on the secondary research of the authors – this topic is also relevant not only because of the previous studies but also based on the primary research as well.

According to the international definition the key performance indicator (further the abbreviation KPI) is a real numerical measurement tool which describes the successful performance of the given company, in this special case the performance of a hotel. Only the indicator, which one can be measured, can also be managed and improved. It helps not only to understand the vision, mission and the values of the company in general, but also the leaders and the researchers can better understand the point of view of the guests’ and the business side as well. Fitzgerald and his authors’ team (1991) have already published the “Performance measures across six dimensions” model. It is the basic literature for the measurement of the companies’ performances. The main topics are competitiveness and financial performance as a “result dimension” and the quality of service, flexibility, resource utilization and innovation as a “determinants dimension” (Brignall et. al, 1991). This model is the basis of the researchers’ COVID-topics as well, it is also including the indicators like profitability (for example ADR, RevPAR), liquidity, quality of service and innovation as well.

In the topic KPIs one fundamental criteria has to be mentioned finally in the introduction part of the article in the sub-topic definition: all of the indicators have to be specific, measurable,



attainable, realistic and time sensitive. This is the so-called SMART-criteria, which definition is in details described in the article of Shahin and Mahbod (2006).

From another aspect the KPIs are not only tools helping the special measurement tasks, but they are also a complex procedures as well. After identifying the appropriate factors these have to be correctly collected to get the right database. After the analyzing session the hotel leader has a final task: to improve and usually control the relevant indicators (Srivastava, Maitra; 2016).

To create a set of the chosen and prioritized KPIs is a hard task for the leaders' team, however it can be a good and reliable management tool as well. First of all the controlling and the quality side are very important and are also measurable and often examined by the international researchers. The importance of the KPIs in the daily life of a hotel is relevant for surviving this economic crisis. Firstly it is important to define the relevance of the performance measurement, because it is an already mentioned, special management tool for implementing the firms' strategy and for controlling of the several mechanism. The improving procedure of a company, in this special case of a hotel, should be continuous all the time (Khan, Shah; 2011).

For the question, why the key performance indicators are relevant in the life of a hotel, the answer is complex. The hotel managers want to ensure high-quality services, to reach incredible level of guest satisfaction and productivity at the same time, however the hotel should be also competitive in the market (Mohamadkhani, Lalardi; 2012).

Harris and Mongiello (2001) determined a decision-making procedure for hotel managers connected to the KPIs. Firstly, in the selection step the key indicator should be defined by the leaders and owners. After it, the chosen indicator has to be interpreted and finally, in the application step the decision-making process is necessary.

The measurement of the KPIs can help the company to decide, if they are working in the right way and if the performance of the hospitality firm is competitive or not. The analyzing and follow-up of the right set of the key indicators can also support the hotel to reach their goals and objectives, because of it the set of the average room rate, the occupancy percentage, the bed occupancy rate and the cost per occupied room has to be checked on a daily basis (Srivastava, Maitra; 2016).

The literature review session can be completed with the topic job satisfaction, because it is also an important KPI according to authors. Borralha and his researcher team analyzed the number of studies which include some references to the job satisfaction and stress, burnout, emotional exhaustion. The result is interesting: from 2000 to 2005 they have found only one research in which the studied variable was job satisfaction and during the following years it reached the number of 6-7-8 as well. The number of studies in the topic of related stress and burnout is also growing from year to year. (Borralha et. al, 2016). Based on this the researchers can assume, that the relevance of the theme job satisfaction is getting more and more important nowadays. Keeping the workforce satisfied is a big challenge especially in the COVID-times. One of the most important factor is the flexibility for example to introduce the home office opportunity in the special work fields and the flexible working hours can also be attractive for the hotel workers.

The management implications of the researchers Cheng and O-Yang (2018) describe, that HR strategies should include job autonomy and discretion, also the supportive work environment can contribute to the higher satisfaction level of the employees. Further, as a "best practice" it is the so-called on-the-job training also highly supported. And last but not least the stress level of

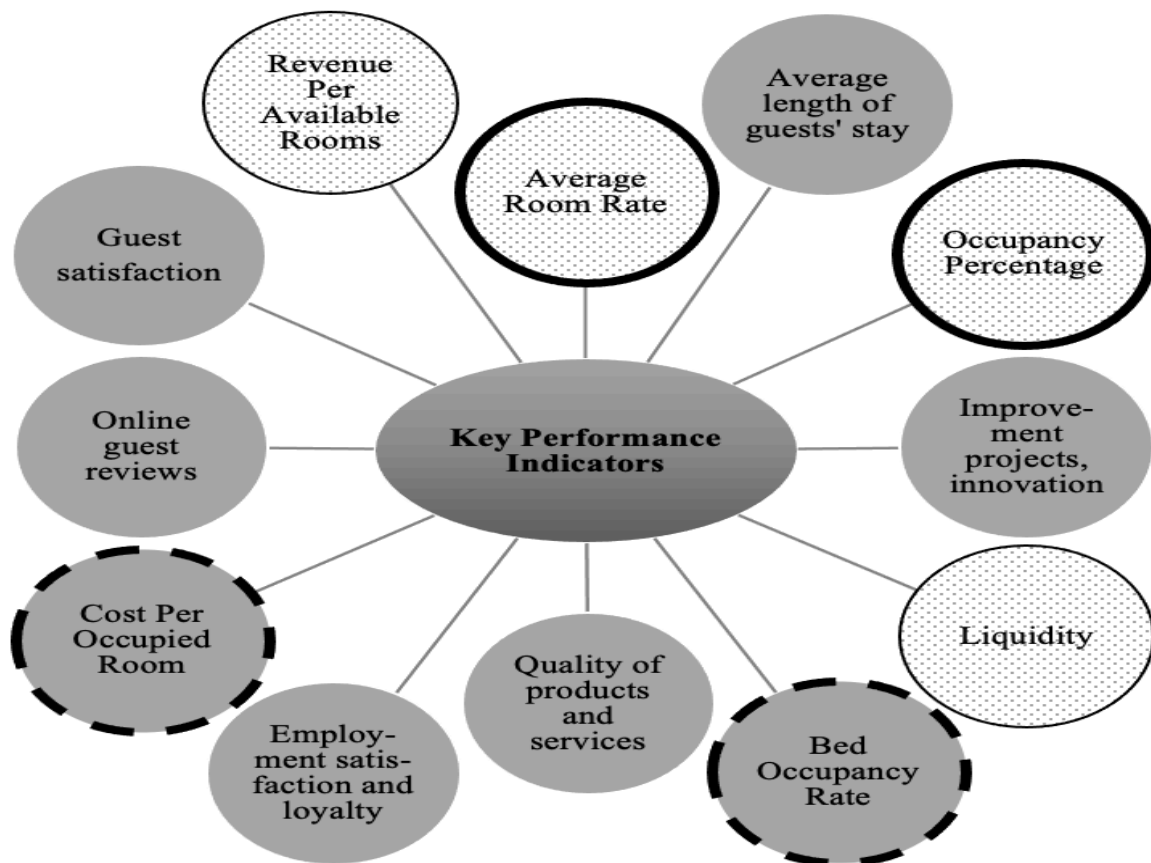
the workers should be reduced to enhance the motivation level of the employees, positive feedback and supporting engagement has a very useful role as well.

Job satisfaction is a popular research field among the authors analyzing the hotel sector. Lim (2017) could find also a statistically significant relationship between self-management and empathy (both of them are sub-dimensions of the so-called Emotional Intelligence). If the employees' job satisfaction is becoming higher, the greater customer satisfaction can be reached (Lim, 2017). Wadongo et. al has already made a division in the theme KPI in this two sub-groups financial and non-financial KPIs (Wadongo et. al, 2010).

Hypothesis of this research is based on the articles mentioned above:

H: *The relevance of the non-financial KPIs is increasing after the COVID pandemic.*

**Figure 1:** Own construction based on the article of Srivastava and Maitra (2016), with extra indicators



Source: self-constructed figure by the researchers (the financial KPIs are marked by light and the non-financial KPIs by darker grey color)

It is not a question that in the hospitality and especially the hotel sector the employees have a significant role due to the number and the quality of the human interactions with the guests during the offered services. Several studies have already analyzed the correlation between the hotel workers' motivation and engagement. The researchers have the conclusion determined, if

the employees are high motivated and the level of their loyalty has an impact on the financial performance of a company (Book, Kim, 2019).

The authors has created based on the secondary research and the own practical experiences a special, ten KPIs included set to measure the performance of the chosen database. After Srivastava and Maitra the average room rate and the occupancy rate is concluded in the authors' KPI-set, but instead of the bed occupancy rate - the occupancy percentage is already refers to the room occupancy rate - and the cost per occupied rooms – the revenue side is much more relevant in this special case - the researchers have involved other indicators in the special model as well, for example from the performance management theory (Fitzgerald) the so-called innovation and liquidity as well. Job satisfaction (Borralha et. al, 2016; Ineson et. al, 2013) and the guest satisfaction (Mohamadkhani, Lalardi; 2012; Lim, 2017) are also elements the created sets. The special, new ten-indicator KPI-matrix is filled with the online reviews as well, because nowadays, in this online world the feedbacks are also relevant.

### **3. Research methodology**

The researchers examined the impact of the pandemic among wellness hotels in Hévíz, in one of the most important Hungarian town from tourism aspect. To get an up-to-date, relevant information database, structured interviews were created. The selection criteria for the sample were the location and the number of rooms (Hotelstars rated hotels with more than 200 rooms). In Hévíz there are ten star-rated and operating hotels with the sum-total of 1498 rooms (www.hah.hu, 2021), 895 of them were involved in the research, so 59,75% of the total room capacity – with the given criteria – was taken into consideration to analyze the trends in the topic KPI.

The interviews were conducted in April 2021 with the General Managers, who are responsible for the hotel performance – only one hotel from the whole sample was not able to take part in the study. The research involved 895 hotel rooms thanks to the GMs of the four hotels in the town. The interviews took place online because of the safety and security reasons caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

To manage a good and useful structured interview it is usually recommended to prepare a sheet with the exact questions, the researcher cannot give any advice or own idea during the interview about how to answer the questions “properly”. This type of the research belongs to the quantitative interviews and the professional who is asking can get gather quantitative data (Majoros, 2011) to analyze further.

The hypothesis of the primary research conclude also the authors' presumption, that beside the financial key performance indicators the non-financial KPIs are becoming more significant in the daily operation of the wellness hotels in Hévíz compared to the before-COVID times after the year 2020.

### **4. Findings and analysis**

The interviews also concluded general questions like question about the non-operational time of the hotels, the source of motivation of the GMs in this hard financial times, as well as hotel-specific, open questions as well.

**Table 1:** The main information in connection with the examined hotels in Hévíz

	<b>Operating/ Non-operating hotel at the current time</b>	<b>Planned opening time</b>	<b>Experience time of the interviewed GMs in the actual position</b>
<b><i>“A” Wellness Hotel</i></b>	Non-operating since the 16th of November	As soon as possible	5 years
<b><i>“B” Wellness Hotel</i></b>	Operating with reduced services for business guests	As soon as possible	2 years
<b><i>“C” Wellness Hotel</i></b>	Non-operating since the 13rd of November	As soon as possible	8 years
<b><i>“D” Wellness Hotel</i></b>	Non-operating since the 13rd of November	June 2021	8 years

Source: self-constructed table by the researchers (actual data in April 2021)

One hotel leader decided to launch a non-operative period since the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2020, two hotels were closed since the 13<sup>rd</sup> of November 2020. One hotel was operating since the November of 2020 with reduced services, it means, that according to the Hungarian regulations in the time of the interviews they could only offer hotel rooms and F&B services with strict regulations only for business guests – without any wellness service elements. All of the hotels were planning to open as soon as possible and one of them can open only in June because of the on-going renovation and renewing procedures. During that period the most important task was to ensure security for the non-operating hotel.

The motivation factors for the management in the COVID-period were the same in all of the hotels, to keep the employees in a competent community, because more and more people are leaving the hotel sector due to the pandemic, the lower salary than the average salaries in Hungary and the lack of the secured future. One of the GMs mentioned, that one of the most important motivation factor is to minimize the deficit of the owners during the period, which one is not generating an income. On the other side, the employees are also very important stakeholders, they should not have a big loss due to the pandemic otherwise they will surely leave the given hotel. If the hotel is able for renewing and creating new services constantly, they will have a bigger chance for surviving. The managers also had a hard time to find their motivation and to lead the entire team as a high-motivated person during the crisis time. But it is not a question – the GMs have to be positive, optimistic and at the same time realistic leaders of the hotels in these times. One of the interviewed persons mentioned the increasing number of the vaccinated people in the country and in Europe and also the “summer is coming” was a positive aspects during the interviews.

The negative impact of the COVID-19 was more and more serious in Hungary, especially in Hévíz as well at the end of February 2020 and at the beginning of March 2020. Less and less reservations were coming by international guests and later by domestic guests as well, there were more and more restrictions introduced by the government to protect the inhabitants from the contamination and the illness. All of the GMs said, that the period before COVID-19, so the whole year of 2019 and the beginning of 2020 was an outstanding period in the operation of the hotels – they could generate more reservations than ever before, reach higher and higher

financial results. One of the interviewed GMs has an opinion, that the hotels in Hévíz could only reach this “good” level in the year of 2022. According to the answers of two GMs not only the operational team, but also the owners highly appreciated the financial results of the hotels before the COVID-times. Since March 2020 it is really hard to survive, because the incomes from the good summer period is not enough to finance a hotel for a whole year.

From the main aspect of this research it is very important, what were/are the KPIs in the life of a hotel. For one hotel it is a success factor, if they can keep the quality of the services at least at the same level and as an end-result they can keep the guest satisfaction indicator also at an enhanced level. Due to the negative impact of COVID-19, during the non-operational period of the hotels the whole daily routine of the employees were changed. One hotel was open for business guests and were able to prepare food for delivering, but the other hotels were completely closed for the guests. It was also an interesting and useful answer from the GM’s side, that they can make a decision themselves and without any restrictions. The main KPI is really the employee’s team – it means, that here are not only separated employees working for the hotel owner and the guests, they are working from day to day as a competent team member. Two hotel leaders mentioned that they could get financial support from the so-called “Kisfaludy Szálláshelyfejlesztési Konstrukció” (<https://kisfaludyprogram.hu/>, 2021) – which hospitality tender is dedicated to improve the quality of the Hungarian hotels – according to the Hotelstars Union - as well.

The main goal of this research is to clarify, if the non-financial KPIs gained a more important role in the operation of the leading players in the biggest wellness hotels of Hévíz.

The examined KPIs are the following:

1. ADR, the average daily rate,
2. RevPAR, the revenue per available rooms,
3. occupancy rate,
4. average length of guests’ stay,
5. improvement projects and innovation,
6. financial indicator like liquidity,
7. quality of products and services offered by the given wellness hotel,
8. employee’s satisfaction and loyalty,
9. online guest reviews,
10. guest satisfaction in the overall meaning.

It was a direct question during the interview, which KPIs were the most important before the COVID-times and which ones will be (five KPIs) after this global recession. After analyzing the answers, it was only one common indicator mentioned by all of the asked GMs: the quality of the products and services in the hotel, however this indicator was chosen only by two GMs as one of the leading KPIs after the COVID-times.

The financial indicators are not significantly losing from their significance, but it is also a tendency, that the overall guest satisfaction rate and the online guest reviews will be more important.

The ten indicators are evaluated by the GMs with using the 1-7 points Likert-scale, in this case the General Managers are the so-called professionals who can deal with a scale including 7 points consequently. This part of the interviews gave the most sophisticated results for the researchers.

According to the experimental questions the means of the evaluated points before COVID-19 and during/after COVID-19 could be measured and these are the followings (Table 2):

**Table 2**

The importance (1-7 Likert-scale) of the KPIs before and during/after the COVID-19 times

Key Performance Indicator	Means – before COVID	Means – during/after COVID
1. ADR	5.5	6.25
2. RevPAR	5.5	6.5
3. Occupancy rate	6.25	4.75
4. Average length of guests' stay	5.25	4.25
5. Improvement projects and innovation	5.25	6.5
6. Liquidity	6.25	<b>7.0</b>
7. Quality (products, services)	<b>6.5</b>	6.75
8. Employment satisfaction & loyalty	5.5	<b>7.0</b>
9. Online guest reviews	6	5.75
10. Guest satisfaction (overall)	<b>6.5</b>	6.5

Source: self-constructed table by the researchers

The results are without doubt really interesting: the financial KPIs like the ADR and the RevPAR are not losing from their relevance, they will be according to the professionals' opinion more significant (means from scores 5.5 to 6.25 and 6.5). The highest scores are voted to the quality of products and services and the overall guest satisfaction before the pandemic area. In the near future the financial KPI like liquidity and the non-financial KPI like employment satisfaction and loyalty will be the most important with the highest scores (7.0) – this was the suggestion of the researchers as well.

**Table 3**

The score differences of the financial and non-financial KPIs before and during/after the COVID-19 times

Key Performance Indicator	The difference of the relevance between the two periods
1. ADR	+0.75
2. RevPAR	+1.0
3. Occupancy rate	<b>-1.5</b>
4. Average length of guests' stay	-1.0
5. Improvement projects and innovation	+1.25
6. Liquidity	+0.75
7. Quality (products, services)	+0.25

8. Employment satisfaction & loyalty	+1.5
9. Online guest reviews	-0.25
10. Guest satisfaction (overall)	same

Source: self-constructed table by the researchers

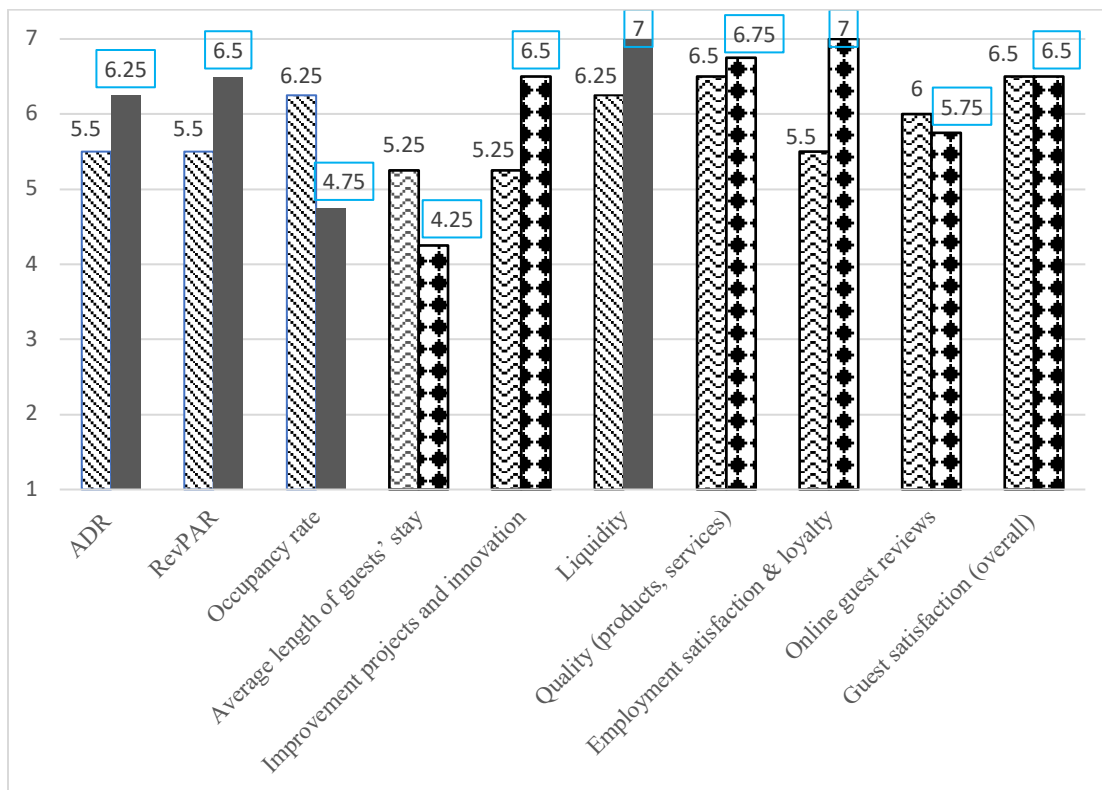
The Table 3 shows the differences between the scores of the two periods and from this data sheet the researchers can also make consequences: due to the recession the importance of the occupancy rate was shrinking in the most dramatic measure (-1.5 points) and the employment satisfaction and loyalty is growing up with the highest score (+1.5 points).

Except for three KPIs – namely the occupancy rate, the average length of guests’ stay and the online guest reviews – are all of the indicators gaining a higher significance level. Only the overall guest satisfaction indicator is the same relevance in the two different periods.

The KPIs ADR, RevPAR, occupancy rate and liquidity are categorized by the authors to the group of the financial KPIs; the average length of guests’ stay, the improvement projects, quality, employment satisfaction, online guest reviews and the overall guest satisfaction are belonging to the group of the non-financial KPIs.

**Figure 2**

The means of the financial and non-financial KPIs before and during/after the COVID-19 times



Source: self-constructed figure by the researchers based on the results of the structured interviews

(the financial and the non-financial KPIs are marked with different styles in the two periods)

In case of the financial KPIs the average moving score is 1.00 (ADR, RevPAR, liquidity in the positive way; occupancy rate in a negative way are moving). If the authors are taking into consideration the non-financial KPIs like the average length of guests' stay, improvement projects, quality, employment satisfaction, online guest reviews and the overall guest satisfaction, they can state as a conclusion, that except for the online guest reviews (only a less difference is the score minus 0.25) and the average length of guests' stay (score by minus 1.00) all of the KPIs has got the same or higher scores, the average difference is 0.71.

## **5. Discussion**

To summarize the key findings of the research, the authors of the paper can state that the theme KPIs of the hotel sector in this times is really useful and also the results of the interviews made in Hévíz (Hungary) can be useful for the General Managers and the owners of the hotels as well. Probably not only in the examined settlement and not only in the wellness segment, but also in a more general aspect.

It is also a big question for the hotel operators, how to manage the unusual challenges in COVID-times, because there are relevant differences in the daily routines as well. Also the operational protocol had to be changed in all of the hotels according to the strict regulations of the Hungarian authorities. One of the other main questions is, how to motivate the employees to work hard and to also ensure the high-quality services.

Nowadays it is more and more important to reach and keep the loyalty of the employees at a higher level, because if they are satisfied with their job, they are not constantly searching for another new job (Rahimpour et. al, 2020).

In this research the biggest and the operating wellness hotels were examined in Hévíz, but it is also a future question, how the market will be changing from the supply side as well. Two big hotels – operating by a big hotel chain – are under construction in the settlement and they will be renewed, and also a new project to build an exclusive hotel with approximately 300 rooms has already started. The town will need more and more tourists, new destinations have to be reached to get more and more tourists.

In Hévíz it is an interesting tendency that all of the big hotels can offer different packages, services for the guests and all of them are differentiated from each other, but they are competitors at the same time.

In all of the examined wellness hotels it is a common feature, that there is a correlation between the staff – as a key resource – and the quality of the products and services offered by a hotel. In the book of Williams and Buswell with the title called “Service quality in leisure and tourism” it is also detailed that the employees can enhance the quality of the services in a direct and an indirect way. The internal marketing, the problem-solving and understanding through empowerment and also the development of the staff – for example with trainings – can also provide a higher quality and contribute to the guest satisfaction (Williams, Buswell; 2003).

During the re-opening times there will be several new aspects which become very important: for example the strict cleaning procedures of the guests' rooms, public and wellness areas; the touchless services; check-in only as an owner of digital or vaccination cards; providing safety and of course high level security (Sigala, 2020).



## 6. Conclusions

As a main conclusion it has to be enhanced that this kind of study is the first COVID-study, which was searching for the relevance and importance of the KPIs concerning wellness hotels.

As it is explained in the literature review part of the article, creating the optimal set of the KPIs is very important and not only few indicators have to be measured but also others as well. The hypothesis of the authors is accepted because the quantitative data also shows that the non-financial indicators (employment satisfaction and loyalty, improvement projects and overall quality) will be more important than before the COVID-19 time.

It is recommended to continue the research with the involvement of more hotels in the settlement or region, to examine all hotels in Hungary or at least all hotels belonging to the same category.

According to the research the GMs has to concentrate beside the very important financial KPIs like ADR and RevPAR also on the employees' satisfaction and the loyalty. It will be the main question of the future, how to keep and recruit the appropriate person to the best position, at the best time period. According to the opinion of the GMs in Hévíz there are more and more people leaving the hotel sector. Not only the higher salaries, but also the security of the work place is relevant. The people, who are working in new positions outside the hospitality sector usually do not have to work on weekends and on holidays, which is a big disadvantage of the hotel sector.

The paper has some limitations, because of the small sample involved in the research, so the number of the structured interviews could be enhanced. As a future research the authors plan to involve more Hotelstars rated hotels or more types of accommodations. It can also mean a wider aspect of examination to involve not only wellness but also medical and business hotels, or hotels from the whole region or the whole country.

It is the biggest challenge for the HR departments of the hotels to keep and motivate the employees now, in this hard financial situation. A well-reconstructed and creative strategy can help a lot in these cases. However the artificial intelligence based technologies will be more and more commonly used in the hotel sector, the quality of the employee services are still connected with the overall quality tendencies and the guest satisfaction as well (Prencitice et. al, 2020), the importance of employees' satisfaction and loyalty are without doubt one of the most important KPIs of the – wellness – hotels as well.

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# **Covid19 consequences on tourism in North Macedonia –a destination perspective for domestic tourism**

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## **Abstract**

*Like many destinations, North Macedonia registered drastic decline in international tourist arrivals after the outbreak of the Covid19 pandemic for which there has been an increase in tourist visits to places and areas that had low performance in tourism activity in the previous period. In this context, the purpose of the paper is to present the perspectives of domestic tourism. The research design aims to present findings related to the perspectives of domestic tourism in North Macedonia. It is upon the assessment of current situation of the characteristics and relations relevant for tourism development during and after Covid19. It is based on incorporation of quantitative and qualitative information obtained through primary and secondary sources. The research findings show that an increased promotion of outdoor activities contribute to increased visits in places that in the past period were not so much visited. Such increased interest will contribute to the enrichment of the tourist offer of the regions. The findings show that domestic tourism helps to alleviate to some extent the negative consequences of the Covid19 pandemic even in such "impossible" situations. The research revealed possibilities for development of enriched tourist offer that may contribute to diversification of supply and dispersion of visitor flows to regions that are not sufficiently promoted for domestic tourists.*

**Keywords:** Covid19; North Macedonia, Destination Perspective; Domestic Tourism

## **1.Introduction**

The development of tourism is constantly accompanied by challenges, limitations, and threats regardless of their nature. This is a challenging time to talk about tourism, more than ever because we are faced with the challenge how to restart tourism, and again to learn how to strive. And it is really difficult to advance any conclusions because in these times we understood that it is very difficult to predict how tourism will continue in the future. Around the world, in countries at all development levels, many jobs and businesses are dependent on a strong and thriving tourism sector. Tourism has also been a driving force in protecting natural and cultural heritage. The global health crisis caused by Covid-19 has dramatically affected the tourism sector to the extent that, in most countries, tourism and leisure activities have come completely to a halt, and it is clear that the tourism has a strong characteristic to survive and to adjust.

As a result of the rapid spread of the coronavirus since the very beginning of 2020 and the proclamation of the Covid19 pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020, travelling domestically or internationally was restricted. We are witnessing a drastic decline in international tourist travel, which registered a decline of 74% in 2020, i.e. from 1.5 billion in 2019 to 381 million in 2020 (UNWTO, 2021). Airlines across the world reduced or cancelled most of their flights due to bans for travel and international border closures (Darlak et al., 2020). In fact, the pandemic has confirmed the importance of travel and tourism sector for the economy, whether internationally or nationally, as the closure of borders has caused the closure of many businesses related to the sector.

As other sectors of Macedonian economy, tourism is facing with the ongoing economic and social consequences. Similar to many destinations, North Macedonia (N. Macedonia) registered a drastic decline of 84,4% in 2020 in international tourist arrivals after the outbreak of the Covid19 pandemic thus breaking the continuous growth trend of tourism. The current level of development as result of the continued growth within the last decade that has reached its peak in 2019 is endangered, and, more importantly, faced with the strongest challenge ever - how to strive and how to restart. Despite the foreign tourism, domestic tourism registered a smaller decline of 18.3% (State Statistical Office of N. Macedonia, 2021). During the 2020 there has been an increase of domestic tourist arrivals to places and areas that had lower performance in tourism activity in the previous period. This situation indicates that travel habits are a significant motivation for people to discover new destinations despite travel restrictions. It is particularly evidenced in Polog Region and Northeast Region (State Statistical Office of N. Macedonia, 2021) that mostly have modest participation in tourist distribution.

Increased visits by domestic tourists create new opportunities but also challenges for destinations in their development and promotion of tourist resources in this direction. Therefore, the analysis is conducted with aim to have a basis for future research activities, and the research' objective is to present findings related to the current situation and perspectives of domestic tourism in N. Macedonia. After the introductory part, a literature overview about the consequences from Covid 19 on international are analyzed and the state of tourism in N. Macedonia as well. The main characteristics of tourism in N. Macedonia and the implemented methodology are then clarified in the third part. This part of the paper focuses on defining and explaining of the regional and destination distribution of tourist arrivals, their structure and their time distribution using comparative time series analysis, with an emphasis on the changes to which domestic tourism is exposed. The discussion on the analyzed shows findings of the current situation and gives suggestions of priority goals for future actions, which is a scientific contribution of the research.

## **2.Literature review**

Tourism as complex socio-economic activity is characterized by numerous interactions with the various dimensions of external influences that can have a significant impact on traveler mobility. As one of the most important industries for the world economy it is also one of the most vulnerable to crises and disasters. It is affected by political instability, terrorist attacks, war operations or natural disasters. Different studies (Dreyer, Dreyer, & Obiego, 2010; Nestoroska, 2006; Ritchie,2009; Ritchie et all.,2013) are dealing with the impact on tourism of such crises and

disasters. Others investigate the types of diseases and epidemics and effects on travel activities and choices of tourist destinations (Lück, 2004).

So far, the consequences of the diseases are reflected in certain tourist regions of the world, most often with stagnation or a slight decline in international tourism in those regions because of the decline of the same in specific countries or sub regions. We can recall the SARS epidemic in 2003 (although the period of the epidemic was from November 2002 to May 2004) in which 29 countries were affected, including China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Canada, and Singapore. SARS epidemic in 2003 had very hard economic consequence in Asian countries with sharp drop in tourism GDP in China, Vietnam, Hong Kong, and Singapore between 25- 40% (Ritchie, 2009). The swine flu pandemic in 2009 (about 500 million confirmed cases (15,000 deaths) and with the most affected countries USA, China, Brazil, Spain and Portugal (over 50,000 confirmed cases in each of the countries). Namely, in 2009, as a consequence of the world economic crisis and the swine flu, a decline 4.2% was registered in international tourist arrivals (880 billion tourists), and decline of 5.7% (852 billion USD) in revenues (World Tourism Barometer,2009), but with fast recovery already in 2010 and an increase of 4.6% in the number of tourists (940 billion) and 3.9% in revenues (927 billion USD).

According to UNWTO (2021), 2020 is the worst year in tourism history with 1 billion fewer international arrivals than in the previous year. Published data for tourism immediately after Covid 19 for the first quarter of 2020 were overwhelming (World Tourism Barometer,2020) showing the worst result in the development of international tourism so far. After the 10-year period of continuous sustainable growth since the fall in 2009 because of the economic crisis and Swine flu there was a sharp drop. The immediate impact of Covid 19 pandemic outbreak on international tourism was manifested with (1) Travel restrictions, (2) Drastic decline of international tourism, (3) Risk for job loss, (4) Taking measures to adapt to the new situation and (5) Scenario and assumptions. (1) according to the UNWTO report from April 20, 2020, all countries as tourist destinations introduced travel restrictions in response to the pandemic; 97 countries (45%) completely or partially closed their borders to tourists; 65 countries (30%) canceled international flights in whole or in part; 39 countries (18%) applied border closure differently by banning entry based on country of origin (e.g. Americans in Canada and Mexico, all who do not have an EU passport or residence permit in EU countries, from high-risk countries in America, to travelers from China to America and EU countries). (2) UNWTO (2020) data showed decline of 22% in international tourist travel arrivals in the first quarter of 2020 with a decrease of 67 million tourists in the first quarter of 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. Regionally, Asia and the Pacific is the first region to suffer the most from Covid 19 with a decline of 35%, followed by Europe - 19%, Americas -15%, Africa - 12% and the Middle East – 11%. (3) Around 120 million direct employments in tourism worldwide and 50 million in Europe were in risk of loss. In EU countries where tourism is the main revenue generator in the economy, there were predictions of reduce by 50% in hotel and restaurant facilities, 70% for tour operators and travel agencies and 90% for cruises and airlines. (4) On May 13, 2020, the European Commission published Covid-19: EU Guidelines for Adjusting the Return of Tourism Services and Health Protocols in Catering Facilities, which defines the principles for safe and gradual return of tourism activities, by ensuring an efficient health care system for tourist services, coordination mechanisms for security between the authorities and hospitality establishments (European Commission,2020). Epidemiological situation, health and safety of guests and workers as priority,

appropriate actions in case of infection, prevention and control measure were the main considered aspects. (5) Based on developments and parameters in international tourism, the UNWTO envisaged three scenarios for international tourism in 2020 that reflected three possible patterns of arrivals by December 2020, assuming that travel restrictions will be lifted and that national borders for foreign tourists will be open: 1) at the beginning of July (Scenario 1), -58%, 2) in early September (Scenario 2) - 70% or 3) at the beginning of December (Scenario 3) - 78%. They were based on the available tourism data for the first quarter of 2020 and other information as the closure of all national borders which according to initial announcements was to be ended in April, but it was on June 15, 2020 for internal borders and July 1, 2020, for external borders (European Commission, 2020). The three scenarios reflected three types of gradual normalization pace but with pronounced different degrees of decline in tourist arrivals. These scenarios predicted a decline in arrivals as of December 2020 from 850 million to 1.1 billion, i.e. a decline in the volume of international tourism between 610 (as the end of the 90s) to 320 million tourist arrivals (mid-80s). Current data in international tourism show that scenarios 2 and 3 were closest to what happened in 2020 (CCSA, 2021). International tourist arrivals had 74% decline with a fall from almost 1,5 billion in 2019 to around 380 million in 2020, with an estimated loss of 1,3 billion in international tourism expenditure.

Similar to other countries around the world, the Covid 19 pandemic has had a negative impact on the tourism sector in N. Macedonia. The situation with tourism has followed the worldwide trend with a decline of around 85% in 2020 in international tourist arrivals compared to 2019 (State Statistical Office of N. Macedonia, 2021). The World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations were followed by the Government, Ministry of health, Commission for infection diseases, as a result of which measures were taken to adapt to the new situation related to travel bans, preservation of health and safety of citizens which caused the interruption of the operation of tourism businesses.

In response to the new situation certain measures were taken for financial support to the most affected sectors to overcome the difficult situation, including the tourism and hospitality sector. In this regard, the measures related to the support of this sector have provided a payment of 7.5 million euros of state aid by the end of 2020 (Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Macedonia, 2020) to businesses. These measures are part of the set of 106 Economic measures for dealing with the crisis from the Covid 19 pandemic (Government of N. Macedonia, 2020). They encompass ten areas and refer to subsidizing 50% of the contributions for the employees in companies from the sectors of tourism, transport and hospitality affected by the corona virus, support for payment of salaries, support of salaries for tourist guides, refund of the tourist tax for 2019, grants for travel agencies from 3,000 to 7,000 euros, reduction of the VAT rate for restaurant services and serving food and beverages, as well as vouchers for domestic tourism.

Research about the effects of Covid 19 on tourism in Macedonia is limited, and it should be noted that there are almost no studies that explore this issue. In addition, there is the study research within the project "Inequality during Corona - effects from the Covid -19 pandemic on the macedonian economy (Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2020) which lists travel agencies, tour operators (tour operators), and other reservation services as well as related activities, and accommodation facilities. The second study addresses the effects on the tourism and hospitality sector of the health and economic crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, with recommendations for dealing with the economic consequences (USAID I Epicenter, 2020). In the

third topic Corona Dialogues by UKLO: The Impact of the New Pandemic Challenges on Tourism and Hospitality (UKLO, 2020) the focus was on the consequences of the pandemic and the impact of economic activities, especially in the tourism and hospitality sectors. There is a lack of a larger number of published studies, for which the preparation of this paper is a real challenge to give an overview of the consequences of Covid 19 on tourism in N. Macedonia.

### 3. Research methodology

The research is based on the analysis of tourist flows in order to determine the participation of domestic tourists in the total volume tourist arrivals. The analysis is upon the assessment of current situation of the characteristics and relations relevant for tourism development during and after Covid19. It incorporates quantitative and qualitative information obtained through primary and secondary sources. The spatial analysis enabled to determine the tendencies of the tourist flows, with special reference to the domestic ones. Therefore the research is applied to the rural and mountainous areas of the country with implementation of the regional analysis of the factors, attractors and support services for tourism of the existing eight planning regions. In this context, the method of comparative analysis is applied in order to deliver conclusions based on the assessment of the level of tourist visits of each region individually. Also, an analysis of the regional distribution of the tourist flows was conducted, which enabled certain tendencies in the domestic tourist demand to be determined.

After ten years of continued growth continued growth N. Macedonia registered a drastic decline in international tourist arrivals (Table 1.) due to outbreak of the Covid19 pandemic, which were followed by the nights spent. The decline in foreign arrivals and overnight stay in 2020 disrupted the ten-year continuous tendency of growth of tourist turnover with an average annual growth rate of 14%. A lower rate of decline is observed in the domestic tourist turnover.

Table 4 : Volume of tourist turnover in Macedonia, 2010-2020

	Tourists		Nights spent	
	Domestic	Foreign	Domestic	Foreign
2010	324 545	261 696	1 461 185	559 032
2011	320 097	327 471	1 417 868	755 166
2012	312 274	351 359	1 339 946	811 746
2013	302 114	399 680	1 275 800	881 375
2014	310 336	425 314	1 273 370	922 513
2015	330 537	485 530	1 357 822	1 036 383
2016	346 359	510 484	1 407 143	1 054 017
2017	368 247	630 594	1 480 460	1 294 692
2018	419 590	707 345	1 685 273	1 491 535
2019	427 370	757 593	1 684 627	1 577 771
2020	349 308	118 206	1 444 605	252 930

Source: [www.stat.gov.mk](http://www.stat.gov.mk)

During the 2020 there has been an increase of domestic tourist arrivals to places and areas that had lower performance in tourism activity in the previous period. Therefore we conducted analysis of the regional contribution on order to identify the changes within the eight regions of



the country (Figure 1). Within the regions, Southwest and Skopje are leading ones, with Ohrid, Skopje, Struga and Prespa as most developed destinations. These two regions along with Southeast and Pelagonija were most visited by foreign tourists. The situation is similar with distribution of domestic tourist flows (Figure 2).

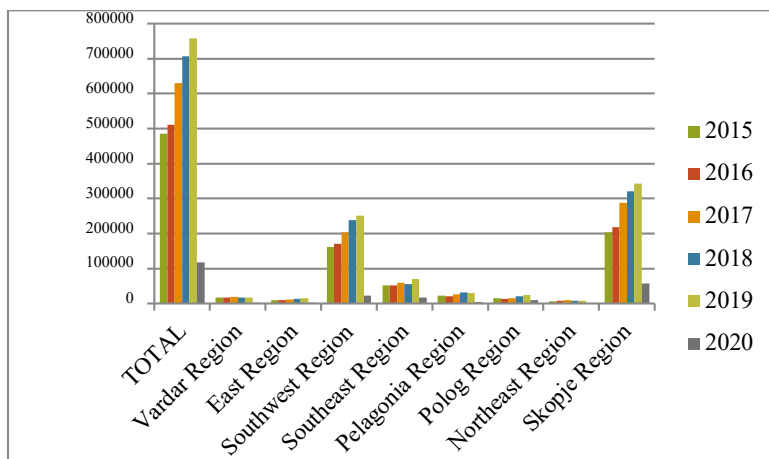


Figure 8 : Regional foreign tourist arrivals in N. Macedonia  
Source: www.stat.gov.mk

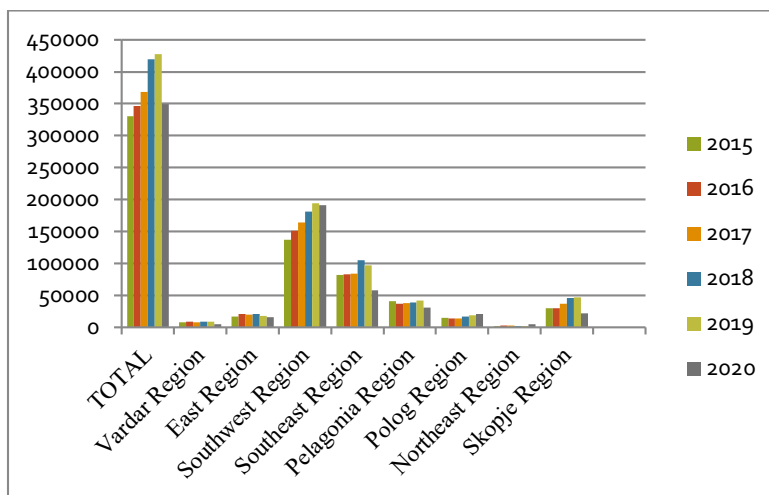


Figure 9 : Regional domestic tourist arrivals in N. Macedonia  
Source: www.stat.gov.mk

But 2020 showed that beside the decline of tourist flows, within Polog and Northeast Region (State Statistical Office of N. Macedonia, 2021) which as regions mostly have modest participation in tourist distribution, there is slight increase in domestic tourism. Further analysis from the aspect of distribution by types of tourist destinations showed that the decline in 2020 compared to 2019 is very striking, harder for foreign than domestic, with hard implications in the capital city and lake resorts in foreign tourists (Figure 3), and capital city for domestic. Considering the restrictions and the interruption of several activities due to which the stay in the

capital was recorded in the previous period (conferences, meetings, cultural events, tourism, etc.) such a decrease in the volume of attendance in Skopje was evidenced.

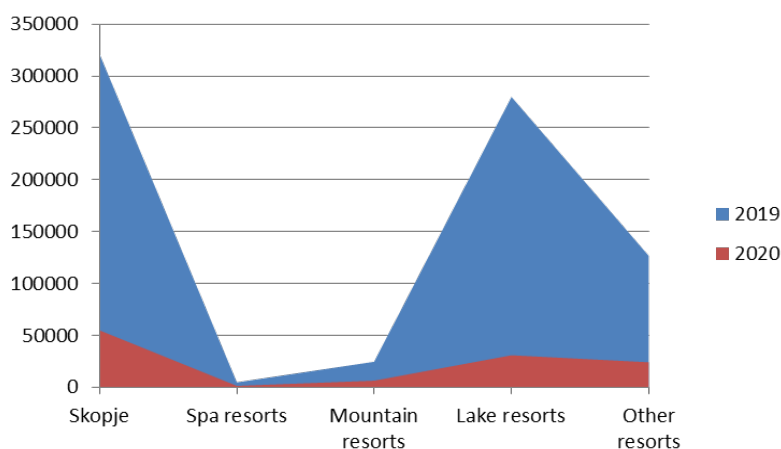


Figure 10 : Distribution of foreign tourist arrivals by types of tourist places (comparison 2020 with 2019)

Source: [www.stat.gov.mk](http://www.stat.gov.mk)

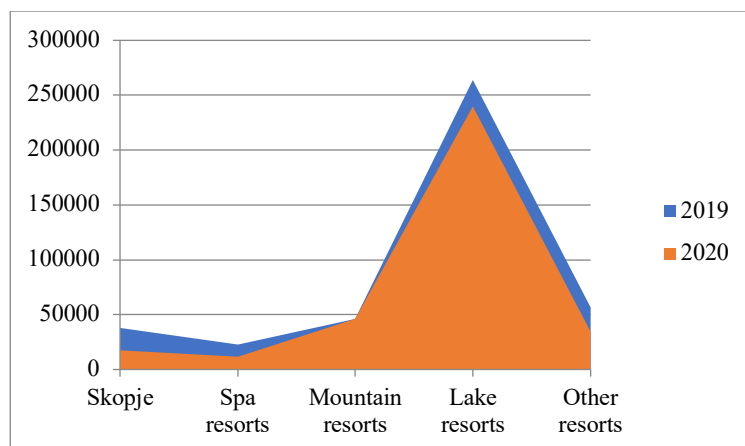


Figure 11 : Distribution of domestic tourist arrivals by types of tourist places (comparison 2020 with 2019)

Source: [www.stat.gov.mk](http://www.stat.gov.mk)

As for the domestic tourists (Figure 4), we did comparative analysis for the period June-October 2019 and same period 2020. We took this period because within these months there is a highest volume of tourist arrivals (and consequently nights spent), and for current Covid19 period in 2020 because of the relaxation of measures regarding travelling and gathering of people, working of tourism and hospitality capacities, and issuing of vouchers for domestic tourism. We found that despite Ohrid and Struga as the most developed destinations in Ohrid lake area, who are always the best performers in tourism in 2020 as well, resorts in rural and mountain areas (Berovo, Krushevo, Mavrovo and Tetovo) have registered increase on tourist arrivals (Figure 5). Given that these destinations have already been oriented towards a development of adventure and culture

tourism as result of the latest adopted destination tourism strategies this situation has created increased tourism opportunities for these places and areas because of increased attendance. And also, they had increased promotion by the Agency for promotion and support of tourism, their web sites, as well as social networks particularly within this period.

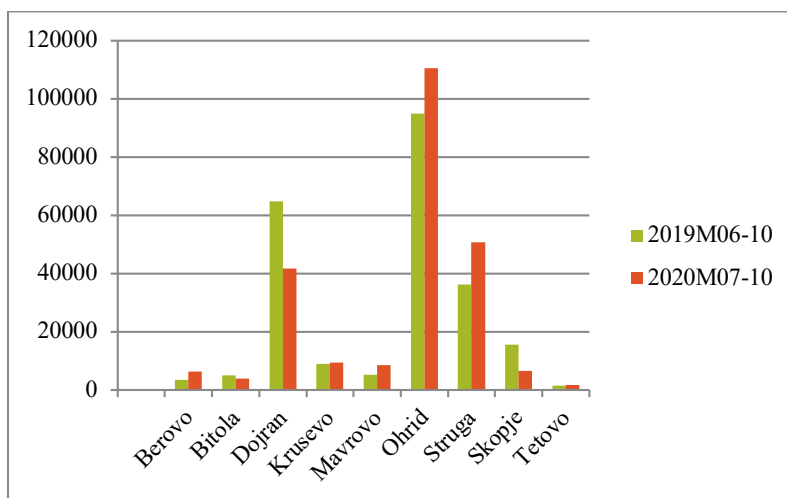


Figure 12 : Distribution of domestic tourist arrivals in selected tourist destinations (comparative analysis of flows within the periods 06-10.2019 and 06-10.2020)

Source: [www.stat.gov.mk](http://www.stat.gov.mk)

This situation indicates that travel habits are a significant motivation for people to discover new destinations despite travel restrictions. But their quest is directed to domestic destinations. On the other hand, after the first months of the pandemic outbreak, people began to adapt to the “new” situation, and continued where they stopped last year, but within the domestic travels. It is particularly evidenced in Polog and Northeast Region (State Statistical Office of N. Macedonia, 2021) that mostly had modest participation in tourist distribution and evidenced slight increase in rural and mountainous destinations within the range 3,5 to 6 % as Galichnik, Mavrovo, Shara, Tetovo, Gostivar, Berovo and Pehchevo (Agency for promotion and support of tourism, 2021). Apart from the promotion of destinations by their own, very intensive activities were undertaken by the Agency for support and promotion of tourism in Macedonia (APPT,2021). During April 2020 a Campaign for promotion of domestic tourism "Home is home "(Дома си е дома) has started. The focus was on increasing the domestic tourism, i.e. increasing the number of domestic tourists and overnight stays. Besides the domestic tourists, foreign citizens living /working in N. Macedonia, potential tourists from the region and abroad in accordance with the existing travel restrictions, they were all target in the promotional campaign. It included videos of 10 destinations from all regions, which additionally cover 3-5 locations per destination. The promotion is presented through specific activities and products from active tourism (hiking, cycling, sport climbing, paragliding, etc.), in combination with cultural experiences, mainly within the rural areas and gastronomy. The promotion of destinations has produced positive results due to which there was an increase in domestic tourism. After the positive experience of the campaign, in 2021 a campaign “Safe like home” is launched, but for foreign tourist. It targets six

countries across the region to raise awareness of safe travel and the tourism potential of Macedonia. The countries are Serbia, Albania, Kosovo, Bulgaria, Poland, and Turkey, and they are chosen because these are traditional tourist markets for N. Macedonia. "Safe like home" is the slogan that communicates the successful implementation of the protocols for security and prevention of the Corona virus and knowing that the biggest motivation in 2021 for travel will be the safety of the destination, by introducing the Safe Travels Stamp developed by WTTC for respecting all protocols, N. Macedonia joins the company of safe destinations for summer 2021. The promotion was created for travelers to recognize destinations and businesses around the world which have adopted the Safe Travels health and hygiene global standardized protocols.

#### **4. Findings and Analysis**

The findings of the research show that tourism in N. Macedonia in the period of Covid 19 pandemic crisis faced large losses in the volume of tourism. This negative effect of Covid 19 caused a stagnation of this sector and very few opportunities for tourist travel as a result of the introduced travel restrictions. However, opportunities were created to overcome this situation as a result of the activities undertaken primarily by the Ministry of Economy - Tourism Department and the Agency for Promotion and Support of Tourism of N. Macedonia. This resulted in a much smaller decline in domestic tourism, as travel was allowed (albeit with restrictions) only nationally. In fact, in this way, domestic tourism was encouraged as a result of the government's measure to finance lower-income families through vouchers for domestic tourism.

The research findings also showed that an increased promotion of outdoor activities with recreational, cultural and adventure contents contributed to increased visits in rural and mountainous places that in the past period were not so much visited. Such increased interest in visiting of less developed or yet undiscovered destinations whose attractiveness and potentials have yet to be promoted for leisure and recreation will contribute to the enrichment of the tourist offer of the country's regions, as are Polog and Northeast Regions.

#### **5. Discussion**

The results of this study show that they are a good basis for other research related to Macedonia's opportunities for domestic tourism development during and after the Covid 19 pandemic. Research has shown that despite travel restrictions during the Covid 19 pandemic, tourism opportunities have not been completely eliminated. In fact, this period has triggered people to turn themselves more to their natural and cultural heritage, which sometimes due to the desire to meet and experience new areas and cultures outside their country may be a little forgotten, neglected. On the other hand, the research showed that the domestic market is more resilient to external influences and changes and easier to adapt to them. Also the analysis showed that the measures of the competent institutions are very important, as in the case of the Agency for Support and Promotion of Tourism of N. Macedonia and the tourism sector at the Ministry of Economy, which in an appropriate manner and with appropriate instruments contributed to mitigation of negative consequences of the pandemic during this period. We also want to emphasize that the lack of other research on the effects of Covid 19 on tourism in N. Macedonia was a limiting factor, for which we didn't have the opportunity to compare our results with

others. We believe that our research will encourage other research which will contribute to enrich the knowledge on this issue.

## 6. Conclusions

The research analysis shows that domestic tourism helps to alleviate to some extent the negative consequences of the Covid19 pandemic even in such "impossible" situations. Furthermore, the research revealed possibilities for development of enriched tourist offer that may contribute to diversification of supply and dispersion of visitor flows to regions that are not sufficiently promoted for domestic tourists. Diversified tourism offer lead to enhancing tourists experience at destination (e.g., cultural tourism). Thus, tourists are inspired to re-discover their local culture and to gain new experiences that as part of the domestic tourist offer enable them to re-connect with the values of local communities. Increased visits by domestic tourists create new opportunities for destinations in their development and promotion of tourist resources. To continue where we were back in 2019 we shouldn't focus on rethinking the well known destinations but to explore and strengthen others, less known, undiscovered. Tourism should be developed towards new quality of the experience that contributes to sustainable development, to create more attractive, efficient and inclusive tourism offer with a view to tackling challenges such as seasonality and overcrowding and developing sustainable destinations.

The obtained results represent a solid basis for future research related to the development of domestic tourism in N. Macedonia. It has also been proven that domestic tourism plays an important role in promoting rural and mountainous places that are not attractive enough for foreign tourists, but are attractive to domestic tourists because the advantage for developing tourist offer for domestic tourists as niche market is their relation with the local natural and cultural heritage. This will enable diversification of domestic tourist flows to places that are insufficiently valorized for tourism.

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# The potential of African religious pilgrimage as a tool for tourism development in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this chapter is to explore the contribution of African pilgrimages towards tourism development at various pilgrimage destinations within four district municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The religious sector is one of the sectors of tourism, and it is important to establish whether the pilgrimage tourism would be considered as a socio-economic enhancer or contributor to the country's economy. A mixed method design was adopted for this study. A total of 210 questionnaires were collected and Qualitative interviews were conducted from 40 respondents using an audio recorder. Respondents were selected using a convenience sampling method which is a non-probability sampling technique. SPSS version 26.0 software and content analysis were used to analyse quantitative and qualitative data respectively. Meanings in the open-ended responses were filtered to establish the respondents' in-depth understanding and/or their own interpretation of the subject under enquiry. The findings indicated that the potential of pilgrimage tourism in enhancing socio-economic development within the study area has not been realized. It is recommended that the government in South Africa needs to provide support and empower local communities to start tourism-related businesses as a way of stimulating tourism development at the pilgrimage destinations.*

**Keywords:** Religious Pilgrimages, Pilgrimage Destinations, Tourism Development, Pilgrimage Tourism, Pilgrims

## 1. Introduction

In the last decades, traditional pilgrimage destinations have become tourist attractions with a multifunctional nature that welcomed visitors that are moved by their religious beliefs and those interested in destination's historical heritage or architectural, cultural, or artistic value (Geary 2018; Ramírez & Fernández 2018; Musa *et al.* 2017; Hughes *et al.* 2013; Fernandes *et al.* 2012; Hyde & Harman 2011; Shinde 2007; Kaufman, 2005). Religious pilgrimages and tourism are closely related to each other however, the relationship between pilgrims and tourists in a religious context is often ignored and neglected. In the case of religious pilgrimage pilgrims have the desire to experience some kind of spiritual change and belief, which can be fulfilled by visiting that pilgrimage destinations while tourist seek to experiences that satisfy tourism touristic needs and desires. African religious pilgrimages are one of the forms of religious tourism and pilgrimage

destinations are visited yearly by the pilgrims and tourists from all over the world. This being the case, African religious pilgrimages have a potential to alleviate poverty, improve the image of pilgrimage destinations, strengthen the socio-economies and empower the local communities. Unfortunately, studies indicate that African religious pilgrimages are not given the recognition that they deserve and are not seen as having a potential for the betterment of the country's economy as it happens in other countries (Patel & Fellow, 2010). On the same vein African religious pilgrimages in KwaZulu-Natal are also currently not perceived as a sector that has a potential of contributing to the country's economy. The purpose of this chapter is to present the extent to which African religious pilgrimages can contribute to tourism development at various pilgrimage destinations within four district municipalities namely eThekweni Metro, iLembe, King Cetshwayo and Zululand which are located in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. District and local municipalities have a responsibility of including tourism development in their IDPs and creating opportunities for local communities to be aware of tourism opportunities at pilgrimage destinations through packaging of facilities and product development and packaging. These tourism development activities have a potential for contributing into the economic development of the local districts and the GDP of the country.

### *1.2 Objectives of the chapter*

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the contribution of African pilgrimages towards tourism development at various pilgrimage destinations within four district municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. This purpose is narrowed down to the following objectives:

- a) To ascertain the awareness of local people at the pilgrimage destinations of the tourism opportunities of religious pilgrimages within the study area.
- b) To find out if there are any tourism facilities and products that can be packaged for tourists and pilgrims in the study area.
- c) To establish perceptions of respondents towards the potential of pilgrimage destinations in enhancing socio-economic development of the study area.
- d) To find out if the IDPs of the study area include the potential of pilgrimage destinations to tourism development.

#### *a) Tourism opportunities of religious pilgrimage at the religious destinations*

There is an indication that local people within four district municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa are *somewhat* aware of the tourism opportunities that can provide social and cultural benefits to pilgrimage destinations (Lopez, 2020; Suntikul & Dorji, 2016; Patel & Fellow, 2010; Tarlow, 2010). These opportunities can enhance socio-economies, general development and betterment of local communities. Pilgrimage tourism also has a potential to bring opportunities for additional income and increased employment (Raj & Griffin, 2015; Egresi, Kara & Bayram, 2014).

#### *b) Tourism facilities and products that can be packaged for tourists and pilgrims*



There are various tourism products that can be related to pilgrimages such as accommodation and tours (Hung, 2015; Hung, Wang & Tang, 2015; Kresic' *et.al.*, 2013; Linderman, 2013; Trantafillidou *et.al.*, 2010). Pilgrimage destinations are like any other tourist destination, in terms of products with numerous attributes that can satisfy the needs of both religious pilgrims and other holidaymakers (Bond, *et al.*, 2014, Rinschede, 1992). Religious pilgrimages, spiritual sites and pilgrimage destinations are often turned into visitor attractions to bring socio-economic benefits to local communities while creating the necessary financial resources to preserve and restore cultural heritage (Leppakari & Griffin, 2016; Raj & Griffin, 2015). Religious pilgrimages can be promoted which can lead to an increase in the number of tourists and an increase in the demand for various tourism related commodities (Henderson, 2011). There is an indication that tourists become more faithful to the pilgrimage destinations with motivations different to faith, returning to these destinations for a longer period of time (Durán-Sánchez *et al.*, 2018; Robles, 2001). An increase in the number of tourists results in an increase in the income and benefits obtained by the companies dedicated to hospitality services (Martín Martín, Guaita Martinez & Salinas Fernandez, 2018; Ashley, & Haysom, 2006). This fact makes religious pilgrimages a modality of tourism with a notable impact on local economies (Pereiro, 2019; Fernandes *et al.*, 2012; Alecu, 2011). This economic injection has a potential of expanding the supply of tourism infrastructure that is purposefully created by provincial tourism entities (Hampton, Jeyacheya & Long, 2018; Rogerson, 2015).

Pilgrimage destinations should have tourism value chains (TVCs) that can provide products and services to cater for the needs of both the spiritual and religious needs of pilgrims (Bond *et al.*, 2015; Henderson, 2011). The understanding of the TVCs becomes a source of getting products and services for pilgrimage tourism (Panasiuk, 2010, Olsen & Timothy, 2006, Tilson, 2005). Value chain products and services may include accommodation, culinary, souvenirs, infrastructures and many more. One of the aspects of the TVC is religion, hence, the pilgrimage tourism, pilgrims and local communities' needs are associated with product and services that can be brought by TVCs in the pilgrimage destinations (Rejman, Maziarz, Kwiatkowski & Haliniarz, 2016; Kartal, Tepeci & Atli, 2015).

The term "products and services" for pilgrimage tourism can be understood as the complex of ambiances which pilgrims get while taking the decision to go on a pilgrimage destination as well as the complex of spiritual experience from the moment of leaving the place of residence till coming back to pilgrimage destinations (Rejman *et al.*, 2016; Panasiuk, 2010, Olsen & Timothy, 2006, Tilson, 2005). Pilgrimage tourism can be understood in an elongated and broad meaning as the TVCs products and services (Rejman *et al.*, 2016). The provision of products and services in a form of tourism offerings such as accommodation, culinary, transportation, souvenirs and admission to the attractions of pilgrimage tourism. (Rejman *et al.*, 2016; Kartal *et al.*, 2015; Shinde, 2010). The product and services of pilgrimage tourism is interpreted as the territorial product (place), that contains the components of TVCs which are understood as tourist products and services essential for pilgrims, local communities and other stakeholders within the pilgrimage destinations (Gonçalves & Maduro, 2016; Rejman *et al.*, 2016; Panasiuk, 2011; Hall, 2006). Pilgrimage tourism should be influential for TVCs in order for products and services to benefit the socio-economies and local development for the study area (Rejman *et al.*, 2016). Non-existence of TVCs within the pilgrimage destinations study cannot alleviate the standard of living

and this can limit the tourist products and services within the study area (Rejman et al., 2016; Olsen, 2006; Vukonic, 2002).

*c) The potential of religious pilgrimages in enhancing local socio-economic development of pilgrimage destinations*

Tourism development is increasingly under enquiry as a tool for catalysing economic development, welfare improvements and employment opportunities in peripheral regions (Telfer, 2002; Brouder, 2013; Saarinen, 2014). Tourism has the potential to help reduce rural out-migration to urban areas, increase employment opportunities for the urban poor, and give them additional income to provide for their families in the local areas (Lipton, 1980).

Studies attest that religious pilgrimages are the fastest growing industry in various parts of the world (Tarlow, 2010; Patel & Fellow, 2010). According to Tarlow (2010) in USA alone, some 24% of travellers are interested in religious-based tourism and further alludes that worldwide, religious pilgrimages are one of the fastest growing segments of the industry, with an estimated value of US\$1.8 billion (in 2010) and 300 million travellers. These assertions clearly indicate that religious tourism like other sectors of tourism is a big business. In India, religious tourism is regarded as the largest socio-economic sector since 70% of domestic tourists travel for religious purposes and in 2010 alone it generated 20% of the revenue (Patel & Fellow, 2010). The tourism industry of which the religious pilgrimages are part employs the largest work force (Tarlow, 2010). Unfortunately, African religious pilgrimages in KwaZulu-Natal are not perceived as an industry that could contribute to the socio-economies of the province (Brouder, 2013; Telfer, 2002). This perception translates to the lack of awareness of local people at the pilgrimage destinations within KwaZulu Natal of the tourism opportunities of religious pilgrimages.

It is however a reality that the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) pilgrimage destination in KwaZulu-Natal contributes to the country's economy by more than ZAR400 million generated from the various activities held within the study area (Resane, 2020; Anderson, 1999). Pilgrimage destinations could contribute to local socio-economic development if the local municipalities could take the initiative of including the religious pilgrimages in the IDPs of municipalities of KwaZulu Natal where the pilgrimage destinations are located.

According to ParthaSarathy (2006) pilgrimage tourism has its own appeal due to various reasons. Pilgrimage destinations are widely believed as the places of worship that have a special power such as many miracles that are reported and certified by people visiting these places. Some tourists visit the pilgrimage destinations for the thanksgiving masses because of the results of their prayers have been answered and their faith confirmed. Tourist's visit and participation in activities offered at the tourist destination enhance the visibility of the location. Studies such as that of Kartal et al. (2015) indicate that there is a relationship between religious assets that "were built by the central government for multi-purposes such as mosques and socio-economic development that some mosque Akdede (2014). Tourism development might contribute towards the enhancement of local communities by providing greater socio-economic benefits. The goal should be of integrating pilgrimage tourism strongly into local development processes as a whole, including the use of traditional knowledge, socio cultural heritage and production of goods and services. In the absence of integrating planning, the danger exists that local people and communities become the objects rather than the subjects of tourism development. Subsequently tourism is not used as a vehicle for development "but rather as an

end in itself without any active integration towards regional or local development goals' (Saarinen, 2003). Fernández (2010) and Nicolaidis (2008) assert that despite being attracted by faith-oriented activities, tourists also engage in other activities, such as exploring and consuming various products of religious tourism which include purchasing of on-site offerings, such as souvenirs, merchandise, etc. The term "product of religious tourism can be understood as the complex of sensations which a tourist (pilgrim) gets while taking the decision to go on a pilgrimage, during the pilgrimage and after returning, as well as the complex of spiritual experience from the moment of leaving the place of residence till coming back" (Panasiuk, 2010; Olsen & Timothy, 2006; Tilson, 2005). The tourist product or the product of religious tourism can be understood in a narrow and broad meaning. These meanings include the elements as the provision of services in a form (accommodation, catering, transport, admission to the attractions of religious tourism).

*d) The significance of the inclusion in the integrate development plans (IDPs) of tourism development at the pilgrimage destinations.*

This inclusion of religious tourism in these IDPs can make tourists and local communities realize the potential of pilgrimage destinations. The potential further developments of religious tourism, would be advantageous as potential developers of new products and for expanding the cultural socio-economy of rituals and religious performances that suit specific tourism markets (Shinde, 2010). The local community and its leadership have worked tirelessly to ensure that these tourism developmental needs have been recognised and prioritised within the IDP. The local municipalities should be able to promote the pilgrimage sites and draw some IDP that could make the tourists and the locals see the pilgrimage destinations potential. The Municipality might succeed in its efforts to uplift its community and the surroundings. The mission of Municipality is to provide and promote innovative and vibrant cultural and tourism services which address the diverse needs of our people in order to enhance their quality of life.

## **2.Methodology**

A mixed method research design was adopted, which suggests that both quantitative and qualitative modes of research enquiry were used during the collection, analysis and interpretation of data (Taherdoost, 2017). This mixed method research design was seen as a formal, objective and systematic process for generating information about the chapter. The design was also seen as suitable to solicit the required information relating to the "To ascertain the awareness of local people at the pilgrimage destinations of the tourism opportunities of religious pilgrimages within the study area", "tourism facilities and products that are packaged for tourists and pilgrims", "perception of local communities towards the potential of pilgrimages in enhancing socio-economic development", "the IDPs of local municipalities with pilgrimage destinations", and "framework for tourism development of pilgrimage". The chapter chose this methodology to develop accurate, objective and interpretative information. In addition, the design enabled the researcher to examine the causal relationships with the constructs used in the chapter.

A survey, which is a technique of gathering data that assists researchers in selecting a sample of respondents and administering a standardized questionnaire to each person in the sample was used (Ntshangase & Ezeuduj, 2019). A total of 280 survey questionnaires were distributed

to pilgrims, and only 210 were fully completed and went through data analysis. A sample size of 210 respondents was considered large enough to reach the chapter conclusion. Qualitative interviews with 40 respondents were conducted using an audio recorder. The interviews were conducted only with those who were easily accessible and perceived to be knowledgeable about the subject of the research. A convenience sampling method which is a non-probability sampling technique was used to collect data from four district municipalities; eThekweni Metro, iLembe, King Cetshwayo and Zululand). IBM SPSS Statistics version 26.0 software and content analysis were used for quantitative and qualitative data analysis respectively. Questionnaire variable included pilgrims' profiles (categorical variables), perceptions of pilgrimage destinations as a socio-economic enhancer. All ordinal variables were presented on a 5- point Likert scale: 1- Strongly agree, to 5- strongly disagree. The ordinal variables originate from the literature study of this chapter. The interviews were transcribed to closely appraise the data (Kerrin *et. al.*, 2017).

### 3.Findings and Analysis

The data were analysed mainly to address the research questions and achieve the objectives of the chapter. The data were, thereafter, interpreted in line with findings to draw conclusions against the objectives of the chapter. The chapter compared the findings against the reviewed literature to determine whether the former support or dispute the latter. Having taken into account that the chapter sought to achieve the objectives and therefore, restates the objectives as they were set in the first chapter of this study. These ideas and beliefs need to be tested after conducting the fieldwork in order to verify their credibility (Pietersen & Maree, 2016). The analysis and interpretation of data enabled the chapter to determine the extent to which the set objectives were achieved. Objectives provide guidelines on where the interpretation of data should focus. The presentation and analysis of the socio-demographic data was done mainly to determine the demographics within the study area and to ascertaining if these (demographics) corroborate those that are discussed in the chapter. Importantly, the chapter executed the analysis to find out which demographic category(ies) participated most towards addressing the research questions and achieving the objectives of the chapter.

#### 3.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

The chapter presented and analysed the socio-demographic characteristics with specific reference to the gender, age, and marital status of the respondents. These characteristics are as presented in the table below (Table 1).

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Profiles	Frequency	%
Gender		
Male	77	39%
Female	118	61%
Total	195	100%
Age (Years)		
18-21	43	22%

22-35	70	36%
36-55	57	29%
56+	25	13%
Total	195	100%
Marital status		
Single	97	50%
Married	63	32%
Divorced	12	6%
Separated	11	6%
Widowed	12	6%
Total	195	100%

The findings as presented in Table 1 indicate that males who participated in the study were 39%. Females constituted 61% of the total respondents. The reason for this distribution could be that the majority of pilgrims were females. These findings resulted from the fact that the number of females exceeds that of males found in religious pilgrimages within the area of study. In terms of the age variable 22% were between the ages of 18 and 21 followed by those who were between 22 and 35 years at 36%. Those who were between 36 and 55 accounted for 29%, while those who were 55 years and above accounted for 13% of the total respondents. The findings indicate that youths dominated in terms of participation in the study. This could have been resulting from the fact that the majority of the population of the country is youthful.

The respondents were asked to reveal their marital status. This was done mainly to ascertain the number of married respondents who participated in the chapter since marriage in many instances is associated with maturity. As shown in Table 1 the marital status of the respondents indicated that about 50% of the respondents in the study area were single. The next largest group respondents 32% were married. Those who were divorced accounted 6%, widowed 6% and lastly 6% were separated. In the light of the above discussion, it would be interesting to establish whether the responses to religious tourism related matters would be influenced by the respondents' marital status. Thus mature respondents are believed to more likely provide credible data in line with the chosen topic.

The first objective of the chapter sought to ascertain the awareness of the respondents regarding tourism opportunities that could be provided by pilgrimage destinations within the study area. The table below (Table 2) presents the results regarding the understanding of the concept 'pilgrimage' by the respondents. Thus, the respondents were provided with options to reveal their level of understanding, lack of understanding, and/or uncertainty by indicating "Yes", "No" and/or "Not sure".

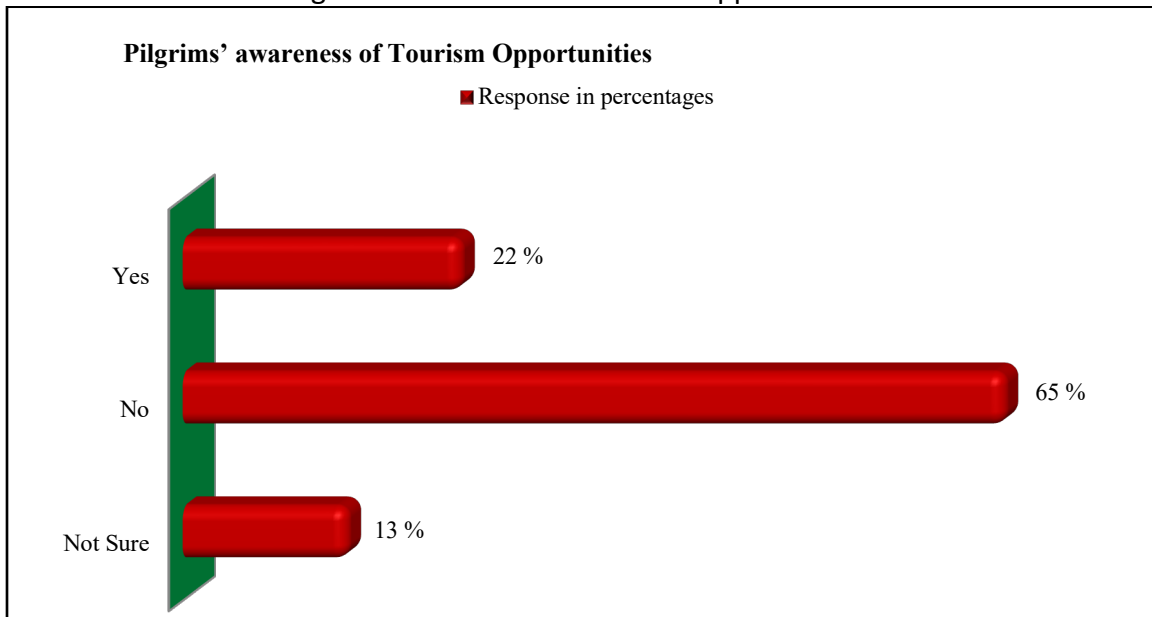
Table 2: Understanding of the concept pilgrimage

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	59	30

No	127	65
Not sure	9	5
Total	195	100

The findings as presented in Table 2, indicate that the majority (65%) of the respondents did not understand the concept 'pilgrimage'. Those who revealed that they understand the concept under discussion accounted for 30% of the total respondents. Those who were not sure of their understanding of pilgrimage constituted only 5% of the total respondents.

Figure 1: Awareness of tourism opportunities



The respondents were asked whether they are aware of the socio-economic opportunities that can be derived from visits to pilgrimage destinations or not. The findings as presented in Figure 1 indicate that local people were not aware of the tourism opportunities that were available at the pilgrimage destinations. The majority [65%] of respondents revealed that they were not aware of the socio-economic opportunities that could be derived from visits to pilgrimage destinations. Those who confirmed their awareness constituted 22% of the total respondents and [13%] of the respondents indicated that they were not sure whether there are socio-economic opportunities that could be derived from visits to pilgrimage destinations or not. Based on the findings, the study concludes that the respondents were not aware of tourism opportunities that can be derived from pilgrimage destinations.

In order to establish why the pilgrims were not aware of the socio-economic opportunities that could be derived from visits to pilgrimage destinations, the priests and pilgrims were asked to provide reasons underpinning their responses that indicated the lack of awareness in this regard. Findings of the study deduces that local government is expected to play a significant role in

creating tourism opportunities within the study area. From the sample of the study (195), 43 respondents revealed that they were aware of the tourism opportunities of pilgrimage destinations within the study area. The same number of respondents (43) were expected to hold a similar view. Thus, there was no difference between the observed and expected values. The majority (127) of the respondents held a contrary view in this regard. The same number of respondents (127) were also expected to hold a similar view. There was, therefore, no difference between the observed and expected values. Those who revealed that they were not sure were 25 and the same number (25) of respondents were expected to say they were not sure. Perhaps, this finding is resulting from the fact that local governments are entrusted with the task of ensuring that local economic development initiatives are executed to benefit the local communities (Nel & Binns, 2001).

The second objective of the chapter, which sought to find out if there are any tourism facilities and products that are packaged for tourists and pilgrims in the study area. In a nutshell, the analysed data were collected from the pilgrims whom were believed to have an ability to identify tourism facilities and products that were packaged for tourists and pilgrims in the study area. The majority [65%] of the respondents indicated that there were no visible tourism facilities and 50% revealed that there were no tourism products offered within the study area. Those who held an affirmative view regarding the availability of tourism facilities accounted for 30% followed by 45% of the total respondents who agreed that there were tourism products that were visible within the study area. Interestingly, the study found that the response rate with regards to those who were not sure whether tourism facilities and products existed in the study area was 5%. The findings revealed that pilgrims are also not aware of the said opportunities on the basis that if they were aware they would establish business enterprises that provide goods and/or services not provided within the pilgrimage destinations e.g. accommodation, culinary, artefacts, etc. In support, Nicolaides (2015;16) concurs that socio-economic opportunities could be achieved if the pilgrimage destinations are well developed and/or sustained in the responsible manner.

Objective three of the chapter aimed at establishing the perception of the respondents regarding the potential of pilgrimage destinations for enhancing economic development of the study area. The Municipality Officials, Roman Catholic Priests and Nazareth Baptist church Ecclesiastes were considered as relevant respondents to provide the data that were deemed necessary for achieving this objective.

The respondents were provided with statements that allowed them to reveal their level/s of agreement and/or disagreement regarding the potential of pilgrimage destinations for enhancing socio-economic development of the study area. Those who affirmed that pilgrimage destinations have a potential for enhancing the socio-economy of the study area were 83%, while 8% of the total respondents disagreed with the statement. Those who held a neutral view with the statement were 9% of the total respondents. The findings of the chapter conclude that the African religious pilgrimages are not perceived as having a potential for enhancing socio-economic development within the study area. The Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) can make a contribution towards poverty reduction in the surroundings of the study area.

Objective four of the chapter sought to find out if the IDPs of the study area include the potential of pilgrimage destinations for tourism development within the study area. In order to obtain relevant and credible data required to achieve this objective, Officials of the four district municipalities i.e. eThekweni Metropolitan, iLembe, King Cetshwayo, and Zululand were

surveyed. The respondents were provided with options to express their views on the said question by stating their level of agreement, disagreement, or uncertainty using “yes”, “no” or “not sure”

The findings indicate that 5% of the total respondents within the Zululand District Municipality agreed that the IDPs include the potential of pilgrimage destinations for tourism development. However, the majority [90%] of the respondents surveyed within the said municipality were of the view that the IDPs do not include the potential of pilgrimage destinations for tourism development. Those who were not sure whether the IDPs include the potential of pilgrimage destinations for tourism development or not were 5%. Those who agreed that the IDPs include the potential of pilgrimage destinations for tourism development from King Cetshwayo District Municipality were 3%, whereas 92% of the total respondents held a contrary view. Those who were not sure in this regard accounted for 5%. At iLembe District Municipality, 5% of the total respondents affirmed that IDPs include the potential of pilgrimage destinations for tourism development. Those who held an opposite view in this regard were 90%, while 5% of the total respondents were not sure whether the IDPs include the potential of pilgrimage destinations for tourism development or not. At eThekweni Metropolitan, 8% of the total respondents agreed that whether the IDPs include the potential of pilgrimage destinations for tourism development. A significant percentage [88%] of the total respondents disagreed with the said question, while 4% of the total respondents were not sure whether the IDPs include the potential of pilgrimage destinations for tourism development or not.

In line with the above findings, the chapter concludes that the potential of pilgrimage destinations for tourism development is not included in the IDPs of the study.

#### **4. Discussion**

The chapter found that pilgrimage destinations are not perceived in terms of the exchange value but rather viewed as sacred spaces designated solely for religious purposes. This had been justified by the finding of the chapter which revealed that pilgrimage destinations are not included in the existing development strategies (Domestic Tourism Growth Strategy [DTGS], and National Tourism Sector Strategy [NTSS]) of the study area as economic opportunities. However, when solicited for their views pertaining the economic potential of pilgrimage destinations, the majority of the respondents held a view that these destinations have a socio-economic potential hence tourists and pilgrims present a need for services such as hospitality and/or accommodation during their period of stay in these sites. In line with this background and the findings of the chapter there is an evident gap in the theories of religious tourism hence this chapter proposes a strategy for enhancement of socio-economic potential of religious pilgrimages. In line with this background, the Modernisation Theory advocates for progressive transition such that existing strategies that do not perceive pilgrimage destinations as an economic opportunity be substituted by the adoption of a new strategy to take into account the socio-economic potential of religious pilgrimages.

##### *a) The awareness of local people of the pilgrimage destination of tourism opportunities*

Local people are aware of the tourism opportunities that could provide social and cultural benefits rather than as delivering tourism related socio-economic benefits. These pilgrimage destinations depend on the extent of tourist interactions (Suntikul & Dorji, 2016). Although



religiousness had been viewed as a core resource of religious tourism, tourist activities would disparage the sanctity of the place and bring condemnation acts on the basis of religious traditions. Reflecting on the meaning of pilgrimage destinations and its effective management, Di Giovine & Elsner (2015), suggest that: tourism professionals must appreciate the multiplicity of heightened meanings, deep-yet conflicting ideologies, and modes of interaction. This chapter seeks to indicate the need to make local communities and stakeholders aware of the tourism opportunities around the religious pilgrimages to their areas and to develop an approach that links pilgrimage tourism with sustainable livelihoods of local communities at pilgrimage destinations. The local communities might perceive the opportunities if these pilgrimage destinations are well developed and sustained in the responsible manner and offer tourist security (Nicolaidis, 2016; 2015). Tourism developments at pilgrimage destinations should be user-friendly and inclusive so that they also accommodate those who have any form of disability. Furthermore, these developments should be sustainable in every manner, remain in a good state and serve the purpose of rest and spiritual growth to everyone who utilises them.

*b) Tourism facilities and products that can be packaged for tourists and pilgrims*

Religious tourism is one of the most important kinds of tourism. It includes participating in religious events which influence the diversity of religious tourism offers. Religious pilgrimages, spiritual sites and pilgrimage destinations are often turned into visitor attractions to bring socio-economic benefits to local communities while creating the necessary financial resources to preserve and restore cultural heritage (Raj & Griffin, 2015). The religious pilgrimages can be well promoted; and might lead to increase in demand of various tourism related commodities. This in turn could lead to general growth in business activities as well as the demand for extended travel opportunities to participate in a variety of tourism activities. This can expand supply of tourism infrastructure that is purposefully created by provincial tourism entities. In addition, tourists could become more faithful to the pilgrimage destinations with motivations different to faith, returning to the study area for a longer period of time (Robles, 2001). These pilgrimage destinations should be utilised even by the tourists and the local communities and be able to view their significance that it portrays to the pilgrims.

Other religious pilgrimages that also attract a large number of low income earners (e.g. Mecca of all the Nazarites) derive greater socio-economic benefits because they lack also severe and stringent both mean intense/or serious etc. (see Vukonic', 1998 and The Economist, 2002). However, despite all the above, the ZCC pilgrimage remains the largest single annual event in South Africa not only in terms of the number of pilgrims (attendees) but also in terms of its socio-economic contribution.

This chapter identified that the main source of socio-economic impact depends on the spending on various items such as accommodation, food, transport and souvenirs. On the downside, a gap that this chapter identifies is that there is insufficient accommodation, shortage restaurants and transport in the study areas. The tourist product, the product of religious tourism can be understood in a narrow and broad meaning. These meanings influence the elements comprising the product of religious tourism. The provision of services in a form of tourism (accommodation, catering, transport, admission to the attractions of religious tourism). The product of religious tourism is interpreted as the territorial product (place), it contains the components where tourist products are understood in tourist services and essentials relating to the tourist offer areas and

destinations (Panasiuk, 2011; Hall, 2006). In the absence of economic opportunities in the study area religious pilgrimages form the basis for tourism development. Findings of the chapter indicated that religious pilgrimages create a socio-economic development opportunity within the study area. According to Steiner & Reisinger (2006), there are a variety of services and/or products such as accommodation, food and beverages that can be offered within tourism destinations including religious pilgrimages as a strategy for developing the socio-economies of the local communities. Despite tourists/ pilgrims being in a different mind frame which perhaps does not prioritise comforts, they still need facilities and amenities. Even historically, the development of commercial hotels can be traced back to religious pilgrimages (among others); hotels were sometimes even alluded to in contemporary hymns (O’Gorman, 2009). Melian et al. (2016) propose that curative shrines signify the overlap between accessible and religious tourisms; they found that both religious and tourists gave importance to different factors in accessibility. This chapter indicates that if certain facilities could be developed in the surrounding of religious pilgrimages it might benefit the pilgrimage destinations, pilgrims, stakeholders and even the local communities.

The purely religious views should be decisive to real singling out of religious tourism product. A lack of these elements for a tourist or a pilgrim limits the nature of this product to cultural aspects. The organizers of religious tourism must reckon with the fact that people differ, having different needs and preferences regarding the quality and character of the tourist journey. For some people visiting such places of interest as churches, chapels and roadside crosses is considered to be monotonous and unattractive, while for other people it can be a tremendous experience. Pilgrimages are undertaken for a number of reasons which include expression of faith, experiencing spiritual enlightenment and deeper understanding of certain beliefs, finding the comfort that is desired to escape from a troubled world, wanting a specific favour such as a cure for an illness, etc. The researcher’s contribution with this one could be that these pilgrimage destinations might benefit everyone who is keen to utilise these religious pilgrimages. The erection of the facilities could be sustainable for pilgrimage destinations and everyone would be ardent to visit these religious pilgrimages. Jamal & Camago (2014) state that it is significant to develop strategies that would enhance the quality service in tourism facilities. The chapter perceived that services such as information and promotional activities need to be developed over these pilgrimage destinations. Tourism developers can play a leading role in the facilitation of the establishments of accommodation and/ or culinary services that are seen as a socio-economic enhancer for the study area. So tourism development could also contribute by appealing to or attracting more tourists/ pilgrims to visit the religious pilgrimages in order to enhance the socio-economies for the study area. Changes could consistently arise from the need to meet and exceed the requirements of travellers to holy sites as valued consumers (Rinschede, 1992).

*c) Perceptions of local communities towards the potential of pilgrimages in enhancing tourism development*

According to Gursory (2004), the local community is likely to view tourism as a tool that reduces unemployment by creating new employment opportunities, creates a new business and new investment opportunities, generates additional business for locals and generates revenue for local communities and governments. The chapter intends to uplift and reduce poverty in the surroundings of the pilgrimage destinations. In the study area the local communities should

perceive pilgrimage destinations as a tool to enhance the socio-economic development and for the betterment of the study area. During the visit of the tourists and pilgrims, the local communities should grasp the opportunity of selling the local souvenirs and cuisine to the tourists and pilgrims.

*d) The inclusion of religious tourism in the integrated development plan (IDP) of local municipalities within the study area*

This inclusion of religious tourism in these IDPs can make tourists and local communities realize the potential of pilgrimage destinations. The potential further developments of religious tourism, would be advantageous as potential developers of new products and for expanding the cultural socio-economy of rituals and religious performances that suit specific tourism markets (Shinde, 2010). The Zululand municipality does not have an integrated development plan with an indication of the potential of Ngome pilgrimage to tourism development. There is a serious need for tourism development within the Nongoma Municipal area. The local community and its leadership have worked tirelessly to ensure that these tourism developmental needs have been recognised and prioritised within the IDP. The local municipalities should be able to promote these sites and draw some integrated development plan that could make the tourists and the locals see the pilgrimage destinations potential. All key players such as authorities, local businesses and local communities have an equal opportunity of participating in dialogue that would develop, implement, monitor and review such initiatives. In relation with this background both selected theories (Modernization and SLA) could promote change during this development.

## **5. Conclusions**

The findings from the analysis of data revealed that the religious pilgrimages are not recognized as a vehicle with which tourism and socio-economic development of the study area can be enhanced. Based on this finding, the chapter recommends that, relevant authorities and/or stakeholders enhance the socio-economic potential for religious pilgrimages such that they promote them as tourism and/or socio-economic development stimulus within the study area and elsewhere. The chapter makes this recommendation with an understanding that if relevant authorities (e.g. municipal officials) and stakeholders (e.g. religious pilgrimages' leaders, pilgrims, tourists, local business people and community members) work collaboratively and share common goals regarding the socio-economic development potential of religious pilgrimages, there is a possibility that these sites would be perceived in terms of religious and exchange value purposes. Literature reveals that religious pilgrimages can be used as a strategy for enhancing socio-economic development in many parts of the world including South Africa. Having taken into consideration the conclusions drawn and recommendations made by the chapter as they were informed by perceptions of the surveyed respondents and also suggests that a future research focused on actual behaviour of the respondents is worth conducting.

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# Gender Nuances in Tourism Entrepreneurship: Traditional Societal Perceptions and Access to Capital

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## **Abstract**

*Previous studies have shown that the number of women entrepreneurs is increasing, however many of them fail to sustain their businesses, compared to their male counterparts. The purpose of this study therefore is to explore gender nuances in the performances of tourism-related businesses in the Durban Central Business District, KwaZulu-Natal, with particular emphases on traditional societal perceptions and access to capital. This study used structured questionnaires to collect data from 150 tourism-related business owners and managers in Durban Central Business District, KwaZulu-Natal using purposive sampling method. The participants were those who have specific knowledge in tourism-related business operations (managers and owners) and are willing to participate. Data was analysed using IBM's SPSS version 25 software. Descriptive (frequency, mean), bivariate (Spearman's Rank Correlation (two-tailed) test, Pearson's Chi-Square test, Mann-Whitney U test) and multivariate (Reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha) data analyses were applied in this study. This study did not make a conclusive finding that gender plays a strong role in differentiating business performance. However, the study found that it is somewhat easier for female entrepreneurs to find business start-up capital. This study recommends that entrepreneurial training and mentorship programmes should emphasise that gender has no role in determining entrepreneurial success.*

**Keywords:** Gender Nuances, Business Operations, Business Performance, Traditional Societal Perception, Sub-Saharan Africa.

## **1. Introduction**

Among the nine provinces in South Africa, KwaZulu-Natal is one of the most visited province in this country. The tourism statistics indicates that tourism makes a significant contribution in the KwaZulu-Natal local economy, and continues to grow from a R9billion contribution to the provincial gross domestic product in 2014 to more than R10billion by 2018 (Tourism KwaZulu-Natal, 2019). Ezeuduji and Nkosi (2017) posit that the KwaZulu-Natal province is quite known for its heritage and cultural experiences. Tourists mostly visit this province because of its warm weather, nature, cultural and beach experience which is offered in both its coastal and inland regions. Tourism in KwaZulu-Natal flourish on tourists volumes and the quality of visitor



experience. Tourism-related entrepreneurship is therefore requisite in this province to service both domestic and international tourists.

Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) Women's Report (2012) shows that sub-Saharan Africa as a region has the highest growth rates of women entrepreneurs. Conversely, the GEM Report (2014) emphasise that the failure rate of women-owned businesses is high. These reports indicate that there is a significant number of women who successfully start their businesses, but some of them fail to sustain their businesses. Women participation in entrepreneurship remains low. This is due to the high rates of female-owned businesses that fail. The South African government and other nongovernmental organisations put in place a number of programmes that support and promote women entrepreneurship in the tourism industry (Mkhize & Cele, 2017). However, Tshabalala and Ezeuduji mentioned that women are mostly playing the supporting role (such as housekeeping and receptionist) in tourism-related businesses. Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), 2005 indicates that women-owned businesses are mostly microenterprises, and are mainly in the informal sector. Research on women entrepreneurship shows that there are many challenges (such as negative traditional societal perceptions, lack of managerial capabilities, inadequate financial capital, weak entrepreneurial networking) faced by women entrepreneurs in South Africa (Tshabalala & Ezeuduji, 2016; Nxopo & Iwu, 2016).

Quite a number of gender-based entrepreneurship studies (such as Witbooi & Ukpere, 2011; Vossenber, 2013; Sarfaraz, Faghih & Majd, 2014; Kokotović, Rakić & Kokotović, 2016; Todorović, Komazec, Jevtić, Obradović & Marič, 2016; Tshabalala & Ezeuduji, 2016; Nxopo & Iwu, 2016; Mkhize & Cele, 2017; Kimbu, Ngoasong, Adeola & Afenyo-Agbe, 2019) focused on women entrepreneurship as means to achieve social development, gender equality and poverty reduction. These studies did not intensely explore gender-induced differences or perceptions, particularly from the African perspective. The objective of this study is to explore gender nuanced perceptions on the influences that access to financial capital and traditional societal perception may have on tourism-related business operations; and also seek if gender identity has influence on business performance, using the case of Durban Central District in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

## **2. Literature Review**

Business management has been generally associated with qualities necessary for the success of a specific entrepreneurial venture (Ezeuduji & Ntshangase, 2017a; 2017b). Meanwhile, literature show that business performance can be determined by the demographic attributes of an individual entrepreneur (Nsengimana, Iwu & Tengeh, 2017; Arora, 2014; Ghat, 2018). Most societies show a strong division between male and female roles (Duflo, 2012). This is different in the Western countries, there is a little effect of the local environment with regard to gender roles and impact of culture on women entrepreneurs (Ghat, 2018). A study by Vázquez-Carrasco, LópezPérez and Centeno (2012) found no significant difference between male and female business managers. In African tradition, women's duties are perceived to be at home (Netshitangani, 2018; Idris & Agbim, 2015). In this situation, women are expected to be submissive to men, and not to stand out and take leading positions. Traditionally, women are perceived as mothers, wives, and caregivers, mainly with domestic and childcare responsibilities (Wankel, 2008; Ahmed, 2018; Chasserio, Pailot & Poroli, 2014). Also, entrepreneurship is

traditionally considered as a male occupation (Ghiat, 2018). Masculine features such as aggressiveness, independence, high risk-taking propensity, dominance, and low need of support are perceived as those that are socially associated with someone who wants to engage him/herself in a business (Omerzel, 2016; Chasserio et al., 2014; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2019). Whereas women's traditional identity is associated with submissiveness, dependence, and obedience (Basargekar, 2007). Women are then perceived as unsuitable for starting and managing businesses. Certain fields are labelled as "suitable" for women (such as healthcare and education). Also, within the entrepreneurial sector, there are certain types of businesses that are considered as unfitting for women to engage in (Tshabalala and Ezeuduji, 2016). The authors further posit that women end up playing supporting roles (such as housekeeping and receptionist) in businesses that are labelled as suitable for male entrepreneurs. The literature highlight several adverse situations that women entrepreneurs are faced with (Ahmed, 2018; Singh, Mordi, Okafor & Simpson, 2010; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2019). Therefore, showing that gender rules and patriarchal norms are still active, especially in African countries.

Apart from traditional societal perceptions, also access to financial capital is one of the most common challenges facing entrepreneurs in Africa (Daniyan-Bagudu, Khan & Roslan 2016; Jha, Makkad & Mittal, 2018). According to De Vita, Mari and Poggesi (2014), financial institutions prefer to give funding to women because they are more community-oriented compared to men. Also, banks in India have come up with structures that support women entrepreneurs, which are more convenient in terms of collateral security and interest rate (Rani, 2015). The Indian government introduced over 27 structures to support women (Arun & Unnipulan, 2017; Jha et al. 2018), including the Women Entrepreneurship Promotion Scheme to empower and encourage women. Mersha and Sriram (2019) and Chirwa (2008) reveal that female-entrepreneurs benefitted more than male-entrepreneurs from government grant and other community-based programmes. Kalyani and Kumar (2011) posit that women are receiving financial support from the government with a much safer and lengthier period to repay. Notably, female entrepreneurs in India may have more financial opportunities than male entrepreneurs since the researchers did not find literature stating that there is financial support specifically created for male entrepreneurs. Availability of collateral, willingness to apply for loans (and repay), and awareness of financial opportunities may then be the real issues concerning access to financial capital for women entrepreneurs.

In contrast to the research evidence earlier presented, Sattar, Dewri and Ananna (2016) state that research reveal that women entrepreneurs in developing countries lack access to financial service. According to Timmis (2017), 85% of South African start-ups are self-funded. According to Chimucheka and Mandipaka (2015), commercial banks do not have confidence in funding small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) because of the lack of managerial skills. This may affect a lot of women entrepreneurs who belong in this category. Usually, women do not have their own savings (Basargekar, 2007), which leads them to applying for loans or searching for other means of financial support. However, Moses et al. (2016) and Mersha and Sriram (2019) state that applying for a loan is usually challenge for women because they usually have no collateral (Karasi, Shambare & Nkondo, 2017; Rao, 2018). Moses et al. (2016) also emphasise that women entrepreneurs often have less financial capital to start successful new ventures. Sudarmanti, Van Bauwel and Longman (2013) posit that women are hesitant to take financial loans due to their poor financial management skills. According to Tshabalala and Ezeuduji (2016), many women lack

knowledge on how to source financial capital and they are also not aware of the available financial supports (Ahmed, 2018). Previous studies revealed that the levels of access to financial capital are very low for women (Vossenber, 2013; Meunier, Krylova & Ramalho, 2017), so also the utilisation of financial support (such as Khoase, Derera, McArthur & Ndayizigamiye, 2019). Having access to financial capital is regarded as one of the key challenges affecting business performance (Daniyan-Bagudu et al., 2016). Jha et al. (2018) state that gender discrimination and stereotypes is the major cause for women entrepreneurs' inability to raise start-up capital. Fairlie and Robb (2009) posit that female-owned businesses have lower profit, survival rates, sales and employment than male-owned businesses. This study argues that women's inability to accumulate appropriate amount of financial capital may cause the poor performance of women-owned business (Marlow & McAdam, 2013). As this section discussed secondary data (previous literature), the next section discusses research methods and design used to collect primary data.

### **3. Research Methodology**

The aim of this study is to find out if are there gender differences shown by tourism entrepreneurs in running their businesses, which may affect business performance. Focusing on traditional societal perceptions and access to financial capital. The nature of this study required a questionnaire survey to address the objectives of this study (see Veal, 2011; Ezeudji & Mbane, 2017). Structured questionnaires were distributed using non-probability purposive sampling. We selected those who have precise knowledge (tourism-related business owners and managers) in tourism entrepreneurship also willing to participate (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2015; Nardi, 2018). We surveyed 150 respondents (75 male and 75 female entrepreneurs) in their tourism establishments in Durban Central Business District under EtheKwini Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. We carefully distributed the questionnaire to create a fair comparison between the characteristics of female entrepreneurs and male entrepreneurs; and how they respond to the business performance factors: "access to financial capital" and "traditional societal perception". Collected data were analysed using IBM's Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 25. We employed descriptive statistics (mean scores of responses and percentage frequencies), bivariate analyses (Mann-Whitney U, Spearman's rank correlation tests and Pearson's chi square) and multivariate analysis (Reliability tests using Cronbach's Alpha). The data analysis showed non-normal population distributions of the ordinal variables used in assessing business operation statements (perceptions); hence this study employed Mann-Whitney U tests by comparing means of responses from two independent groups (demographic variables) to check if these are significantly different from one another. We compared business operation statements with respondents' demographic variables. We employed Spearman's correlation (two-tailed) test to checked for relationships between ranked or ordinal variables, to find out if there are negative or positive correlations between the variables (Veal, 2011), which for this study is between business operations statements and perceived business success classification. We conducted Mann-Whitney U tests based on the prescribed criteria that the dependent variables have ordinal scale, the independent variables have only two groups, and normality of distribution and homogeneity of variance did not prove true in a t-test (George & Mallery, 2003; Veal, 2011). Pearson's chi square test was used to check for relationships between categorical/nominal data, where some previous variables measured in an ordinal scale were

recoded to support this analysis. Respondents' profiles were compared with business start-up motivation and perception of entrepreneurial success.

Multivariate analysis (reliability tests) was employed by this study to check for the level of internal consistencies of variables used to describe factors influencing business operations (traditional societal perceptions, access to financial capital). Finn et al. (2000) support the use of multivariate analysis in tourism studies where a phenomenon is likely to be influenced by a large number of variables rather than a single one. Researchers suggest that a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of between 0.5 and 0.7 is acceptable in social science research, to denote adequate consistency of variables used in measuring a factor or dimension (George & Mallery, 2003; Chawla & Sondhi, 2011). Nonetheless, Tavakol and Dennick (2011) posit that a low Cronbach's alpha score may occur if there is a weak interrelationship between the variables used in the analysis, or if few variables are being used to depict a particular dimension or factor. From the reliability tests conducted on the two business operation dimensions, the "access to financial capital" dimension did not achieve up to 0.5 Cronbach alpha coefficient, hence this study finds the variables contained in this dimension not internally consistent, and treated them as individual variables for results' interpretation. Variables that explain the business operation dimension of "traditional societal perception" were found to be internally consistent or related. We present the results and discussion of findings in the next section.

### 3. Findings and Analysis

#### 3.1 Respondents' Profile

The results presented in Table 1 show that respondents in this study are mostly South Africans and the majority have business experience of not more than six years. Nsengimana et al. (2017) argue that business experience influences the chances of entrepreneurial success. More entrepreneurs started their business to take available opportunity compared to those who started businesses as a means of survival. According to Mersha and Sriram (2019), in most African countries, entrepreneurs are pushed into business by socio-economic factors (such as lack of job opportunities). This study however, found that majority of respondents in this study are „opportunity entrepreneurs“. The results also show that the majority of respondents perceive themselves as either successful or very successful (57%).

Table 1: Respondents' profile (N=150)

Variable	Category	Frequency (%)
South African	Yes	88.7
	No	11.3
Gender	Male	50
	Female	50
Ethnic group	Black	52.7
	White	18.0
	Indian	22.0
	Coloured	7.3
Age group	Less than 40 years	61.3

	40 years and above	38.7
Business owner	Yes	63.3
	No	36.7
Business manager	Yes	58.7
	No	41.3
Motivation to start tourism business	Took opportunity	54.4
	Means of survival	45.6
Type of Business	Accommodation	16.0
	Food and Beverage	26.7
	Events Management	10.0
	Tour Operation	3.3
	Travel Agency	4.7
	Tour Guide	2.7
	Car rentals	7.3
	Resorts	2.0
	Consultancy	2.7
Souvenir Shop	24.7	
Number of years in business	Up to 6 years	60.7
	7years and above	39.3
Self-classification as an entrepreneur	Very successful	13.4
	Successful	43.6
	Surviving	32.2
	Struggling	9.4
	Unsuccessful	1.4

### 3.2 Business Operation Dimensions

Results in Table 2 show that respondents were more in disagreement than in agreement towards the statement: 'male business managers perform better than female business managers', as about 61% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. This result suggests that the entrepreneurs believe that the performance of entrepreneurs is not necessarily determined by their gender. Also, about 62% disagreed or strongly disagreed that the 'gender of the business manager influences the level of service(s) delivered to customers'. This result does not support some of the earlier studies (such as Vrbanacetal., 2016; Wankel, 2008; Chasserioet al. 2014; Ahmed, 2018) which posit that women are perceived as unfit for starting and running a business. The result of this study which show that many of the respondents (about 45%) agreed or strongly agreed to the statement: 'international tourists patronise mostly white businesses', supports the findings by Tshabalala and Ezeuduji (2016) that international tourists mostly utilise white businesses. It can therefore be said that there is still racial segregation within the tourism industry in this study area. About 60% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the belief system of the society influences the performance of the business. This result continues to throw light on the stronghold of the African belief system in its economic operations.

Previous literature (such as Daniyan-Bagudu *et al.*, 2016; Jha *et al.*, 2018) report that sourcing financial capital is likely to be the key challenge to most entrepreneurs. Results in this study

support that sourcing financial capital is difficult for the entrepreneurs, as about 78% of respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed that 'It is easy to find start-up capital to start a tourism business'. However, about 43% of the respondents believe that it is possible to start a business without external support.

Some entrepreneurs have own financial capital to start their businesses. Research by Sattar *et al.* (2016) found that women in developing countries (like South Africa) are less privileged to get access to financial resources than men. However, results in this study reveal that majority (about 67%) of the respondents disagreed that men have better access to financial resources. Some entrepreneurs, especially women are reported to lack information on how to source financial capital and not aware of the available financial support (Tshabalala & Ezeuduji, 2016; Ahmed, 2018). Results in this study support this notion as half of the respondents (50%) strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement: 'I am aware of the available sources of capital that cater for tourism businesses', although about 60% of the respondents reported that their 'business financial capital is inadequate'. The results of this study are aligned with Marlow and McAdam's (2013) position. They note that the inability to source funding usually results in poor business performance.

Table 2: Business operation statements (%)

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<b>2.1 Traditional Societal Perception</b>					
Male business managers perform better than female business managers	12.7	13.3	12.7	38.0	23.3
The performance of the business is influenced by the belief systems of the society	24.7	35.3	10.0	28.0	2.0
The performance of entrepreneur is determined by their home background	20.7	43.3	10.7	21.3	4.0
The gender of the business manager influences the level of service(s) delivered to customers	8.0	16.7	18.0	44.0	18.3
International tourists patronise mostly white businesses	24.0	21.3	21.3	26.0	7.3
<i>Reliability statistics (Traditional Societal Perception): Cronbach's Alpha = .601, N of items = 5, Valid cases = 150 (100%), Excluded cases = 0 (0.0%), Total =150</i>					
<b>2.2 Access to Financial Capital</b>					
It is easy to find start-up capital to start a tourism business	6.0	4.0	11.3	32.7	46.0
It is impossible to start a tourism business without external financial support	24.7	16.0	16.7	34.0	8.7

Male business owners / managers have better access to business capital than female business owners / managers	5.3	7.3	20.0	49.3	18.0
I am aware of the available sources of capital that cater for tourism businesses	6.7	30.0	13.3	41.3	8.7
My business financial capital is inadequate	27.0	33.1	27.0	12.2	0.7
<i>Reliability statistics (Access to Financial Capital): Cronbach's Alpha = .272, N of items = 5, Valid cases = 148 (98.7%), Excluded cases = 2 (1.3%), Total =150</i>					

### 3.3 Perception of Entrepreneurial Success Level Versus Business Operation Statements

Respondents were asked to classify their perceived business success level (responses ranging from very successful to unsuccessful). A correlation test was done between their responses on entrepreneurial success level and their responses on business operation statements. Results in Table 3 show strong positive correlations between perceived business success levels and some 'access to financial capital' statements (it is easy to find start-up capital to start a tourism business; I am aware of the available sources of capital that cater for tourism businesses; my business financial capital is inadequate). This means that respondents who perceive themselves as successful agree more to these statements regarding 'access to financial capital'. They are aware of available sources of capital and could easily find start-up capital, however they posit that their financial capital is inadequate. Knowing and having the means of accessing financial capital equip the organisation to access required equipment (fixed capital) and running cost to support business operations. The inability to access financial capital was reported as a major challenge to the success of business operations (Tshabalala & Ezeudji, 2016). There is also no indication from these results that being male or female relates to entrepreneurial success level; hence business success is gender neutral. Results in Table 3 did not show any correlation between perceived entrepreneurial success level and any of the statements in the 'traditional societal perception', confirming that traditional societal perception has no impact on the entrepreneurial success level.

Table 3: Correlating perception of entrepreneurial success level versus business operation statements

<b>Statements<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Correlated with perception of entrepreneurial success level<sup>b</sup></b>
<b>3.1 Traditional Societal Perception</b>	
Male business managers perform better than female business managers	N.S
The performance of the business is influenced by the belief systems of the society	N.S

The performance of entrepreneur is determined by their home background	N.S
The gender of the business manager influences the level of service(s) delivered to customers	N.S
International tourists patronise mostly white businesses	N.S
<b>3.2 Access to Financial Capital</b>	
It is easy to find start-up capital to start a tourism business	**
It is impossible to start a tourism business without external financial support	N.S
Male business owners / managers have better access to business capital than female business owners / managers	N.S
I am aware of the available sources of capital that cater for tourism businesses	**
My business financial capital is inadequate	**

<sup>a</sup>Questionnaires were itemised along a 5-point Likert-type scale (business operation statements): 1, Strongly agree; 2, Agree; 3, Neutral; 4, Disagree; 5, Strongly disagree.

Questionnaires were itemised along a 5-point Likert-type scale (perceptions of entrepreneurial success level): 1, Very successful; 2, Successful; 3, Surviving; 4, Struggling; 5, Unsuccessful.

<sup>b</sup>Spearman's Rank correlation (two-tailed) test significance: \*\*,  $p < 0.01$ ; N.S., no significant results.

### 3.4 Comparing Demographic Variables with Business Start-Up Motivation and Perceptions of Entrepreneurial Success Level

In this study, the demographic variables were further compared with business start-up motivation and perceptions of entrepreneurial success level (using Pearson's Chi-Square test). Results in Table 4 show that there is no significant influence of 'gender', 'age group', and 'number of years in business' on business start-up motivation. Nationality was identified as the demographic variable in this study that has a significant relationship on motivation to start a tourism-related business. Results indicate that South Africans are more 'opportunity entrepreneurs' whereas non-South Africans are more 'survival entrepreneurs'. According to Mersha and Sriram (2019), majority of entrepreneurs in Africa are forced to start a business as means of survival due to socio-economic challenges. In this case, non-South African entrepreneurs may struggle to find long-term resident permit in South Africa, and may be discriminated against in the labour market. They may therefore end up starting a business to survive in South Africa. Owing to the focus of this study, the results did not show that male or female entrepreneurs are more 'opportunity' or 'survival' orientated, in terms of business start-up motivation. More so, perception of entrepreneurial success level is gender neutral (Table 4) and also does not depend on nationality, age group, and number of years spent in acquiring business experience.



Table 4: Comparing demographic variables with business start-up motivation and perceptions of entrepreneurial success level

<sup>a</sup>Questionnaire was itemised categorically: 1, Took opportunity; 2, Means of survival

Statements		Evidence from analysis	Compared with respondents' demographic variables <sup>c</sup>
<b>Motivation to start tourism business <sup>a, c</sup></b>			
		<b>Cross-tabulation results</b>	
Nationality	South Africans	Expected count for opportunity entrepreneurs = 71.8; Actual count = 79	** South Africans are more 'opportunity entrepreneurs', while Non-South Africans are more 'survival' entrepreneurs
	Non-South Africans	Expected count for survival entrepreneurs = 7.6; Actual count = 15	
Gender	Male		N.S.
	Female		
Age group	Less than 40 years		N.S.
	40 years and above		
Number of years in business	Up to 6 years		N.S.
	7years and above		
<b>Perceptions of entrepreneurial success level <sup>b, c</sup></b>			
		<b>Mean scores</b>	
Nationality	South Africans	2.42	N.S.
	Non-South Africans	2.41	
Gender	Male	2.49	N.S.
	Female	2.35	
Age group	Less than 40 years	2.34	N.S.
	40 years and above	2.53	
No. of years in business	Up to 6 years	2.39	N.S.
	7years and above	2.46	

<sup>b</sup>Questionnaires were recoded into 3 categories (perceptions of entrepreneurial success level): 1, Very successful and 2, Successful, were recoded to mean “Successful”. 3, Surviving; to mean “Surviving”. 4, Struggling and 5, Unsuccessful, to mean “Unsuccessful”.

<sup>c</sup>Pearson’s Chi-Square test significance: \*\*,  $p < 0.01$ ; N.S., no significant results.

### 3.5 Comparing Gender Identity with Business Operation Statements

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement towards variables in the business operations’ dimensions: ‘traditional and societal perception’ and ‘access to financial capital’. These variables were then compared with respondents’ gender (employing Mann-Whitney U test) to check for significant relationships.

Results in Table 5 show that there are significant differences between male and female mean scores and some of the variables used to explain business operations’ dimensions. Female respondents agree more than male respondents to these statements: ‘I am aware of the available sources of capital’, ‘it is easy to find start-up capital’, and ‘gender of a business manager determines the level of service delivered to customers’. Also in Table 5, more male than female respondents agree to the statements: ‘international tourists patronise mostly white businesses’, and ‘my business financial capital is inadequate’.

Table 5: Comparing gender identity with business operation statements

Statements <sup>a</sup>	Mean score (Males)	Mean score (Females)	Compared with gender <sup>b</sup>
<b>5.1 Traditional Societal Perception</b>			
Male business managers perform better than female business managers	3.29	3.63	N.S.
The performance of the business is influenced by the belief systems of the society	2.32	2.63	N.S.
The performance of entrepreneur is determined by their home background	2.60	2.29	N.S.
The gender of the business manager influences the level of service(s) delivered to customers	3.60	3.16	* Females agree more
International tourists patronise mostly white businesses	2.41	3.01	** Males agree more
<b>5.2. Access to Financial Capital</b>			
It is easy to find start-up capital to start a tourism business	4.23	3.95	* Females agree more
It is impossible to start a tourism business without external financial support	2.76	2.96	N.S.

Male business owners / managers have better access to business capital than female business owners / managers	3.76	3.59	N.S.
I am aware of the available sources of capital that cater for tourism businesses	3.35	2.96	* Females agree more
My business financial capital is inadequate	2.09	2.43	* Males agree more

<sup>a</sup>Questionnaires were itemised along a 5-point Likert-type scale (business operation statements): 1, Strongly agree; 2, Agree; 3, Neutral; 4, Disagree; 5, Strongly disagree.

<sup>b</sup>Mann-Whitney U test significance: \*,  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*,  $p < 0.01$ ; N.S., no significant results.

#### 4. Discussion

Researchers (such as Daniyan-Bagudu *et al.*, 2016; Jha *et al.*, 2018) posit the issue of obtaining external financial support as a common challenge facing entrepreneurs in most countries of the world. Results in this study reveal that compared to men, women tend to have better awareness of sourcing start-up capital and find it easier to get this capital. This result is in line with De Vita *et al.*'s (2014) findings that financial institutions prefer sponsoring women entrepreneurs to male entrepreneurs. Also, they (De Vita *et al.*) reported that women are given the opportunity to get loans in more relaxed terms concerning collateral security and payment plan. In contrary, Sattaret *al.* (2016) reported that women in developing countries (like South Africa) are less privileged in accessing financial capital. The results of this study provide evidence that female entrepreneurs are more advantaged than male entrepreneurs in terms of receiving financial capital, as they agree more that it is easy to source funding. This result disagrees with the findings of Meunier *etal.* (2017) and Vossenber (2013) who posit that women entrepreneurs are lacking access to financial capital compared to their male counterparts. Difficulty in sourcing financial capital is regarded as one of the major reasons for the poor performance of women entrepreneurs in managing their businesses (Marlow & McAdam, 2013). However, the results in this study show otherwise. Women entrepreneurs in South Africa, also based on the researchers' personal knowledge, tend to be more favoured compared to men regarding receiving financial support to kick-start a business. SME South Africa's (2019) Guide to Government Funding for Small and Medium Enterprises provides a number of funding instruments for small businesses in South Africa, ranging from grants to incentives; each funding programme offering some form of financial support for entrepreneurs. While none of these government funding programmes specifically targets male entrepreneurs, some funding programmes such as Tourism Transformation Fund aims to drive transformation in the tourism sector to give rise to a new generation of Black-owned youth, women and community-based enterprises. There is also the National Empowerment Fund (NEF) targeting specifically women (NEF Women Empowerment Fund, aiming at accelerating the provision of funding to businesses owned by Black women). In fact, all the government business funding programmes in South Africa prioritises women entrepreneurs, especially young Black women, even when their names do not suggest the preferred gender, age bracket or race; as youth and women empowerment is enshrined in the South Africa's National Development Plan 2030 (National Development Plan, 2012).

It seems that more male than female entrepreneurs perceive racial discrimination among international tourists (confirmed by the findings of Tshabalala & Ezeuduji, 2016). These results also show that more male than female entrepreneurs perceive their financial capital inadequate; this could be as a result of the difficulty they may face getting external financial support from private (such as banks) or government funding programmes. This could also mean that male entrepreneurs are more 'business growth' orientated than female entrepreneurs; and perceive they need more cash injection to scale up their businesses further and create jobs. We found in this study that a significant number of respondents agree that the belief system of the society and the home background of an entrepreneur determine entrepreneurial performance. There may be the influence of African traditional societal perceptions in this result, as African women may be more contented than men with the small size of their businesses (because society expects them not to manage large businesses). This study did not find any statistical gender difference regarding motivation to start tourism-related business. However, according to Fisher (2011) and Kokotović *et al.* (2016), entrepreneurs who started business to take available opportunity display characteristics of 'growth entrepreneurs'. The authors state that growth entrepreneurs are driven by the competitive nature of business; they create a business of long-term value and constantly want to make the business bigger and more competitive. According to Fisher (2011) and Kokotović *et al.*, (2016), growth entrepreneurs are likely to start a business with larger investments. Vázquez-Carrasco, López-Pérez and Centeno's (2012) study finding in Spain, is supported by this research that there are no significant differences between male and female business managers. The last section of this paper concludes this study's finding and makes relevant recommendations.

## **5. Conclusions**

This study did not make a conclusive finding that gender or any other demographic characteristics play a very strong role in differentiating business success or performance, as mostly perceived. The capability of the business manager (with regard to operations, marketing, general management) must then be the differentiating factor determining business success. This study however found pointers that imply that female entrepreneurs in this study area have a more favourable access to start-up capital. This result, however, has no direct link to business success or performance. A significant number of respondents agree that the belief system of the society and the home background of an entrepreneur determine entrepreneurial performance. Hence, there may be the influence of African traditional societal perceptions on African women entrepreneurs to be more contented than men with the small size of their businesses (because society expects them not to manage large businesses). The characteristics of 'growth entrepreneurs' may therefore become latent among African women entrepreneurs. This lends itself to further study, as a new study could explore gender attitude towards 'growth entrepreneurship', checking for statistical difference between male and female entrepreneurs or prospective entrepreneurs.

This study recommends that entrepreneurial training and mentorship programmes in South Africa and the sub-Saharan African region should emphasise that gender has no role in differentiating successful and unsuccessful entrepreneurs. These programmes should also increase the general awareness level of entrepreneurs with regard to sourcing of start-up or business operating capital.

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# Special interest tourism development and tourism destination growth in post-Covid 19 era

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## Abstract

*The aim of this study was to identify specific special interest tourism forms that could efficiently develop in the prefecture of Chania, Crete, to assist this destination in overcoming the challenges following the covid 19 pandemic. For this, a well-structured questionnaire was distributed to stakeholders and tourism-related professionals of the destination. Overall, 540 completed forms were collected and analyzed using SPSS.*

*Most respondents stated that the current tourism development status of Chania is satisfactory; however, 80% of them think that the tourism product offered needs to be redefined in order to become more attractive both today and in the competitive environment of the post-covid era. For this, almost 90% of respondents believe that the development of specific special interest tourism forms is necessary. For the current era six forms were proposed: cultural tourism (by 71.8% of the respondents), gastronomic tourism (75.1%), adventure tourism (71.8%), religious tourism (56.5%) and sports tourism (53.6%). However, the percentages of the same forms for the post-Covid 19 era were lower by a mean of 12%, probably because respondents believe that the development of these specific forms will take time and, although they may have a long-term positive outcome, it is difficult to give the immediate results needed in the post-Covid 19 era. It is concluded that local stakeholders and tourism professionals, along with regional and central government officials should collect and analyze all available data to adopt a strategy able to make appropriate adjustments for each specific destination in order to develop the most suitable special interest tourism forms that could assist destinations to meet the post-covid 19 challenges.*

**Keywords:** *Special Interest Tourism Development, Post-Covid 19 era, Destination Development*

## 1. Introduction

As special interest tourism development appears to be a key factor for further growth of an established tourism destination (Wen and Yu 2020), stakeholders worldwide focus on the identification of the most suitable forms for destination growth (ETC 2020a). However not all destinations can develop a sustainable form of special interest tourism, as it obviously depends on local and regional resources; moreover, the decision to spend time and money on infrastructure should be based on solid evidence, as tourism needs effective strategies for fast recovery in the post-Covid 19 era (Toubes, Vila and Brea 2021, ETC 2020a, Cretu et al 2020). Indeed, after the pandemic international and domestic competition will grow, while travelers will

continue to demand sustainable and differentiated tourism products (ETC 2021). The aim therefore of this study was to identify what specific special interest tourism forms could be developed in the prefecture of Chania, Crete, both efficiently and sustainably, in order to assist this mature tourism destination to face the challenges of the post-Covid 19 era.

## 2. Material and Method

To meet the aims of this study a well-structured questionnaire was used, distributed electronically through Google Forms to stakeholders and tourism-related professionals of the destination. Despite the difficulties experienced, mainly from non-operating or restricted (due to government orders) enterprises and organizations, overall, 540 completed forms were collected. The results were statistically analyzed using the SPSS program.

## 3. Results and Analysis

From the 540 respondents, 47% were men and 53% women, with 67% being under 45 years of age (Table 1). Among them 51.9% were enterprise owners or organization leaders, collectively listed as “owners”, and 48.1% were executives (10%) and staff (38.1%), collectively listed as “employees”.

Table 1: Respondent’s age distribution

Age (years)	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	Over 55
Percentage	12.4%	23.1%	31.5%	24.8%	8.2%

Regarding education, 56% were university graduates (of whom 15.7% had a master’s degree and 1.5% a PhD degree), 41% were high-school graduates and 3% junior high-school graduates: respondents’ education status therefore ensured an objective response to our questions. Furthermore, 49.8% of them worked in hotels and other types of accommodation, 16.1% in transportation, 15.6% in restaurants and bars, 10.2% in car or boat rent enterprises and 8.3% in travel agencies and tour operators.

Table 2: Level of satisfaction from the current tourism development in the prefecture of Chania

	Total (n=540)	Employees	Owners
Extremely satisfied	9.4%	13.1%	7.2%
Satisfied	47.9%	51.5%	44.9%
Neutral	31.5%	28.2%	33.5%
Dissatisfied	9.6%	5.3%	12.3%
Extremely dissatisfied	2.1%	1.9%	2.1%

This distribution probably reflects the differences seen in the next set of questions: indeed, although respondents seemed to be quite satisfied from the current tourism development of Chania (Table 2), 83% of them also think that the tourism product of this destination needs to be differentiated in order to become more competitive and sustainable. To achieve this, the development of certain special interest tourism forms seems to be very important for almost 90% of respondents (Table 3), as most enterprises in this destination (53%, Table 5) deal only

with holiday tourism and need to expand their activities to specific special interest tourism forms in order to achieve economic growth.

Table 3: The need to re-define of the tourism product of the prefecture of Chania

	Total (n=540)	Employees	Owners
Yes	80.9%	77.8%	82.9%
No	10.9%	13.6%	9.3%
Don't know	8.2%	8.6%	7.8%

Table 4: Importance of special interest tourism forms development in the prefecture of Chania

	Total (n=540)	Employees	Owners
Very Important	50.9%	49.3%	52.0%
Important	38.7%	40.4%	37.7%
Moderately Important	7.7%	6.9%	8.2%
Slightly Important	1.9%	2.5%	1.5%
Not Important	0.8%	1.0%	0.6%

Table 5: Owners' active involvement in special interest tourism

	Owners (n=334)
Extremely	7.7%
Very	17.7%
Moderately	21.6%
Slightly	22.2%
Not at all	30.8%

Respondents also believe that special interest tourism development is very important for the extension of the tourism season (Table 6), the creation of new jobs (Table 7), the improvement of infrastructure (Table 8) and the expansion to new markets (Table 9).

Table 6: Importance of special interest tourism development for the extension of the tourism season

	Extension of the tourism season		
	Total (n=540)	Employees	Owners
1	1.7%	1.0%	2.1%
2	2.4%	1.9%	2.7%
3	10.9%	12.6%	9.9%
4	32%	25.7%	35.9%
5	53%	58.7%	49.4%

Table 7: Importance of special interest tourism development for the creation of new jobs

	New jobs		
	Total (n=540)	Employees	Owners
1	1.0%	1.0%	0.9%
2	1.1%	0.0%	1.8%
3	7.6%	4.9%	9.3%
4	28.3%	20.9%	32.9%
5	62.0%	73.2%	55.1%

Table 8: Importance of special interest tourism development for improving local and regional infrastructure

	Infrastructure		
	Total (n=540)	Employees	Owners
1	2.0%	1.5%	2.4%
2	6.7%	7.8%	6.1%
3	29.1%	27.6%	29.9%
4	26.5%	24.8%	27.5%
5	35.7%	38.3%	34.1%

Table 9: Importance of special interest tourism development for expanding to new markets

	New markets		
	Total (n=540)	Employees	Owners
1	1.3%	0.5%	1.8%
2	3.0%	2.9%	3.0%
3	16.3%	15.5%	16.8%
4	33.3%	32.5%	33.8%
5	46.1%	48.5%	44.6%

The answers to the next question (Table 10) cross-checked and reconfirmed the respondents positive view on special interest tourism development, despite the fact that only few enterprises are currently active in special interest tourism, as seen in Table 5. One can also notice that employees are less enthusiastic than owners (60% against 73%), a finding probably reflecting the owners' better knowledge and understanding of the specific needs of their enterprises.

Table 10: The ability of the enterprise where the respondents work or run to expand to specific forms of special interest tourism

	Total (n=540)	Employees	Owners
Strongly Agree	37.8%	28.6%	43.4%
Agree	30.9%	31.1%	30.8%
Neutral	19.1%	22.8%	16.8%
Disagree	7.6%	10.2%	6.0%
Strongly Disagree	4.6%	7.2%	3.0%

We then asked the respondents' views on the development of six major forms of special interest -tourism previously proposed for this destination (Chania-info 2021), both for now and the post-Covid era. Surprisingly, remarkably lower percentages for the post-Covid era were reported, as seen in Table 11. Table 12 shows that the respondent's percentage of agreement shifted either to neutral or to disagreement with the highest shift seen in the natural tourism sector and in the employee's category, followed by the gastronomy tourism sector for both owners and employees. These results are quite difficult to be explained and further research is needed to identify if this is due to fear or uncertainty for the future or the respondents believe that special interest tourism will take time to work, while mainstream tourism if restarted can give immediate positive results.

Table 11: Respondent’s opinion on the need for development of certain forms of special interest tourism, both in the current (upper table) and in the post-Covid 19 era (lower table)

Special interest tourism form	Respondents	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Cultural	Employees	50,0%	31,5%	17,0%	0,5%	1,0%
	Owners	62,2%	24,6%	10,8%	1,2%	1,2%
Gastronomy	Employees	82,0%	11,7%	4,3%	0,5%	1,5%
	Owners	81,4%	12,3%	4,5%	1,2%	0,6%
Sports	Employees	25,3%	32,0%	28,6%	11,2%	2,9%
	Owners	30,3%	30,5%	26,3%	9,0%	3,9%
Nature	Employees	77,1%	16,0%	4,9%	1,5%	0,5%
	Owners	83,2%	11,1%	4,2%	0,9%	0,6%
Adventure	Employees	57,3%	26,2%	13,6%	1,9%	1,0%
	Owners	56,9%	27,5%	11,7%	2,4%	1,5%
Religious	Employees	35,0%	31,6%	23,3%	6,8%	3,3%
	Owners	35,6%	33,5%	20,7%	5,1%	5,1%

Cultural	Employees	37,4%	29,6%	24,8%	5,8%	2,4%
	Owners	38,3%	33,5%	18,9%	5,4%	3,9%
Gastronomy	Employees	54,3%	24,8%	15,0%	4,4%	1,5%
	Owners	51,4%	23,7%	15,3%	5,7%	3,9%
Sports	Employees	23,8%	27,2%	27,7%	16,0%	5,3%
	Owners	24,3%	29,3%	28,1%	11,7%	6,6%
Nature	Employees	60,7%	17,0%	17,0%	3,4%	1,9%
	Owners	60,5%	22,5%	9,3%	4,5%	3,2%
Adventure	Employees	40,3%	31,1%	20,9%	5,8%	1,9%
	Owners	45,2%	26,6%	17,1%	6,9%	4,2%
Religious	Employees	23,3%	30,6%	28,6%	10,7%	6,8%
	Owners	26,3%	30,2%	23,1%	11,4%	9,0%

Table 12: Analysis of the differences in employee’s and owners’ opinion on the development of six specific forms of special interest tourism, both today and in the post-Covid 19 era

Type		Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Cultural	Employees	-14,5%	7,8%	6,7%
	Owners	-15,0%	8,1%	6,9%
Gastronomy	Employees	-14,6%	10,7%	3,9%
	Owners	-18,6%	10,8%	7,8%
Sports	Employees	-6,3%	-0,9%	7,2%
	Owners	-7,2%	1,8%	5,4%
Nature	Employees	-15,4%	12,1%	3,3%
	Owners	-11,3%	5,1%	6,2%
Adventure	Employees	-12,1%	7,3%	4,8%
	Owners	-12,6%	5,4%	7,2%
Religious	Employees	-12,7%	5,3%	7,4%
	Owners	-12,6%	2,4%	10,2%

The next six comparative tables give the respondents’ views on the development of each form of special interest tourism suggested, both for now and in the post-Covid 19 era. The forms

presented here are as they were listed in the questionnaire and not by the highest percentage scored.

For current culture tourism the positive collective views were 85% while for the future were 70% (Table 13). The same decline was seen for both employees (81% versus 64%) and owners (86% versus 71%). For further culture tourism development major marketing efforts are needed that will need time to yield results.

Table 13: Importance of cultural tourism development now (left) and in the post-Covid 19 era

	Cultural tourism				Cultural tourism		
	Total (n=540)	Employees	Owners		Total (n=540)	Employees	Owners
Strongly Agree	57.7%	50.0%	62.2%	Strongly Agree	38.0%	37.4%	38.3%
Agree	27.2%	31.5%	24.6%	Agree	32.0%	29.6%	33.5%
Neutral	13.1%	17.0%	10.8%	Neutral	21.1%	24.8%	18.9%
Disagree	0.9%	0.5%	1.2%	Disagree	5.6%	5.8%	5.4%
Strongly Disagree	1.1%	1.0%	1.2%	Strongly Disagree	3.3%	2.4%	3.9%

In gastronomy tourism, that was the most popular form with 83.8% positive views, the gap was even greater. For current gastronomy tourism the positive collective views were 93.8% and for the future 76.6% (Table 14) while for employees the positive results were 93.7% versus 79.1% and for owners 93.7% versus 75.1%. Current research suggests that this differentiation might be due to growing concern for the maintenance of jobs, and the insufficiency of government measures (Madeira, Palrao and Mendes 2021).

Table 14: Importance of gastronomy tourism development now (left) and in the post-Covid 19 era

	Gastronomy tourism				Gastronomy tourism		
	Total (n=540)	Employees	Owners		Total (n=540)	Employees	Owners
Strongly Agree	81.8%	82.0%	81.4%	Strongly Agree	52.5%	54.3%	51.4%
Agree	12.0%	11.7%	12.3%	Agree	24.1%	24.8%	23.7%
Neutral	4.4%	4.3%	4.5%	Neutral	15.2%	15.0%	15.3%
Disagree	0.9%	0.5%	1.2%	Disagree	5.2%	4.4%	5.7%
Strongly Disagree	0.9%	1.5%	0.6%	Strongly Disagree	0,03	1.5%	3.9%

For sports tourism the current positive collective views were 59.4% and for the future 52.6% (Table 15) while for employees the positive results were 57.3% versus 51% and for owners 60.8% versus 53.6%. It seems that for the development of sports tourism respondents' views were low but balanced.

On the contrary, positive views on today's nature tourism development were extremely high: current collective positive views were 93.9% but for the future were significantly lower, 81%, while for employees the positive results were 93.1% versus 77.7% and for the owners 94.3%



versus 83%. These differences are difficult to be explained, as nature tourism needs only limited infrastructure and other resources to be developed in this specific destination.

Table 15: Importance of sports tourism development now (left) and in the post-Covid era

	Sports tourism				Sports tourism		
	Total (n=540)	Employees	Owners		Total (n=540)	Employees	Owners
Strongly Agree	28.3%	25.3%	30.3%	Strongly Agree	24.1%	23.8%	24.3%
Agree	31.1%	32.0%	30.5%	Agree	28.5%	27.2%	29.3%
Neutral	27.2%	28.6%	26.3%	Neutral	28.0%	27.7%	28.1%
Disagree	9.8%	11.2%	9.0%	Disagree	13.3%	16.0%	11.7%
Strongly Disagree	3.6%	2.9%	3.9%	Strongly Disagree	6.1%	5.3%	6.6%

Table 16: Importance of nature tourism development now (left) and in the post-Covid 19 era

	Nature tourism				Nature tourism		
	Total (n=540)	Employees	Owners		Total (n=540)	Employees	Owners
Strongly Agree	80.9%	77.1%	83.2%	Strongly Agree	60.6%	60.7%	60.5%
Agree	13.0%	16.0%	11.1%	Agree	20.4%	17.0%	22.5%
Neutral	4.4%	4.9%	4.2%	Neutral	12.2%	17.0%	9.3%
Disagree	1.1%	1.5%	0.9%	Disagree	4.1%	3.4%	4.5%
Strongly Disagree	0.6%	0.5%	0.6%	Strongly Disagree	2.8%	1.9%	3.2%

Similar results we seen from the answers on adventure tourism. Current collective positive views on adventure tourism were 84% and for the future 71.7% (Table 16), while for employees the positive results were 83.5% versus 71.4% and for the owners 84.4% versus 71.8%. Adventure tourism does not need important infrastructure development, as it is mostly nature-based: it needs however new, specialized and dedicated travel agencies.

Table 17: Importance of adventure tourism development now (left) and in the post-Covid era

	Adventure tourism				Adventure tourism		
	Total (n=540)	Employees	Owners		Total (n=540)	Employees	Owners
Strongly Agree	57%	57.3%	56.9%	Strongly Agree	43.4%	40.3%	45.2%
Agree	27%	26.2%	27.5%	Agree	28.3%	31.1%	26.6%
Neutral	12.4%	13.6%	11.7%	Neutral	18.5%	20.9%	17.1%
Disagree	2.2%	1.9%	2.4%	Disagree	6.5%	5.8%	6.9%
Strongly Disagree	1.4%	1.0%	1.5%	Strongly Disagree	3.3%	1.9%	4.2%

Finally, religious tourism, although ranked last, gave balanced results. The current collective positive views were 68.2% and for the future 55.6% (Table 17), while for employees the positive results were 66.6% versus 53.9% and for the owners 69.1% versus 56.5%. This probably reflects the fact that no major infrastructure development is needed.

Table 18: Importance of religious tourism development now (left) and in the post-Covid era

	Religious tourism				Religious tourism		
	Total (n=540)	Employees	Owners		Total (n=540)	Employees	Owners
Strongly Agree	35.4%	35.0%	35.6%	Strongly Agree	25.2%	23.3%	26.3%
Agree	32.8%	31.6%	33.5%	Agree	30.4%	30.6%	30.2%
Neutral	21.7%	23.3%	20.7%	Neutral	25.2%	28.6%	23.1%
Disagree	5.7%	6.8%	5.1%	Disagree	11.1%	10.7%	11.4%
Strongly Disagree	4.4%	3.3%	5.1%	Strongly Disagree	8.1%	6.8%	9.0%

#### 4. Discussion

The COVID19 pandemic revealed how frail the current global economic system is, especially tourism economy (Sharma, Thomas and Paul 2021, Lew et al 2020, Paraschi 2020). Indeed, among the various economic activities, tourism was affected first and will probably be the last to overcome this crisis. However, the COVID19 pandemic might also be an important opportunity for the global tourism industry in order to restart on a more solid basis: many scholars believe that in the post-COVID 19 era mass tourism should no longer be the single viable option for many Mediterranean countries (ETC 2020, Lew et al 2020, Paraschi 2020, Roman, Niedziolka and Krasnodebski 2020, Seraphin and Dosquet 2020) while others also think that destinations should adopt new models of sustainable management based on four pillars: economy, society, nature and health and safety (ETC 2020, Galvani, Lew and Perez 2020, SETE 2020, Seraphin and Dosquet 2020, Sigala 2020, Uhodnikova et al 2020). This can be achieved by both supporting very small and medium-sized community enterprises and encouraging locals to maintain their customs, language, traditional professions and the local cuisine: this way a strong identity will be formed that may prove to be durable in future crises (ECTAA 2021, Everingham and Chassagne 2020, Samarathunga and Gamage 2020, United Nations 2020, WTO 2020a, b, Zukhri and Rosalina, 2020).

In Greece the pandemic, according to a report of the Ministry of Tourism, revealed the need for a tourism product that will be consistent with sustainability and digitization (Greek Ministry of Tourism 2020). The Hellenic Association of Tourism and Travel Agencies on the other hand (HATTA 2021) emphasizes on sustainability in combination with corporate social responsibility and the orientation to local communities and environmental awareness.

In our study, although most respondents think that the current tourism development status of Chania is satisfactory, 80% stated that the tourism product offered needs to be redefined in order to become more attractive for tourists in the competitive environment of the post-Covid 19 era and especially during the first years after the pandemic. As a result, almost 90% of respondents stated that there is a need for the development of specific special interest tourism forms in the prefecture of Chania.

For this, six specific forms were proposed for the current period: cultural tourism (proposed by 71.8% of the respondents), gastronomic tourism (75.1%), adventure tourism (71.8%), religious tourism (56.5%) and sports tourism (53.6%). All these forms for many years operated in parallel with mass (holiday) tourism but can independently attract many visitors if adequate infrastructure is developed. These forms however, when considered for the post-covid 19 era are

not strongly supported, as respondents are sceptic about the fast recovery needed for the first post-pandemic years and appear unwilling to take major risks. It seems that they prefer to play safe and continue business as before, offering mainstream holiday tourism services rather than expanding to activities that need time, money, infrastructure and excessive marketing efforts. Despite that, however, there is a strong indication that these forms will be highly supported in the future, when tourism activities will return to normal and the tourism product offered will have to be differentiated and expand to new special interest fields.

## 5. Conclusions

Local stakeholders and tourism professionals, along with the regional and central government officials, must thoroughly study all destinations (mature, problematic or declining) and analyze all available data in order to adopt a developmental strategy and propose the most appropriate infrastructure for each specific special interest tourism form that their research reveal as suitable for the destination in question. This will lead to further development of these destinations, making them more attractive and able to compete in future excessive demand for sustainability, social responsibility, digitalization and product differentiation expected in the post-Covid 19 era.

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# Exploring the main elements of a post Covid- 19 destination management and branding strategy for the city of Kastoria

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## Abstract

*After the COVID-19 pandemic outburst the need to establish the image of a safe but yet attractive city or destination became evident and city officials tried to combine destination management measures and placemaking practices with a city branding strategy. The purpose of the paper is to analyse the potential development of tourism and destination branding, before and after the Covid-19 pandemic for the city of Kastoria, within this context. Special reference is made on specific groups of tourists (city break tourists, tourists assessing Greece by car) before and after the pandemic based on previous research. Drawing on destination management, urban planning and place branding as crucial ingredients for sustainable tourism development, crisis management is also seen as a main element of the discussion. The crisis of the traditional fur sector, the launching of new leisure activities in the lake and the easy access due to the new road network have been discussed as part of a rebranding strategy the last decade, but now the pandemic crisis offers the opportunity for a stronger destination relaunch. The paper reflects critically on the current discussions regarding the city as an attractive destination and the efforts to build a new reputation.*

**Keywords:** Place branding, Destination management, Special interest tourism, Crisis, Covid 19, Kastoria, Greece

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to add evidence to the discussion on post-covid tourism management through a case study and a survey that was conducted before the Covid - 19 pandemic outburst, regarding the potential development of tourism for the city of Kastoria. The city was hit severely by the COVID-19 pandemic quite hard, linking the city with an image of a high infection/death toll and strict measures. Not only for Kastoria, but for many countries, regions and cities the negative effect of the pandemic created a challenge, especially for the tourism sector. It is therefore more crucial than before the outbreak that destinations and its stakeholders develop a destination management plan, in order in the first place to minimize the negative effects and moreover to create a safe and attractive destination within a long-term branding development. Many researchers believe that promoting an attractive image and identity of a place, region or city, is the key to attract investments and consequently tourism,

but they also acknowledge that it's not easy to maintain the positive image of the destination without significant effort for a long time (Avraham and Ketter, 2016). Nowadays, this challenge becomes even more difficult as the scenarios for the post-pandemic condition of tourism are open and destination management organizations in Kastoria and elsewhere need to work on this reality.

Kastoria is a small city of 20.174 inhabitants, located in the northwestern territory of Macedonia region in Greece. It is built on the shore of lake Orestiada and surrounded by famous mountains "Vitsi" and "Grammos". The city is well known domestically as the city with the most byzantine churches in Greece, the traditional architecture kept from the byzantine and the ottoman era, the lake and its surrounding natural environment and the traditional fur clothing – craft industry (Konsola and Karachalis, 2010). According to the institute of the Association of Greek tourism enterprises (SETE), for the year 2018 Kastoria was the city with the highest amount of hotel beds, specifically 2.078 beds, among the cities in the Region of Western Macedonia ([www.insete.gr](http://www.insete.gr)). The city can be easily reached through the Egnatia road system and has a small airport for domestic flights. The city can be considered as one of the most attractive and picturesque tourist cities in Greece and recently developed a reputation as a city break destination.

The research outcomes highlight the necessity for a strong restart of Kastoria as a destination based on contemporary branding and the destination management practices that follow a more sustainable path. The city has been promoting alternative forms of tourism (i.e. recreational tourism, cultural tourism, religious tourism, agritourism etc.), after the loss of income from the traditional fur sector. Still, the current situation calls for a new plan in order to confront the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The most crucial element for a destination in times of crisis is a destination management plan (DMP) which will aim to promote its strengths, revert the weaknesses into opportunities and minimize possible threats. This plan must also include a branding plan to optimize the view of the tourists and create a distinctive story for the destination. According to Y. Wang (2011), it should be understood that the tourism system is not an independent or closed system, it relies, relies on external or environmental factors, such as sociocultural, economic, political, physical, etc. which create the need for a strategic response.

Following the same line of reasoning, destination marketing and management has been, and will continue to be, affected by multiple external factors which serve as the driving forces. Pearce and Schanzel (2015) in their review described the key elements should taken under consideration when creating the DMP in three main categories. The first category includes a set of activities, attractions, attributes, experiences, products or services on the destination, the second includes a geographical dimension, with particular locations, areas, regions or spaces at a range of scales from the local to the macro-regional, with debate occurring over whether the boundaries of destinations are fixed or fluid and the last is defined from either a demand or supply perspective in which the first two groups of characteristics are seen either in terms of the tourists' needs, perceptions and experiences or with regard to the multiple private sector providers and relevant public sector organizations who offer a range of products and services. Sustainable tourism is seen a a key element, with many challenges when addressed on a city level. According to Hinch (1996) although planning and management at a site level is relatively simple, a city is much more difficult to manage as a destination given the myriad of other forces

acting within the urban environment, these well-intentioned efforts may be overwhelmed. Evans (2000) proposes that an essential methodological and policy priority would require a holistic approach to incorporate all of these areas of provision.

The meaning and importance of a brand for a country, a city or a city and its connection to strategy goals is at the center of discussions around local tourism development (Kolb 2006, Deffner et al. 2020). The American Marketing Association defines brand-name as one name, one condition, a sign, a symbol or a combination of the above that help identify the products or services of a unit and help it is different from its competitors ([www.ama.org](http://www.ama.org) ). Furthermore, Aaker (1997) believes that the primary role of a brand is to classify its goods and services and offers of a destination, as well as the features of their differentiation from those of competitors. Hankinson (2004) agrees with the above definition and adds that value of a brand comes from its reputation, its perceived quality as well as its belief in it. As Dinnie (2004) argues, that there are many reasons for places to manage and control their brand, including the necessity to attract tourists and businesses. This requires places and, in particular, cities to consciously create a brand and compete effectively at a global level. The correct and effective creation and implementation of place branding requires the understanding of basic marketing practices. The ultimate target of place branding is both the development of the city, which mainly originates from attracting investment from tourists as well as attracting human resources (Metaxas, 2010). Destination management and branding, are, arguably, moving towards a more open and democratic mentality; the image of a city that allows experimentation and is open to new ideas becomes attractive to various segments (Karachalis 2021).

As a large part of the place branding and destination management literature refers to nations, larger districts and world cities, smaller cities are often examined within a framework which is not suitable. Smaller cities can have other advantages compared to world cities, especially in a time that sustainability, green transition, participatory processes and placemaking is connected to the place branding discussion (Richards and Duif, 2018). Koumara-Tsitsou and Karachalis (2021) argue that in some cases traditional crafts could play a key role in combining economic recovery with sustainable tourism goals. This opens up a discussion on the role of local assets and the role of stakeholder management.

In order to build a strong brand identity for a city or a country it should meet certain criteria, according to Helmy (2008). Thus, to develop one strong brand in a city there should be based on research. The slogan will be a promise for the visitor, which means all the particular features of regions or cities must be promoted and advertised. In addition, many cities suffer from a negative stereotype image, which could be substituted by a fresh and true city image throughout the brand. One city or one country must also have a uniqueness as mentioned above, because this is what contributes to policymaking steps to be followed (Helmy, 2008). Social media, but also other channels, can also help notably in developing a strong brand for a city or city of a region. Finally, on-line tourism guide-books can also enhance the product, as such materials include structured information for guests in one place as they handover the experience of a visitor by indicating the sights, places of attentiveness, places to visit, etc. Some of the factors which affect the image and thus the brand of a city are climate, products and services, companies that provide products and services, foundations in civil society, the economic sector and specialization of production (Hazime, 2011).



The paper intends to link the discussion on destination management and branding to the city of Kastoria. The results of a visitors' survey conducted before the outburst of Covid -19 are presented in order to describe in depth the opinion, beliefs and needs of the tourists regarding the city. Also, these results will help diagnose the strengths but also the weak points and limitations of the destination, which are critical variables to focus on, for conducting a destination management plan and consequently implementation of a branding strategy. Both quantitative and qualitative data aimed to be collected to enable in depth understanding from the potential tourists from the destination. The survey entailed the collection of a sample of 200 individuals, which visited nearby Thessaloniki as domestic tourists. The sample consisted of visitors of a hotel and the questionnaire was filled in on the spot. Apart from that, the opinion of key informants living in Kastoria has been used in order to reflect on the post-pandemic period for the city and the current discussions. Also, the research is updated with information from the local press, the current debates on post-covid tourism response and the new situation in the tourism industry. The outcomes are presented in a brief way in this paper, with some first comments on future policy recommendations.

## **2.Kastoria as a tourism destination: findings and analysis**

In this section the findings of the visitor study for the city of Kastoria are presented, followed by brief explanation and analysis of the findings. These findings can become a reference point for future research in this field and also a first input in the discussion of for a future destination management and branding strategy.

Regarding the sample which consists of persons that have visited the area, 51,50% of the respondents were men and 48,50% were women, while almost half of the respondents (49%) are over 66, 47.5% are 30-65 years old and 3.5% are 18-29 years old. Regarding employment status it should be noted that apart from the majority of active private/public sector employees and self-employed, 24% was unemployed and 11,50% retired. More than half of the respondents have an income under 1000 Euro a month (up to 500 Euro with 28%, while 24% said they have a monthly income of 501-1000 euros), but there is also an important proportion (22,5%) with an income of over 2.000 Euro. 17% of the respondents had not visited Kastoria and are therefore only taken into consideration in table 3. 40,5% claimed to have visited Kastoria many times, 23% visited the Kastoria region once before, 19,5% visited both Kastoria and the area. Moreover, regarding the purpose of visiting Kastoria, 31% of respondents have visited Kastoria for holidays, 29.5% have visited the area on business, 20% have visited the area to visit friends and relatives, 11% has visited the area for a specific event, 5.5% has visited the greater Kastoria region for entertainment and 2.5% has visited the Kastoria area for shopping. The reason of visit varies a lot within the sample allowing a better analysis of motivation.

As per the duration of the tourists stay, 54% of respondents visited Kastoria from 1 to 2 days, 35.5% visited the area from 3 to 5 days and 10.5% visited the area for more than 5 days. Regarding the way of transition, 55% of respondents have arrived in Kastoria by private means of transport, 21.5% have arrived in Kastoria by buses, 16.5% by airplane and 7% by excursion bus. In addition, in the essential question about the character of visit shows that 59% of the respondents visited exclusively Kastoria and 40.50% would visit other parts of the municipality of Kastoria. 45,5% visited the city alone instead of 23% which visited the city with friends. As per

the duration of visit 54% stayed 1-2 days when a 35,5% stayed between 3-5 days. A 54% of the respondents answered that visited the city by private means of transport and also a 76% estimated that spend 25- 50 Euro per day on the destination excluding the transportation costs. Furthermore, from the tables of sightseeing preferences of the respondents were interested on visiting the majority of the sight in the region with answers vary from 34,10% to 40,20%. Similarly, regarding the available activities on the destination such as shopping, nightlife, activities in nature etc. the interests of the respondents varied from 24,90% up to 34,10%. It could be therefore claimed that the amenities Kastoria offers include a variety of activities, while easy access from most parts of Greece is a key advantage of the destination and is therefore suitable for city breaks or short stays.

45.50% claimed to have visited the area alone, 23% visited the area of Kastoria with friends, 19% of respondents visited the area of Kastoria with relatives and 11.50% visited region as a member of a group. Regarding the amount of money, they spent daily on the destination excluding the transportation costs, 76% spent in the Kastoria region from 20 to 50 euros in addition to transport costs, 16% spent between 50 and 75 years and 8% spent in Kastoria under 25 euros. When participants were asked what local products, they would purchase from Kastoria upon their visit, 45% responded that they bought fur products, 37.5% bought tsipouro, 12% bought preserves, 4.5% bought mushrooms and 1% bought wine.

Table 1: Activities in Kastoria

Activities	Percentage
Shopping in the city's shops	34,10%
Outdoor activities (hiking, agritourism, horse riding, etc.)	34,10%
Night life	27,90%
Visit to museums, archaeological sites, Library and Stationery	24,90%
Coffee - Food	24,90%
Business visits / meetings	24,90%
Monitoring / attending a conference	24,90%
Visit to nearby villages	24,90%

As shown in Table 1 regarding the key activities the respondents have chosen during their visit (-s), most of them (34,10%) claimed to have shopped in local shops or carried out physical outdoor activities such as hiking, agritourism, horse riding etc. (34%) Especially the second activity is one of the key activities the city officials want to promote within a sustainable tourism plan. Night life, museums and archaeological sites, coffee and food, business visits and meetings - conferences and neighboring villages are the next most popular choices. Regarding attractions the Lake waterfront is the obvious attraction most respondents filled in, while museums, historical mansions follow. The nearby Ski center is also a key motive for some of the visitors. The way the respondents evaluate key statements regarding the tourism attractiveness of Kastoria reveals some interesting facts and table 3 adds more evidence to the preferences and opinions of the tourists attracted to the city and their opinion regarding the development of

Kastoria.: respondents feel that Kastoria is not that strongly associated with an attractive tourism destination, while they recognize the strong potential in several special interest tourism sectors.

Table 2: Attractions of the city of Kastoria

Sights of the city of Kastoria	Percentage
Folklore Museum	40,20%
Lake waterfront pedestrian area	40,20%
Monastery of Mavriotissa	34,10%
Byzantine Museum of Kastoria	34,10%
Archaeological Museum of Argos Orestiko	34,10%
The "Mansions" of Kastoria	34,10%
Ragoutsaria carnival	34,10%
Vitsi Ski Center	34,10%
The Dragon's Lair	34%
Museum of Costumes	12,70%
Aquarium of Kastoria	6%

Also, 73% of respondents fully agree or agree that the city of Kastoria is world – famous as a destination, 30% agree with this view. Most of the of respondents are neutral to the view that the city is well known for its assets. In the question regarding the cultural heritage of the city, most of the respondents recognize this quality

Table 3: Perception of respondents for the tourism image of Kastoria

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Most people have a positive view of the city as a tourist destination	1%	5%	29%	32%	33%
The city is world – famous as a destination	-	4%	23%	30%	43%
The city is well known for its assets	-	10%	37%	31%	22%
The city has a rich cultural heritage	1%	5%	29%	32%	33%
The city is attractive for young People	3%	18%	30%	23%	26%
Archaeological-museum tourism can be developed	3%	11%	16%	37%	33%
Agrotourism can be developed	1%	3%	11%	27%	58%
Religious tourism can be developed	3%	1%	18%	24%	54%
Family tourism can be developed	-	3%	17%	36%	44%

Recreational tourism can be developed	4%	3%	12%	36%	45%
Accessible information on Kastoria	3%	1%	18%	24%	54%
The city is promoted efficiently	-	3%	17%	36%	44%
The cities authorities are very efficient in tourism promotion	3%	1%	18%	24%	54%

Following up on the above survey and in the context of the discussion on the tourism recovery of the city, some other elements were also brought up, e.g. the fact that the airport is under-used and could be bringing more visitors to the city or the opportunities to reach specific segments such as young visitors that come to Kastoria for the River Party Festival. When the participants were asked if the city is attractive to the young generation, most of the respondents argue that the city is attractive for young people and this could be a key input for a future marketing goal. During the 2020 summer period car-tourism was also a key determinant of tourism visits, especially from the Balkan countries.

### 3. Discussion

The results of the visitors' survey allow for some general comments regarding the way the average traveler perceives the key characteristics of Kastoria. Opportunities are highlighted in relation to special interest tourism. For example, regarding the development of archaeological tourism in the city of Kastoria over 70% agree or strongly agree on its significance. This percentage is even higher for agritourism and religious tourism, while family trips and recreation also score high. The respondents think that the promotion is rather effective already, which means that the local policy makers should be looking onto further promotion to specific tourism segments in the context of particular assets of the destination.

Obviously, the above opinions can only be seen as an indication, still they allow to further discuss the future steps in tourism planning for Kastoria. Regarding the current debate the above results offer some first indications regarding the recognition of the destination. The survey's results show that Kastoria is established and recognized as a city break destination, with some key attractions being recognized by the domestic visitors. Based on the key informants' opinion but also on articles from the local press some main issues will be determining the future steps of the city.

First of all, it is generally acknowledged that the exclusive development of the fur industry for many decades as a profitable economic activity has not allowed to develop a tourism-friendly mentality. Internal marketing should therefore be prioritized. Stakeholder management is weakness regarding destination management, this has been evident during the COVID19 pandemic which hit the city in a very severe way. Ketter and Avraham (2021) refer to the way destinations continued marketing themselves during the pandemic crisis and describe specific marketing strategies that are effective in order to confront similar situations in the future. Kastoria's policymakers should look into these best practices and deal with the future challenges within the context of a DMO where local stakeholders will be represented.

Connectivity is a key issue as the airport and the road network offer opportunities for city break development. City breaks are very much reliable on transport access and Kastoria has a strong advantage – especially if the lake is used for hydroplanes (Karachalis and Deffner, 2022). Most importantly, as Kastoria offers many opportunities for outdoor activity and special interest tourism in connection with the lake, a rebranding strategy is more than evident. This could be combined with the effort of the regional authorities which are already putting Kastoria in the spotlight as the main attraction of the region; its image is dominant in the tourism portal (Western Macedonia Tourism Portal 2021). The positive evaluation of the visit and the generally the attractive image of the city among domestic tourists is already an important advantage: as shown in Table 3, 65% of respondents argued that most people have a positive view of the city as a tourist destination, while 29% have a neutral view and 6% disagree with this view. This means that Kastoria is recognized in a positive way and should start working on repeat visits and the attraction of new visitors. The establishment of a DMO and the creation of a roadmap for tourism recovery could be the next steps.

It is difficult to forecast how and to what extent the tourism sector will be recovering in the long-term, although some first projections show that the expectation for a full recovery are still difficult to determine (UNWTO 2020, Fotiadis et al 2021). Therefore, any destination will be moving between different scenarios regarding strategic planning; this is the case for Kastoria as well. The research, based on both quantitative and qualitative research, has highlighted the main aspects and current state of the city Kastoria as a tourism destination. The city is at a crossroad and decisions made in the coming period will determine its future tourism potentials. Despite the shortcomings of this research (e.g. a second survey would be need in order to examine possible changes during and after the COVID 19 pandemic), some main outcomes have been presented regarding the characteristics and preferences of the visitors of the city, as well as some key findings regarding the next day after the re-opening of the borders for the tourism sector.

As a destination Kastoria is already recognized as an attractive destination, so a strategy needs to focus on applying a destination management plan. The most important challenge is not in the external environment but can be detected within the destination's capacity to plan and implement a cohesive strategy: a DMO, an effective stakeholder management scheme and a more effective promotion of its "green" tourism profile are key factors for the next day. The COVID-19 pandemic's effects and the loss of tourist income is seen as a major threat for Kastoria, but the reactions that have been announced by city officials can be considered as inadequate: they do not capture the trends and current practices in participatory destination management and branding. The particularities of Kastoria and the ongoing discussion on its branding strategy. The findings lead to first policy recommendations which could lead to specific actions. Further research regarding the next steps in the context of the post-pandemic situation and the willingness of tourists to travel to Kastoria would shed more light into the potential tourism recovery of the city.

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# Instagram Advertising for Museum Marketing: Testing Alternative Advertising Appeals to Attract Visitors

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## Abstract

*This study investigates the influences of museum marketing communications through social media. The Louvre Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates is the focus for this study – a modern museum combining traditional exhibits with contemporary activities. The primary research question addressed in this study tests effectiveness of alternative social media message appeals. Seven distinct message appeals were identified among illustrations of real campaigns posted by The Louvre Abu Dhabi on their official Instagram page. Respondents were asked to indicate how much each Instagram post would interest / motivate them to visit The Louvre Abu Dhabi. Reactions were rated along a 5-point Likert scale – 1 being very little and 5 being very much. A total of 255 respondents participated in the survey, capturing information about the message appeals, respondent’s social media usage, and attitudes about visiting the Louvre Abu Dhabi. Responses were analyzed using chi-square contingency tables and ANOVA analysis of mean rating scores. Analysis indicates that significant differences exist among respondents’ reactions to alternative message appeals.*

**Keywords:** Museum marketing, Communication, Digital marketing, Social media, ANOVA

## 1. Introduction

All around the world, leisure time is enjoyed relaxing and engaging in preferred activities, experiences, attractions, or events that we enjoy away from our work or daily routines. How and where we choose to spend this time arises from the expected level of enjoyment we are looking to experience. “Through participation in leisure activities people build social relationships, feel positive emotions, acquire additional skills and knowledge, and therefore improve their quality of life” (Brajša-Žganec, Merkaš & Šverko, 2011). In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Abu Dhabi has rapidly developed a great variety of leisure activities – both indoor and outdoor – in seeking economic diversification through tourism to counter a reliance on oil revenues (Sharpley, 2002). As such, the options for leisure activities and experiences for local residents and visiting tourists has been growing exponentially.

One such leisure activity is the recently developed Louvre Abu Dhabi Museum. Traditionally, museum marketing programs focused on promoting curated collections and exhibits, and



managing overall reputation (Bradford, 1994). Today, cultural and heritage marketing campaigns emphasize broader experiential aspects that drive visitation (Kirezli, 2011). Integrated within the fabric of collective communities – both physical and virtual – museums celebrate multi-faceted aspects of culture and heritage. Today, media technologies are rapidly transforming museums from spaces of looking and learning to spaces of interaction, participation, and engagement (Carlsson, 2020).

The Louvre Abu Dhabi provides a unique world class attraction with multiple characteristics that give it a distinctive placement within the city, and thus an ideal focus for this study. The Louvre Abu Dhabi is relatively new, having opened to the public in November 2017. Being located in the UAE provides the museum with a unique aspect of being the largest art museum in the Arabian Peninsula occupying approximately 24,000 square meters – 8,000m<sup>2</sup> of which is gallery space (Hambly, 2019).

The design for this museum was executed based on the French architect Jean Nouvel's unique vision as the heart of a new urban quarter for the UAE's capital city. A symphony in concrete, water, and the subtle play of reflected light, its design was inspired by the region's rich architectural traditions and the museum's unique location at a point where the Arabian sky meets the sands of Saadiyat Island and the waters of the Arabian Gulf. The floating dome alone has been a signature of the museum and was created in such a way that as lights passes through it, known as the 'rain of light' (Louvre Abu Dhabi, 2021). In addition, the location amidst surrounding water makes it a unique experience to just be within the expanse of the museum environment.

As such, the Louvre Abu Dhabi offers attractions, activities and restaurants along with traditional museum exhibits and displays. Visitors can partake in multiple pursuits; examples include varied workshops and masterclasses offered for adults and children at different times of the day, yoga under the dome, kayak riding around the surrounding sea water, tours of the external structure as well as the museum itself, and school trip performances. A variety of restaurants and cafés on site are available to choose from, as well as the Louvre park, which can be the perfect way to admire the architecture of the Louvre while out in the sun (Louvre Abu Dhabi, 2021). This array of activities allows residents of the city to enjoy the Louvre even if they are not intending to peruse the artwork, as the location itself provides an enjoyable leisure experience.

Traditionally, museum marketing appeals are driven by building brand recognition, with campaigns focusing on the art, architecture, and history of the museum and its exhibits. Today, however, museums are increasingly integrating social media content to deliver extended experiences and entertainment. Digital media platforms expand the museum experience beyond the borders of time and place (Vassiliadis & Belenioti, 2017). Framing relevant message elements and appeals are critical to effectively influencing potential patrons. Marketing professionals need to know what aspects are most influential across a broad range of possible museum attributes and associations. Thus, the primary purpose of this study investigates the influence of alternative museum marketing messages via a social media platform.

## **2.Literature Review**

Local museums provide a sense of community and place by celebrating a collective heritage, offering a great way to get to know the history of a particular area (Carlsson, 2020a). Carlsson

(2020b) asserts that museums are more important today than ever before, as they help bring unity, address social issues, and transform our outlook of the future.

In the traditional sense, museums are homes to extensive and exclusive artifacts, some specific to the region where the museum is located while others are international. Arising as private collections of nobility and the wealthy, museums were “wonder rooms or cabinets of curiosity” displaying unique valuables (British Library, 2021). From their origins, museum intentions were focused on attracting visitors, and most marketing campaigns seek to drive visitation and generate increased footfall. Moreno-Gil and Ritchie (2017) concluded that “repeat visitors and those who plan the visit in advance were found to have a more positive museums’ image for both the cognitive and the affective components of museum image”.

Research suggests that museum image and atmosphere impacts brand trustworthiness, perceived quality, visitor satisfaction, and experience, as well as visitors’ intentions to revisit. For the museums of today, returning loyal visitors are the essence for survival, and institutions must cater their services to these individuals to succeed (Piancatelli, Massi, & Vocino, 2021).

Creating repeat interest and appeal means that attention should be directed to both the core museum offering and the augmented experience. Collections and exhibitions form the core product of a museum, whereas the augmented experience derives from museum services, such as the retail shop, educational programs, and amenities. From a consumer perspective, the museum consists of a holistic experience. “Museums are increasingly facing the challenge to stay relevant for visitors, thus avoiding being perceived as outdated and obsolete institutions” (Piancatelli, Massi, & Vocino, 2021).

Thanks to recent advances in technology, what it means to be a museum is being questioned and challenged (Carlsson, 2020). Museums are increasingly being challenged to present a variety of narratives and societal perspectives in ways that appeal to broader audiences (Stuedahl & Lowe, 2014). Through technology, museums are able to become hubs for digitalization and presenting artworks in new and innovative ways which are unique and create new experiences (Carlsson, 2020). Witnessed by the recent global pandemic, digitalization has been credited with allowing individuals from all around the world to experience the sensations of an event or artwork from around the globe even without physical proximity to it. Pandemic restrictions have demonstrated that events in a particular time and space can be experienced emotionally by audiences in another time zone or geographic space as well (Sgourev, 2020).

Along these lines, social media have emerged as excellent communication channels to promote events and activities such as these. Research has shown that brand content published in social media can create interest and encourage users to learn more about those activities and drive engagement (e.g., Kim & Johnson, 2016; Rietveld et al., 2020). The use of visual imagery in sponsored messages has grown tremendously in recent years. Instagram, for example, is now the second leading channel after Facebook for marketing messages in social media (Statista Research Department, 2021). Thus, social media platforms are an increasingly important communication channel to inform, interest, and engage with potential patrons.

In this context, the creation of effective message appeals is an important consideration for marketing managers. Kusumasondjaja (2018) demonstrated different response effects generated by alternative message formats in Facebook and Instagram. Visual images are especially effective in driving user engagement, and Instagram is a social media platform well-suited for emphasizing visual content. Creative message appeals focused on visuals and aesthetics

will be more effective in engaging users and promoting interest (Casaló, Flavián, & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2021).

Clearly, museums today offer much more than the traditional image of passive displays they once represented. Employing ever-changing marketing strategies, technologies, and tools to create interesting and immersive museum experiences, this study investigates the influence of alternative advertising messages through social media platforms. Specifically, varied Instagram-format communication appeals were compared to assess their influence upon consumer interest and intention to visit the Louvre Abu Dhabi Museum. The primary research question addressed in this study measures consumer response to alternative message appeals. Results will shed light on understanding which message appeal types, if any, result in positive consumer intentions to visit the museum.

### **3. Research Methodology**

In this study, a survey was created to test differences among alternative Instagram advertising messages. Seven sample Instagram posts were selected to compare a range of classic exhibit/art-based campaign themes versus alternative messages focusing on augmented aspects of the museum experience. The survey illustrations represent a range of relevant message appeals selected from real campaigns on the Louvre Abu Dhabi's Instagram page. All messages taken from the Instagram page applied a similar layout with an image and caption (i.e., advertising copy) to represent the different campaigns that are used by The Louvre Abu Dhabi to attract new and repeat visitors.

Each message illustration was presented as an image and with the caption copy directly sourced from the Instagram page of the Louvre Abu Dhabi. Respondents then rated each post on a five-point scale with 1 – being “interest very little” and 5 – being “interest very much”.

A description of each message is summarized below:

#### *Message appeal 1: The artwork and exhibitions*

As a recent exhibition taking place in the Louvre Abu Dhabi, a description of the artwork and the exhibition addresses the traditional appeal to visit a museum for the artwork and exhibits.

#### *Message appeal 2: The Louvre Abu Dhabi facilities*

An image of a guided tour with a description of the facility and the multiple language options available addresses the second appeal for the experience of the exhibit coupled with the benefit of in-depth information and interaction with knowledgeable staff.

#### *Message appeal 3: The dining experiences*

An image relating to the dining experience in one of the restaurants available on site at The Louvre Abu Dhabi addresses an appeal which is not common in all museums – to enjoy the unique dining experience.

#### *Message appeal 4: The physical activities*

An image that demonstrates one of the physical activities available at The Louvre Abu Dhabi represents active experiences that include options such as art lessons, yoga, and kayaking. These types of activities are independent of the exhibits, and visitors can go to The Louvre Abu Dhabi specifically to participate in the activities alone.

#### *Message appeal 5: Museum staff expertise*

An image of a staff member with a caption describing their expertise in a field relating to the museum illustrates staff expertise and the ability to learn more about the museum through the staff interactions.

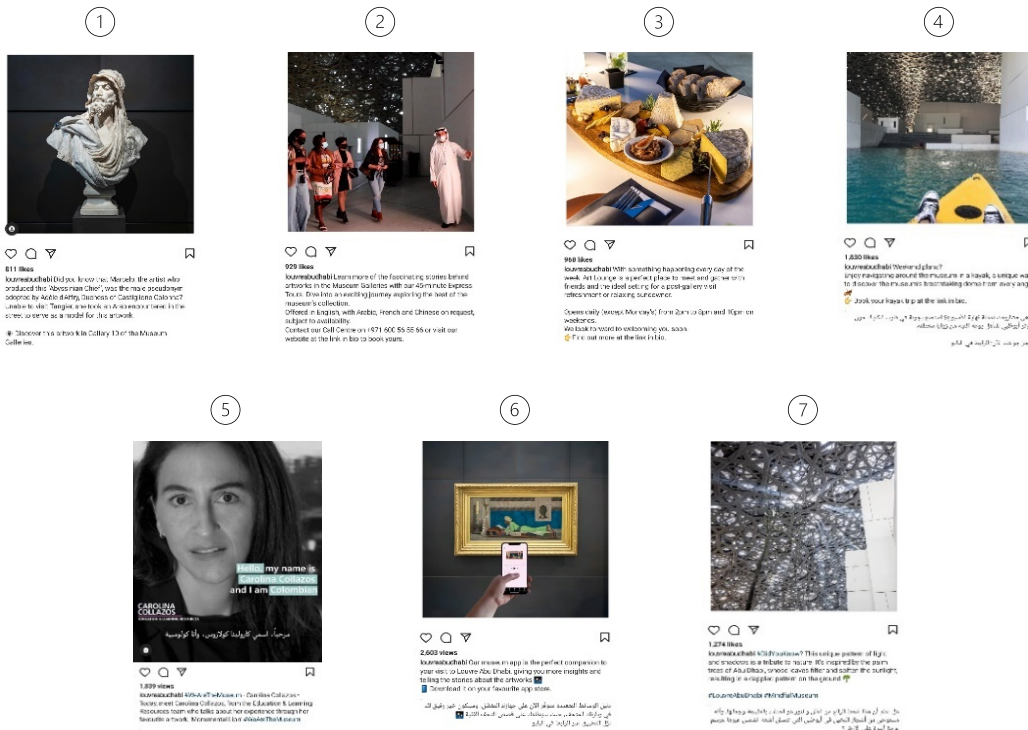
**Message appeal 6: Technology appeal**

A technology appeal explains the use of a Louvre Abu Dhabi mobile application that provides in-depth explanations for exhibits as a visitor scans the QR codes of these exhibits.

**Message appeal 7: Architecture appeal**

The unique design of the Louvre Abu Dhabi is an appeal focusing on the characteristic architecture of the museum exterior or interior. The selected image represents part of the skylight complex known as the Dome, which presents a unique environment experience for visitors.

The illustrations below demonstrate the different images and descriptions used in the survey. Respondents then rated their reactions to each post on a five-point scale reflecting low-to-high interest.



Illustrations of the seven Instagram advertising messages.

After exposing respondents to the seven message appeals and associated scale items, survey questions collected data capturing respondent profile characteristics, typical social media usage, and attitudes about leisure time preferences.

The survey was distributed through multiple social media channels, which included direct messages to approximately 2000 followers of The Louvre Abu Dhabi on Instagram, distribution to personal contacts network of the author, and through a link on multiple Facebook groups related to leisure and tourism activities in Abu Dhabi.

Targeted groups are open to the public and can be accessed by anyone, which provided a diverse distribution for the survey to respondents from all walks of life within the UAE and outside it. The survey was open for two weeks during March 2021, with multiple reminders and posts to allow for an increased number of participants.

#### 4. Findings and Analysis

A total of 255 responses were collected within the two-week period during which the survey was available. Respondents represented a diverse range of demographic characteristics, including ages, nationality, and length of residency or visiting Abu Dhabi.

Table 1: Age Ranges of Respondents

Age	Frequency
18 – 25	32
25 – 40	158
40 – 50	40
50 – 60	23
Over 60	2

Analysis of the rating scale responses for the seven message appeals is illustrated in Table 2 below. Each image was prefaced with the question “How much does this Instagram post interest/motivate you to visit The Louvre?”. Participants then indicated their response in a Likert scale question below the illustration.

Table 2: Scale Rating Frequencies and Mean Scores for Each Image

		Scale item ratings					
		Mean rating	1	2	3	4	5
Message appeals	Image 1	3.03	49	36	78	42	50
	Image 2	3.10	37	39	77	66	36
	Image 3	3.43	24	34	73	56	68
	Image 4	4.16	10	12	26	83	123
	Image 5	2.84	54	49	85	44	32
	Image 6	3.53	16	33	60	92	54
	Image 7	3.89	7	26	53	71	98

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to test the significance of differences observed among mean rating scores. Results of the ANOVA indicate that mean rating differences among the seven images were significant at the <.05 level, as per Table 3:

Table 3: ANOVA Results

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	349.127	6	58.18786	39.28633	4.75E-45	2.103674

Within Groups	2633.435	1778	1.48112			
Total	2982.562	1784				

Ranking the mean rating scores from highest to lowest illustrates which of the message appeals generated reactions from the most impactful/effective to least impactful/effective, as per Table 4 below:

Table 4: Ranking of Mean Rating Scores

Message appeal	Mean
Image 4	4.16
Image 7	3.89
Image 6	3.53
Image 3	3.43
Image 2	3.10
Image 1	3.03
Image 5	2.84

#### *Social Media Usage*

Respondents were asked to report on their social media usage habits, which included multiple questions about incidence and rate of usage. Overall, 92.5% of respondents indicated that they were ‘regular’ users of Instagram social media content.

Respondents were then asked to rank themselves as “Light, Medium or Heavy” users of Instagram, as an attitudinal reflection of self-reported behavior. Table 5 below illustrates the range of reported use:

Table 5: Self-reported Instagram Usage

Usage Level	Frequency
Heavy user	58
Medium user	114
Light user	64
Non-user	19

Further to this reflection, respondents were also asked to rate an hourly amount of usage with the question “How much time do you spend on Instagram in a day?” The range of responses indicate that while most respondents consider themselves medium users, a majority believe that they spend only around 1 hour a day on Instagram:

Table 6: Hours per Day using Instagram

Hours	Frequency
More than 3 hours	40
2 to 3 hours	48
1 to 2 hours	61

less than 1 hour	87
Not a user	19

Analysis of associations among social media usage and rating scores of the message appeals did not indicate any relationships influencing reactions. There are no apparent associations among social media usage rates and the influence of the message appeals.

*Interest and Intention to Visit the Louvre Abu Dhabi*

Lastly, respondents were asked about their interest and intention of visiting the Louvre Museum. Two questions probed attitude and behavior:

- Have you visited the Louvre Museum Abu Dhabi before?
- When thinking about spending your day off, do you consider visiting the Louvre Museum as an option?

Past visitations were split relatively evenly as per Table 7:

Table 7: Visited the Louvre Abu Dhabi Before

Responses	Percent
Yes	47.8%
No	52.2%

When thinking about spending a day off visiting the Louvre Museum, a majority of respondents were favorable:

Table 8: Interest/Intention to Visit the Louvre

Responses	Percent
Yes	63.5%
No	36.5%

Next, rating score reactions to the messages were analyzed in relation to past and intending visitation. Results indicated an interesting difference between actual experience visiting the Louvre Museum and interest/intention to visit. First, chi-square analyses were conducted among the series of contingency tables produced by past visit response and frequency distribution of message appeal rating scores. Similarly, intention to visit was also analyzed across all seven messages.

In comparing actual experience having visited the Louvre Abu Dhabi, there were no significant associations one way or the other influencing rating score reactions to most of the message appeals, except for Image 4 of the kayaking activity which was slightly more likely (<0.05 level) to interest respondents that have not yet visited the Louvre Museum. Reported interest and intention to visit the Louvre Museum, on the other hand, generated significant differences in reactions across all seven message appeals. In all image examples, respondents indicating a positive interest and intention to visit the Louvre were more likely to rate the message appeal more favorable:

**Table 9**  
Likelihood of Rating the Message Appeal Favorably

		Messages						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Past visit	No	NS	NS	NS	More *	NS	NS	NS
	Yes	NS	NS	NS	Less *	NS	NS	NS
Intention to visit	No	Less	Less	Less	Less	Less	Less	Less
	Yes	More	More	More	More	More	More	More
		* Significant at <0.05 level						

These findings were further substantiated by a series of two-sample T-tests performed among all combinations of visitation responses and message appeal rating scores.

**Table 10: Two-sample T-tests Among Visitation and Message Appeal Mean Rating Scores**

		Messages						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Past visit	No	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
	Yes							
Intention to visit *	No	2.28	2.47	2.98	3.88	2.30	3.01	3.38
	Yes	3.46	3.46	3.69	4.32	3.15	3.83	4.19
		* All significant at <0.01 level						

While it may appear obvious that Instagram message appeals would be rated more favorably among respondents expressing an interest and intention to visit the Louvre, the observations do reaffirm a few important points. Firstly, it would be beneficial to target individuals who are more predisposed with interest in the museum. Again, perhaps slightly obvious, but indicators such as 'following' Louvre social media accounts may be one option to target selective individuals. Also, among individuals in which the museum is not currently in their consideration set, advertisers should be aware that it will be less likely to convert awareness and consideration.

Lastly, among respondents indicating favorable interest and intention to visit the Louvre Abu Dhabi, a variety of primary reasons were explored. Relating back to the message appeal themes, respondents selected a preference from among five descriptive attributes:

- To enjoy the exhibits
- To enjoy the knowledge and advice of experts in the field
- To enjoy the food and facilities
- To enjoy the location / architecture
- To enjoy the additional activities (kayaking, yoga, garden walks, picnics, etc.)

Results among 162 respondents were:



**Table 11**  
Reasons Why Respondents Would Visit the Louvre Abu Dhabi

Responses	Percent Choosing
To enjoy the exhibits	36%
To enjoy the knowledge and advice of experts in the field	14%
To enjoy the food and facilities	2%
To enjoy the location / architecture	27%
To enjoy the additional activities (kayaking, yoga, garden walks, picnics, etc.)	21%

Thus, while the kayaking activity message appeal rated as the most influential advertising image, the art and exhibits were selected as the most relevant reason why respondents would visit the Louvre Abu Dhabi.

## 5. Discussion

Digital media platforms are now integral elements of museum marketing communication programs, given the evidence of influence digital content exerts upon consumer decision-making (Stephen, 2016). This study investigated what type of Instagram message appeals would be the most effective and impactful to create interest toward visiting the Louvre Abu Dhabi. Results indicate that significant differences do exist among alternative advertising appeals. Responses varied among different types of message elements, indicating that different types of museum message information are more and less influential in generating interest to visit.

In comparing alternative message points of information, posts that focused on aspects relating to the Louvre Abu Dhabi physical activities and experiences prompted the strongest degree of interest and intention to visit. The message appeal focusing on a kayaking activity was the most favored Instagram post, followed secondly by the image emphasizing an experience enjoying the unique architecture of the Louvre Abu Dhabi. Both messages offer contemporary alternatives to traditional museum marketing messages highlighting prominent exhibits and displays. Respondents were also more likely to react positively to the messages if they were predisposed with interest to visit the Louvre Abu Dhabi.

In contrast, messages emphasizing more traditional information about display collections and exhibit items generated the least amount of interest in visiting the museum. However, when stating a primary reason why one would visit the Louvre, museum exhibits ranked as the most popular motive. This contradiction may reflect the difference between advertising information and visitor intention. At the end of the day, museums do exist to provide an experience immersed in cultural history. Patrons know and expect this experience. Consequently, advertising messages merely reinforcing these themes may fall upon deaf ears (and 'eyes' amidst visual social media environments). Effective advertising is likely to benefit from introducing 'new news' for patrons, inciting additional interest in visiting the museum. In short, museums should not abandon their core purpose but also enhance the overall experience patrons can anticipate.

## 6. Conclusions

As cultural museums continue to embrace new marketing methods to attract visitors, understanding the impact of alternative message appeals in social media platforms is critical – similar to traditional advertising. These results indicate that even in the limited information format available via the social media platform environment, consumers perceive differences and reactions vary. The traditional emphasis on curated collections and exhibits does not appear to be the most motivating message in driving visitation. This research strongly indicates a shift in what information attracts consumers to a museum experience, and, as such, indicates a change to how museums are often marketed.

Like emerging trends in research, patrons are influenced by more experiential and holistic associations. Museum marketers should take heed to test social media messages and prioritize the most effective appeals. The same can be applied in other fields and to other attractions, where consumers might view traditional message themes as unimpactful. In contrast, a change in social media message strategies to address more experiential associations could prove effective in shifting consumer intention to visitor action. Future research could explore the contexts of different destination environments, such as exposition events and theme parks. Furthermore, future research could include in-depth motivation analyses, such as focus groups or personal interviews, to develop qualitative insights explaining more about the existing quantitative data observations.

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# COVID-19 and the Behaviour of Sector-wise Employment in the Hospitality Industry of the United States: Lessons from the Shocks of Past Pandemics

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this paper is to analyze the effects of historical shocks emanating from uncertainty on the employment patterns of the travel and hospitality industry in the United States in the context of the current global pandemic. The major research questions to be explored in this study include: How do historical shocks generated from uncertainty from earlier pandemics like SARS; H1N1; MERS and others impact employment in the hospitality sector? The study utilized the vector autoregressive (VAR) model to explore the effects of uncertainty shocks in a dynamic system on the hospitality sector. Several measures of uncertainty shocks are used in this study: World Pandemic Uncertainty Index, (Ahir et al., 2018); the stock market volatility measure (VIX), (Caggiano et al., 2018) and the index of consumer expectation. The results based on the impulse response function indicate that uncertainty shock emanating from the uncertainty indicators has a strong negative impact upon all sectors of the hospitality industry as far as employment is concerned. A diversified economic policy thrust could be suitable in the long-term for example i) waiver taxes for resilience and ii) thrust on the social security measures to safeguard against losses.*

**Keywords:** Leisure and hospitality sector; Sectoral employment; Pandemics; United States

## 1. Introduction

The global pandemic from the rapid spread of the COVID-19 has adversely impacted the travel, tourism and hospitality industries. Our paper is among the first to explore empirically the historical experiences of shocks emanating from past pandemics upon the employment levels of the hospitality sector of the United States. According to the latest report of the (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2020) (WTTC) owing to the current pandemic around 75 million workers are at risk of losing their jobs. The study by (Eichenbaum et al., 2020) through a theoretical model discussed the pandemic situation can be contained only through social distancing and travel restrictions. This would have a negative impact upon the economy which would be far more worsening than the recent global financial crisis. The study by (Barro et al., 2020) using proxies from the Spanish flu explained through historical evidence the disastrous impact of pandemics upon the economy. The paper by (Sobieralski, 2020) explored the impact of shocks arising from the past pandemics upon the employment pattern of the airline industry. The results showed that during periods of uncertainty the airline industry experienced job loss of about 7 per cent. The hospitality industry of the United States is threatened due to containment policies and travel restrictions. To analyze the impact of the pandemics on the employment patterns of the United States hospitality sector we set up a Vector Error Correction Model (VECM) and using monthly

historical data on different sectors of the hospitality industry we explore how uncertainty shocks impact employment. The novelty of the contribution of the paper is threefold: i) it examines the relationship between the hospitality sector and uncertainty owing to shocks occurring historically; ii) it has used dense time-series data and also disaggregated data on the hospitality sector and iii) it has initiated discussion on how employment patterns respond to historical shocks, an area of research which is rather scant. The major research questions to be explored in this study include:

- i) How does historical shocks of the Asian crisis; 11/9 crisis and global crisis impact employment patterns of the hospitality sector?
- ii) How does historical shocks generated from uncertainty from earlier pandemics like SARS; H1N1; MERS and others impact employment in major sub-sectors of the hospitality sector?

The hypotheses to be explored is as follows:

- I. The uncertainty owing to past pandemics and other crisis have a long-term negative impact on the employment of the hospitality industry in the US.
- II. The uncertainty owing to the past pandemics and other crises impact different sub-sectors of the hospitality industry in the US differently.

The paper henceforth is designed as follows the subsequent section discuss the major findings and the research gaps in the extant seam of literature. Section 3 provides an overview of the research methodology and data sets used. The empirical findings are found in Section 4. Section 5 discusses the major insights of the study. Finally, Section 6 concludes.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Pandemics, Uncertainty and the impact of shocks on the economy*

A wide range of literature has explored the impact of uncertainty shocks on output, employment, business cycles and the financial sector since the outbreak of the recent pandemic using different measures of uncertainty. The study by (Leduc and Liu, 2020) using a structural VAR model explained the uncertainty impact of COVID-19 on unemployment, interest rate and inflation using the volatility index. The paper concluded that the impact of uncertainty shocks is persistent upon the economy. Using a three-variate VAR model and using the global financial uncertainty index and the world production index the study by (Caggiano, Castelnuovo, and Kima, 2020) explained the uncertainty shocks of the COVID-19. The results predict about a 14 per cent shrinkage in world output in the post-pandemic situation. By constructing a news-based disease index the study by (Kholodilina and Rietha, 2020) explored the dynamic impact of the pandemic on the global economy using a VAR model. The study by (Ludvigson, Ma, and Ng, 2020) explored the macroeconomic impact of the deadly virus on the US economy. According to (Bernstein, et al., 2020) the shocks of the COVID-19 had a nonlinear impact on the vacancy decline and employment patterns of the US economy. In the non-linear framework unemployment peaks to 19.7 per cent post two months after the shock. Based on a Bayesian structural vector autoregression model and using monthly observations the study by (Brinca et al 2020) explored the impact of supply and demand shocks owing to the pandemic upon the global employment pattern and wages. Though the impact of the shocks was largely negative there appeared a divergent tendency across sectors.

The ongoing discussion in the recent literature has advanced some important crucial points of the economic and financial impacts of the pandemic COVID-19. The discussion concludes that the crisis will bring long-term losses in the labour market. However, the literature has not made substantial exploration on the prediction and magnitude of the uncertainty shocks upon the downturns in the labour market.

### *2.2 Pandemics and Uncertainty: impact of shocks on the Tourism and Travel industry*

According to the findings by (Karabulut et al., 2020; and Sonmez et al., 2020) the tourism industry is among the worst affected sector owing to the rapid spread of the pandemic, the COVID-19. This is due to domestic and international travel restrictions and the closure of borders. The study by (Yang et al., 2020) based on the dynamic stochastic general equilibrium model confirm the findings of Karabulut et al., 2020; and Sonmez et al., 2020). The research by (Sharma and Nicolau, 2020) discussed the differential impact of the pandemic upon the different sub-sectors of the travel industry for example airlines, hotels, cars on rent and cruises. The study found that the cruise is the worst hit owing to the spread of the pandemic. The research by (Gossling et al., 2021) compared the impacts of shocks from the COVID-19 with the previous shocks of the earlier pandemics upon the tourism and the hospitality sector. The study observed that the low-paid jobs in the hospitality sector in the lower-income countries will be worst affected owing to the disruptions caused by the pandemic. The paper concluded that there is an urgent need to draw lessons from the past as to how the tourism industry could be converted into a sustainable tourism industry.

Using panel data sets from 1995 to 2019 the research by (Škare et al., 2021) explored the impact of uncertainty owing to past pandemics upon the tourism industry. The study obtained based on a structural VAR model that as the adverse shocks die down the tourism industry revives instantaneously. However, the paper points out the impact of shocks owing to the recent pandemic, COVID-19 upon the tourism industry may be different. The recovery of the industry is strategically dependent upon proper policy coordination across different sectors. The study by (Khan et al., 2020) examined the adverse impact of the pandemic COVID-19 on the employment trends of the different sectors of the hospitality industry of the United States using an autoregressive distributed lag model based on daily observations. The paper concluded that the hospitality sector was adversely impacted in the short-run but over the long-run, it recovered. The study by (Sobieralski, 2020) explored the historical experiences of past epidemics and other disasters on the employment patterns of the airline industry. The paper using a VAR model obtained that the worst affected employees are those associated with passenger flights. The study obtained a drop in employment to about 7 per cent during periods of uncertainty owing to the epidemic situation of the past.

As evident from the aforesaid discussion, the COVID-19 pandemic has created financial duress in various sectors associated with the travel and tourism industry. The high transmission nature of the virus has obliterated the demand for tourism, travel and local sightseeing which has generated uncertainty on the nature of employment of these industries. However, the discussion in the current seam of the extant literature is inconclusive about the extent to which employment in the different sub-sectors of the travel and hospitality industry is impacted. This study attempts to address this gap in the seam of findings in the existing literature. Such findings will enable us to draw lessons as to how the bailout funds for bringing resilience in the travel and hospitality

sector can be prioritized. While the government of the United States have already announced fiscal packages to stimulate the hospitality sector the findings from this study will throw insights on the areas which need additional assistance in the near future to prevent it from collapse. The current study seeks to contribute to the extant literature by formally testing the role of global uncertainty shocks like the world pandemic uncertainty index, index of consumer expectation and the volatility measure upon the employment position of various sub-sectors of the hospitality industry using dense time-series data.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Econometric Methods

To explore the impact of shocks emanating from uncertainty upon the employment patterns in the hospitality sector along with the investigation of structural breaks we apply the standard econometric model developed in the time series literature. The first two tests on unit root namely the Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) (Elliot,1998) test and the Phillips and Perron (1988) unit root test are applied to explore the stationary properties of the time-series observations. To study the behaviour of structural breaks in the time series the study used the Zivot and Andrews (1992) unit root test. The US economy has registered major structural changes and ignoring them in the study would make our results spurious. Table (1) presents the important events that have generated uncertainty in the US economy and which are responsible for structural breaks in the series. According to (Perron. 1989) the ignorance of the importance of the structural breaks in the series would generate spurious results.

Table 1: Uncertainty owing to economic and pandemic disaster in the US Economy

Events	Year	Nature
Asian Financial Crisis	1998-1999	Economic crisis
9/11 Attacks	2001	Terrorist attacks
SARS	2003	Epidemic
Global Financial crisis	2007-2009	Economic crisis
H1N1	2009	Pandemic
MERS	2012	Pandemic
Ebola	2014	Pandemic
Zika	2016	Epidemic
COVID-19	2020	Pandemic

Second, after testing the order of integration of the variables the study explored the cointegrating relationship across the variables. This study used two tests on cointegration to obtain the long-run relationship of the observations. The cointegration test of Johansen-Juselius, (Johansen, 1988; Johansen and Juselius, 1990) is applied first. Further, the Gregory and Hansen (1996) cointegration test with structural break is applied to test for the series break. If the test series exhibit the cointegrating properties then the Vector Error Correction Model (VECM) is

applied otherwise if no cointegrating properties exist the Vector auto-regression model (VAR) is applied to explore the dynamic adjustments in the model behaviour.

#### The Vector Error Correction Model in the Presence of Structural Breaks

After testing the cointegrating properties the next step is to employ the VAR model if no cointegration exists or the VECM model if cointegration exists across the variables, to obtain the response of the dependent variable to the shocks owing to uncertainty. The model specification of the Vector Error Correction with structural break is developed following Hansen (2003). Equation (1) explains the VECM model with structural breaks

$$\Delta X_t = \alpha(t)\beta(t)'X_{t-1} + \sum_{i=1}^{k-1} \Gamma_i(t) \Delta X_{t-i} + \Phi(t)D_t + \varepsilon_t \quad (1) \quad t=1,2,\dots,T$$

Here  $\{X_t\}_{t=1}^T$  denotes the p-dimensional process which has m regimes and is thus affected by breakpoints.  $D_t$  stands for the unrestricted deterministic variables.  $X_{t-1}$  contain  $X_{t-1}$  which shows the deterministic restricted variables.

### 3.2 Data Description

#### Dependent Variables

The major dependent variable is employees in the hospitality and leisure industry of the US economy. Furthermore, the employees in the sub-sectors of the hospitality and leisure industry are also considered. The main sub-sectors include i) accommodation sector; ii) spectator in sports; iii) special food services; iv) recreational parks; v) restaurants; vi) performing arts; vii) amusement and other recreation sectors; viii) museums and historical places and ix) limited-service restaurants. Monthly observations from the first month of 1996 to the first month of 2021 are considered here.

#### Explanatory Variables

Several measures of uncertainty shocks are used in this study. The first measure of uncertainty used is the World Pandemic Uncertainty Index, (Ahir et al., 2018), this measure shows the impact of fear associated with uncertainty owing to pandemics. According to (Ahir et al., 2018) this index is associated with the discussion about pandemics. A higher number implies higher uncertainty surrounding the fear associated with pandemics. The second measure used here is the stock market volatility measure (VIX) which is widely used in the literature on macroeconomic uncertainty (Caggiano et al., 2018). The VIX is an important index for predicting the macroeconomy because it provides a quantifiable measure of the market sentiments of the investors. The third measure of uncertainty used here is the index of consumer expectation of the University of Michigan. The index of consumer expectation explains the behaviour of consumers to shocks in aggregate demand. The control variables used in the study are Gross Domestic Product per capita, oil prices, exchange rate and the rate of interest. According to (Mishra and Mishra, 2020) the control variables take into consideration the real, monetary and external sectors of the economy which might impact the behaviour of the employment pattern in the presence of uncertainty. The use of major macroeconomic variables as control variables reduces misspecification bias Monthly observations from the first month of 1996 to the first month of 2021 is considered here. All observations are converted to monthly frequency to keep conformity in the set of observations. Table (2) provides a detailed description of the variables and the data sets used in the current paper.



Table 2: Description of Variables and Data Sets

Explanatory Variables				
Serial No	Name of the Variable	Description	Symbol	Source
1	Gross Domestic Product Per capita	A comprehensive measure of U.S. economic activity per head population of the country.	GDPP	FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis <a href="https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/">https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/</a>
2	The Volatility Index	The Volatility Index is a real-time market index representing the market's expectations for volatility.	VIX	
3.	Exchange Rate	The exchange rate is the weighted average of a country's currency in relation to an index or basket of other major currencies.	EX	
4.	Interest Rate	The 3 Month Treasury Bill Rate is used here.	INT	
4.	Oil Prices	Brent is the major global price benchmark for Atlantic basin crude oils. It is one of the main benchmark prices.	OIL	Brent crude oil prices <a href="http://oilprice.com">http://oilprice.com</a> .
6.	Index of consumer expectation	The Index of Consumers Expectation is an indication of the future of national economy.	ICE	University of Michigan <a href="https://data.sca.isr.umich.edu/">https://data.sca.isr.umich.edu/</a>
7.	World Pandemic Uncertainty Index	The World Pandemic Uncertainty Index is constructed by counting the number of times uncertainty is mentioned within proximity to a word related to	WUI	Ahir, Hites and Bloom, Nicholas and Furceri, Davide, The World Uncertainty Index. DOI: <a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3275033">http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3275033</a>

		pandemics in the Economist Intelligence Unit country reports.		
Dependent Variables	Data in thousands			
1.	All employees in the leisure and hospitality sector in total.	It is obtained from the survey of National employment statistics.	E1	U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics <a href="https://www.bls.gov/">https://www.bls.gov/</a>
Sub Categories of the Hospitality Sector				
2.	All employees in the accommodation sector.		E2	
3.	All employees in the spectator sports.		E3	
4.	All employees in special food services.		E4	
5.	All employees in recreational parks.		E5	
6.	All employees in restaurants and other eating places.		E6	
7.	All employees performing arts and spectator sports		E7	
8.	All employees in amusement and other recreation industries		E8	
9.	All employees employed in museums and historical sites		E9	
10.	All employees in limited-service restaurants.	E10		

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**4. Findings and Analysis**

*4.1 Results based on the Econometric Model*

Results based on Unit Root Tests

Before the use of any time series methodology, it is essential to find the order of integration of the time series observations, (Granger and Newbold, 1974). The study applied the Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) (Elliot,1998) unit root test and the Phillips and Perron (1988) unit root test to test the stationary properties of the observations. Results of Table (3) show that all the variables are of I(1).

Table 3: Unit Root Tests

Variables	ADF Test		Phillips-Perron Test	
	Statistic		Statistic	
	At Levels	In First Difference	At Levels	In First Difference
GDPP	-1.40	-18.98*	-1.59	-19.16*
VIX	-2.09	-18.97*	-2.88	-19.22*
EX	-1.40	-12.08*	-1.78	-203.42*
OIL	-1.71	-12.37*	-8.81	-204.50*
INT	-0.59	-12.22*	-1.15	-12.66*
ICE	-2.05	-19.25*	-4.53	-19.64*
WUI	-2.69	-22.41*	-3.51	-22.52*
E1	-2.42	-18.67*	-2.11	-19.42*
E2	-0.84	-13.81*	0.29	-13.54*
E3	-0.54	-20.43*	-1.29	-22.79*
E4	-0.34	-11.04*	-4.54	-20.63*
E5	-0.89	-5.08*	-3.27	-21.24*
E6	-0.45	-3.85**	-2.99	-19.18*
E7	-1.07	-2.92**	-3.09	-18.43*
E8	-0.29	-4.09*	-3.78	-19.68*
E9	-1.92	-16.97*	-2.07	-16.96
E10	-0.73	-14.11*	-0.97	-22.87*
<i>Critical values</i>	1% -4.12 5% -3.48 10% -3.17		1% -19.13 5% -13.40 10% -10.77	

Note: (\*), (\*\*) and (\*\*\*) denotes the level of significance at 1%, 5% and 10% respectively.  
Compilation Author

Since the traditional linear unit root test does not throw insights into the impact of structural breaks. Zivot-Andrews unit root test with structural breaks is applied. The US economy has experienced regime changes in the economy owing to economic uncertainty, health hazards and terrorism. The results of Table (4) show that all the variables under the Zivot Andrews unit root test are integrated of I(1). The results of Table (4) confirm the structural breaks in the series owing to shocks occurring from uncertainty.

Table 4: Zivot-Andrews Test Results: Break in Both Intercept and Trend

Variables at level	TB	K	<i>t</i>	Inference
E1	2014M3	2	-3.06	Unit Root
E2	2008M12	2	-2.61	Unit Root
E3	2012M4	2	-4.01	Unit Root
E4	2013M4	2	-2.01	Unit Root
E5	2009M4	2	-2.47	Unit Root
E6	2012M4	2	-2.14	Unit Root

E7	2009M2	2	-2.67	Unit Root
E8	2014M2	0	-2.41	Unit Root
E9	2012M4	3	-2.21	Unit Root
E10	2012M4	3	-2.06	Unit Root
GDPP	2009M2	2	-2.12	Unit Root
VIX	2012M2	2	-4.16	Unit Root
EX	2012M4	2	-3.59	Unit Root
OIL	2016M2	2	-2.48	Unit Root
ICE	20012M2	2	-2.36	Unit Root
WUI	2020M4	2	-2.07	Unit Root
INT	2016M4	2	-0.07	Unit Root
Variables in their first difference				
E1	2016M2	2	-7.50*	I(1)
E2	2012M4	2	-7.81*	I(1)
E3	2016M2	2	-7.12*	I(1)
E4	2009M4	2	-6.89*	I(1)
E5	2009M5	2	-7.81*	I(1)
E6	2012M4	2	-5.25**	I(1)
E7	1999M4	2	-5.68*	I(1)
E8	2014M6	3	-11.21*	I(1)
E9	2016M4	2	-16.32*	I(1)
E10	2012M4	2	-8.28*	I(1)
GDPP	2009M4	2	-7.34	I(1)
VIX	2014M4	2	-5.76*	I(1)
EX	2012M4	2	-11.08*	I(1)
OIL	2009M2	2	-7.09*	I(1)
ICE	2009M2	2	-6.89*	I(1)
WUI	2020M9	2	-7.02*	I(1)
INT	2012M3	2	-11.03*	I(1)

Note: Critical values: 1%: -5.34, 5%: -4.80 and 10%: -4.58, (\*), (\*\*) and (\*\*\*) denote the levels of significance at 1% 5% and 10% respectively. Here TB is the break date, t is the test statistic and K denotes the selected lag length. Compilation: Author

### Cointegration Test Results

#### Johansen and Juselius Cointegration Test Results

After obtaining the stationary properties of the time series observations we next proceed to detect the cointegration relations of the observations. Table (5) reports the results of the cointegration test based on the Johansen and Juselius Cointegration Methods, (Johansen, 1988; Johansen and Juselius, 1990). The results of Table (5) confirm the existence of the cointegrating relationship.

Table 5: Johansen and Juselius Cointegration Results

Serial No	Specification of the Hospitality Sector	Hypothesis	Trace Statistic	Probability****	Maximum Eigen Value Test Statistic	Probability****
1.	E1	None <sup>a</sup>	142.27*	0.00	51.43 <sup>#</sup>	0.01
		At most 1	88.85**	0.13	37.55 <sup>##</sup>	0.09
2.	E2	None <sup>a</sup>	157.99*	0.00	64.27 <sup>#</sup>	0.00
		At most 1	93.71**	0.06	41.23 <sup>##</sup>	0.03
		At most 2	52.40***	0.53	40.07 <sup>###</sup>	0.64
3.	E3	None <sup>a</sup>	162.24*	0.00	65.06 <sup>#</sup>	0.00
		At most 1	97.14**	0.03	42.57 <sup>##</sup>	0.02
		At most 2	54.59***	0.43	22.54 <sup>###</sup>	0.56
4.	E4	None <sup>a</sup>	145.20*	0.00	64.4 <sup>#</sup>	0.00
		At the most one	80.79**	0.33	27.08 <sup>##</sup>	0.62
5.	E5	None <sup>a</sup>	154.79*	0.00	63.11 <sup>#</sup>	0.00
		At the most one	91.68**	0.09	46.23 <sup>##</sup>	0.18
6	E6	None <sup>a</sup>	145.61*	0.01	64.02 <sup>#</sup>	0.00
		At the most one	81.58**	0.31	28.23 <sup>##</sup>	0.54
7.	E7	None <sup>a</sup>	149.41*	0.00	59.43 <sup>#</sup>	0.00
		At the most one	89.98**	0.11	46.23 <sup>##</sup>	0.35
8.	E8	None <sup>a</sup>	148.12*	0.00	60.34 <sup>#</sup>	0.00
		At the most one	87.78**	0.15	28.38 <sup>##</sup>	0.53
9.	E9	None <sup>a</sup>	150.15*	0.00	62.94 <sup>#</sup>	0.00
		At the most one	87.20**	0.16	35.90 <sup>##</sup>	0.13
10.	E10	None <sup>a</sup>	149.11*	0.00	63.83 <sup>#</sup>	0.00
		At the most one	85.23**	0.21	33.49 <sup>##</sup>	0.22

Notes: (\*) Critical Values at 5% level - 125.61; (\*\*) Critical Values at 5% level - 95.75; and (\*\*\*) Critical Values at 5% level - 69.81.(# )Critical Values at 5% level- 46.23; (##)Critical Values at 5% level -40.07 and (###) Critical Values at 5% - 33.87.

(\*\*\* \*) denotes the p-values- McKinnon-Haug-Michelis (1999). (a) indicated the rejection of the hypothesis at 0.05 level. Compilation Author

Nonlinear Cointegration Test with a Structural Break

Gregory Hansen Cointegration Test Results

The results of the Gregory Hansen Cointegration Test are reported in Table (6). This test allows for cointegration with the possibility of regime shifts. The results confirm the cointegrating relationship across the variables. The major structural breaks occurred during the period of the global financial crisis, the spread of the MERS epidemic, the spread of the H1N1 virus and the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Overlooking these structural breaks might have led to spurious estimation. The results lend substantive empiricism to our research questions that pandemics and other crises lead to structural shocks in the US economy.

Table 6: Gregory–Hansen cointegration test with a structural break

Model	T-statistics (ADF)	Break period	Result
F(E1/VIX, WUI,ICE,GDPP)	-7.31*	2012M4	Cointegration
F(E2/VIX, WUI,ICE,GDPP)	-6.90*	2009M5	
F(E3/VIX, WUI,ICE,GDPP)	-7.1*	2009M10	
F(E4/VIX, WUI,ICE,GDPP )	-7.04*	2008 M8	
F(E5/VIX, WUI,ICE,GDPP)	-7.69*	2012 M4	
F(E6/VIX, WUI,ICE,GDPP)	-7.91*	2020 M8	
F(E7/VIX, WUI,ICE,GDPP, OIL, EX, INT)	-6.84*	2008 M8	
F(E8/VIX, WUI,ICE,GDPP)	-6.31*	2012 M4	
F(E9/VIX, WUI,ICE,GDPP)	-7.27*	2020M5	
F(E10/VIX, WUI,ICE,GDPP)	-7.61*	2020M5	

Note: The null hypothesis states no-cointegration. Full structural break and trend are under model specification. (\*) Indicates rejection of the null hypothesis at a 5% level of significance. Critical Values at the level of 5% is -5.96. Compilation author

#### *VECM and the Impulse Response Function*

Based on the VECM model we assessed the response of the dependent variable to shocks in uncertainty owing from VIX, WUI and ICE respectively. The exploration of the impact of uncertainty shocks through the impulse response function is one of the major applications of the VECM model. It shows the period through which the impact of shocks continues in future.

Figure (1) to Figure (10) shows the generalized impulse response of E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, E6, E7, E8, E9 and E10 to a unitary shock in WUI, VIX and ICE over a 10 period respectively. Figure (1) shows

that the response of employment in leisure and hospitality in aggregate, (E1) to shocks owing to uncertainty from WUI, VIX and ICE respectively. The response to ICE shocks shows the maximum contraction in employment. The results are obvious because consumers pessimism leads to a contraction in output and hence employment opportunities. These results confirm Hypothesis I. The response of E1 to WUI is fluctuating but when the fear of pandemic is not there, in the near future growth in employment picks up. Figure (2) shows the response of employment in accommodation (E2) to uncertainty shocks. The response to the VIX shocks persists but as consumers expectations regarding the economy improves owing to the upliftment of the travel bans the response to ICE of E2 picks over the fourth period. Figure (3) shows the response of employment as a spectator in the sports industry, (E3). The results show that employment contracts to shocks in WUI and VIX because of fear and pessimism. Visitors restrain themselves from visiting sports places for a considerable time in the near future. The percentage decline in employment is around 40 per cent in this sector. The response of employment in special food services, (E4) to shocks in VIX, WUI and ICE show contraction, Figure (4). The contraction in employment is around 150 per cent for the next seven period. Figure (5) shows the response of employment in recreational parks (E5) to shocks in WUI, VIX and ICE respectively. In the short-run, the employment owing to ICE shocks pick up as market sentiments of consumers improve. The response of E5 is more volatile to WUI and VIX. The decline in employment owing to shocks from VIX and WUI is around 4 to 12 per cent over the first five periods post-shock in the system. Figure (6) shows the behaviour of employment patterns in restaurants and other eating places (E6) to shocks in uncertainty. The figure demonstrates a negative impact on employment regardless of the measure of uncertainty from where the shock emanates. In Figure (7) we find the negative impact of uncertainty shocks in employment in performing arts and spectator sports(E7). Figure (8) shows the response of employment in the amusement industry (E8) to shocks in uncertainty emanating from WUI, VIX and ICE. Irrespective of the source of uncertainty the response of employment in the amusement sector shows a decline ranging from 50 to 150 per cent in the next five periods. Figure (9) demonstrates the response of employment in the museums and other historical places, (E9) to uncertainty shocks. The response is negative to all the uncertainty measure. The steepest decline is in response to WUI. The results show that the contraction in employment continues for the subsequent ten periods. As the fear of pandemic continues visiting historical places of interest is rare which negatively impacts employment in this sector. The impact appears to be the worst of its kind because the shock persists over the next ten periods. In Figure (10) we study the responsiveness of employment patterns in the limited-service industry, (E10) to the shocks in uncertainty. The results based on the impulse response function confirm Hypothesis II of our study. The results corroborated the findings in the earlier literature (Leduc and Liu, 2020; Ludvigson, Ma, and Ng, 2020; Bernstein, et al., 2020). The impulse response function demonstrates that the impact of the shocks is largely negative and the extent is divergent across sectors, confirming hypothesis II of the study. The results confirmed the study by (Brinca et al., 2020).

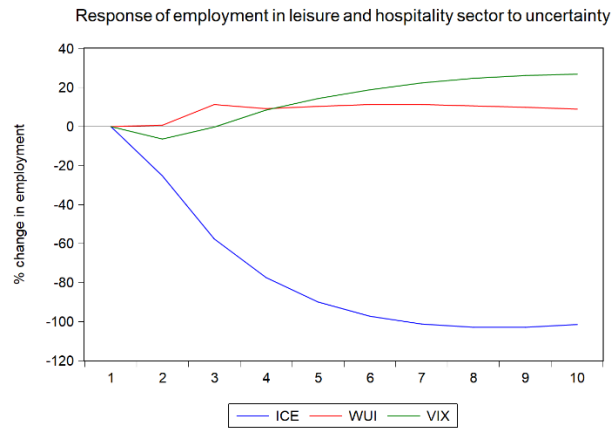


Figure 1: Impulse Response function of E1 to shocks

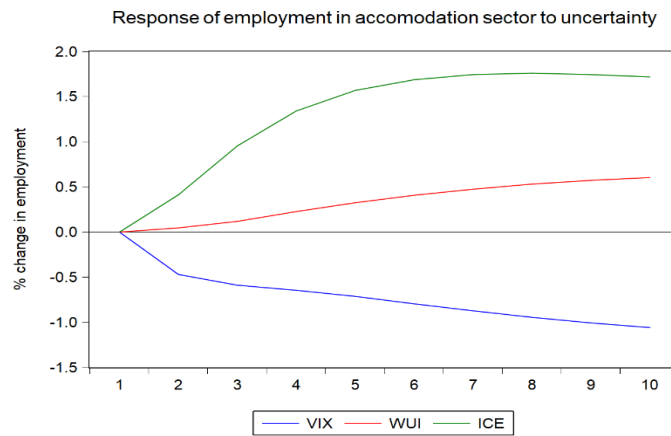


Figure 2: Impulse Response function of E2 to shocks

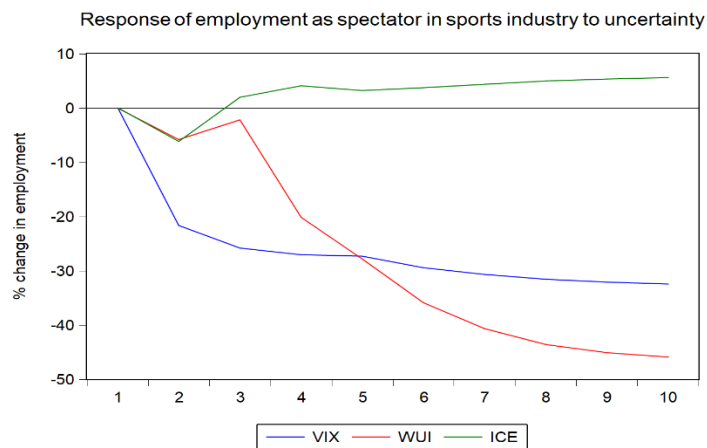


Figure 3: Impulse Response function of E3 to shocks



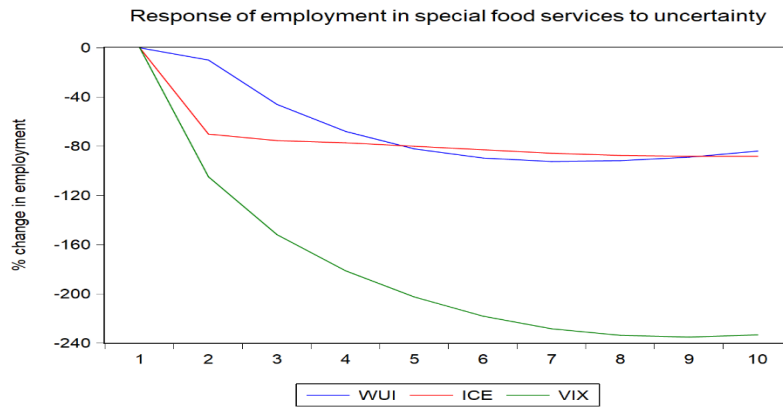


Figure 4: Impulse Response function of E4 to shocks

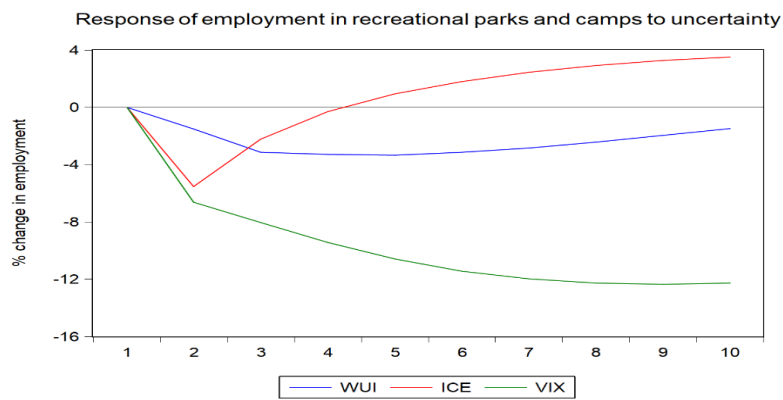


Figure 5: Impulse Response function of E5 to shocks

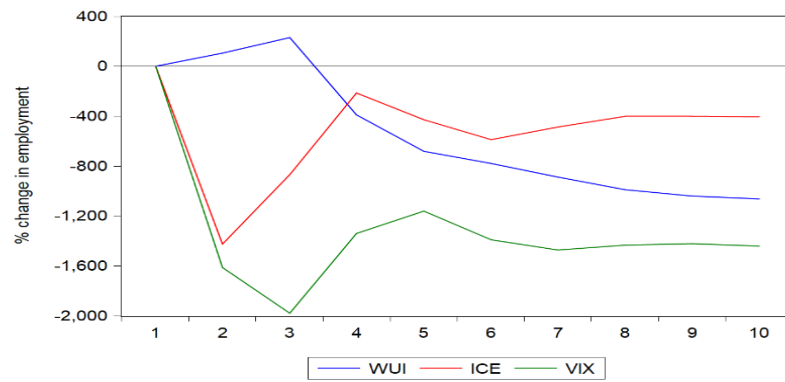


Figure 6: Impulse Response function of E6 to shocks

Response of employment in performing arts sector and spectator in sports industry to uncertainty

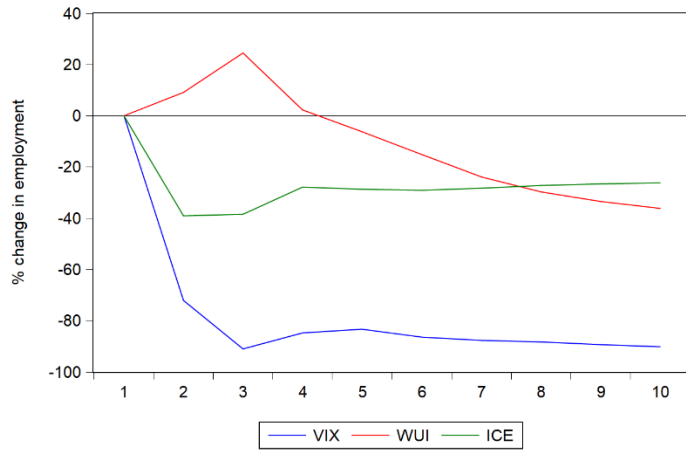


Figure 7: Impulse Response function of E7 to shocks

Response of employment in amusement and recreation industry to uncertainty

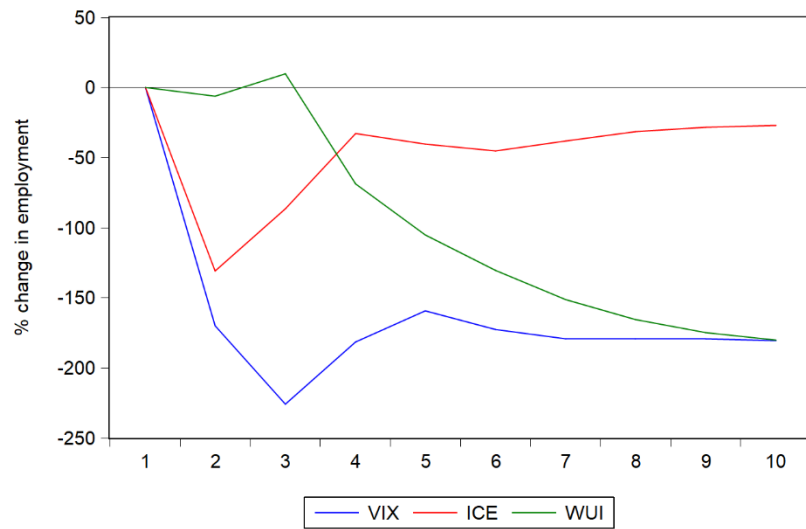


Figure 8: Impulse Response function of E8 to shocks

Response of employment in historical sites and other similar institutions to uncertainty

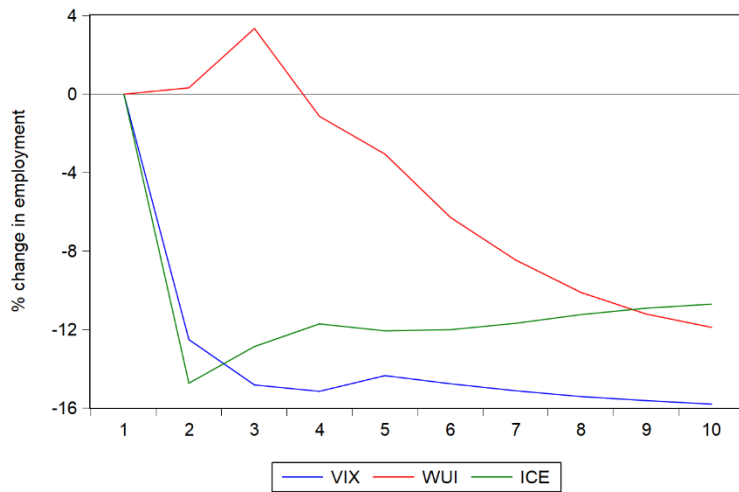


Figure 9: Impulse Response function of E9 to shocks

Response of employment in limited-service restaurants to uncertainty

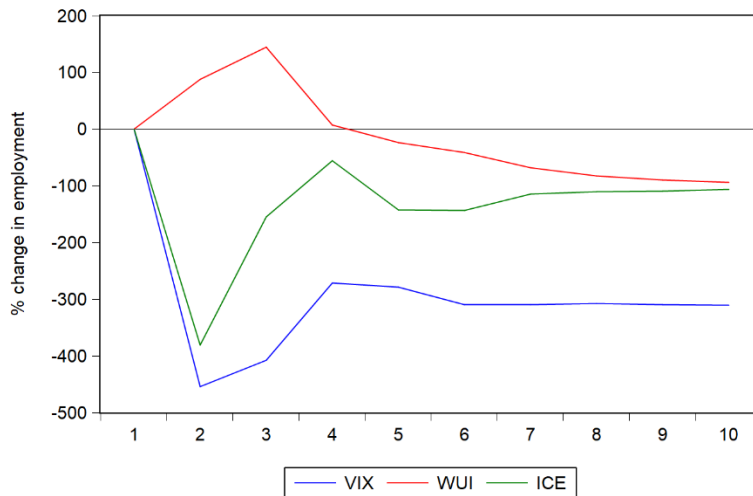


Figure 10: Impulse Response function of E10 to shocks

## 5. Discussion

This study examined the response of the U.S. labour in the leisure and hospitality industry to large and persistent shocks of uncertainty owing to past pandemics and other economic disasters based on impulse response function at the backdrop of a VECM model. The study showed that the shock arising from the World Pandemic Uncertainty Index have a larger negative impact on the hospitality sector. It has severely impacted the spectator employment associated with the sports industry; employment in restaurants and other eating places and employment in museums and other historical places of interest. The negative response of the employment in the hospitality sector to the World Pandemic Uncertainty Index is consistent with the 'uncertainty

multiplier hypothesis' by (Alfaro, Bloom, and Lin, 2019), who postulate that financial stress owing to uncertainty shocks augment the direct uncertainty effects on output and hence employment. The impact of uncertainty shocks from the index of consumer expectation (ICE) is persistently adverse for employment in the museums and other historical places of interest, employment in performing arts and as a spectator in the sports industry. For other sub-sectors employment prospects look up after the initial four periods. The negative response of the ICE is quite consistent with the findings in the theoretical literature particularly based on the real option theory. Under the real option theory, the agents adjust their purchasing/investment decisions based on a "wait-and-see" attitude. The agents wait to defer their investment / consumption decisions until the uncertainty is not there anymore, (Caggiano, Castelnuovo, and Kima, 2020). The findings confirm the earlier studies in the literature for example ( Škare et al., 2021 and Khan et al., 2020). Our research complements the existing literature in tourism studies in an important way. Rather than modelling on uncertainty shocks on the tourism/hospitality industry in aggregate as most studies in the literature have done, we have made a unique contribution by interpreting the unprecedented shocks upon the employment sector of the leisure and hospitality industry.

## **6. Conclusion**

This paper explored the response of the U.S. labour market of the leisure and hospitality industry at the disaggregated level to persistent shocks owing to uncertainty, drawing motivation by the current economic uncertainty shocks effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study can be considered as a trailblazer in the tourism and hospitality literature because it makes a unique attempt to explore how employment responds to uncertainty shocks at a disaggregate level. Monthly observations from the M1 1996 to M1 2021 is explored. To explore the impact of shocks from uncertainty several measures of uncertainty are used such as the World Pandemic Uncertainty Index; the stock market volatility (VIX) measure and the index of consumer expectation.

To examine the impact of the shocks owing to uncertainty along with the investigation of the structural breaks we primarily apply the VECM model. The impulse response function of the employment in various sub-sectors of the leisure and the hospitality industry showed that the impact of the shocks arising from the VIX is persistent and negative. The shocks arising from the World Pandemic Uncertainty Index have a larger shrinkage impact on employment in historical places and museums and eating places. Last the shocks emanating from the index of consumer expectation is persistently adverse for the spectator sports industry and museums and other historical places. The impulse response function is an important application of the VAR/VECM group of models which demonstrates to put in simple terms the number of time lags through which the impact of the shocks will continue upon the dependent variable until it disappears.

The results provide several important policy implications. The major thrust of emphasis in policy building is bringing in resilience. Through this research, we gained knowledge on the historical impact of past pandemics in the hospitality sector. A four-pronged economic strategy could be useful in the long-term: i) make an assessment of the losses and try to waive taxes to protect the concerned sector for resilience; ii) concern must be there for the health and sanitization measures; iii) evolve social security to protect workers against sudden losses and iv) innovate to incorporate manpower training for digitalization of the hospitality sector. Future work in this

direction could explore the transmission process of shocks emanating from a wide-ranging macroeconomic context for the U.S. economy. Additionally, future research could investigate how a wide range of consumer sentiments reflected in market uncertainty get diffused in the leisure and hospitality markets.

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# Package Tour Satisfaction and Successful Holiday Experience: Outbound Package Tourists' Perspective from Sri Lanka

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## Abstract

*Package tourism has been in existence for decades and continues to be a strong component of the global tourism industry. This study strives to explore the relationship among the components of the packaged tour leading to a package with a successful tour experience from the perspective of participants. A quantitative research design was used in this study. The data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed to the 140 outbound travelers. The analysis was performed by using SmartPLS- Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The result reflects, that there is a relationship between package tour satisfaction and a successful holiday experience. Therefore, it is argued that there is a weak positive relationship between satisfaction and experience in a package tour. Further, the study revealed that transportation and destination service plays a major role in tour package satisfaction and successful holiday experience. The study reconfirmed that there is a positive relationship between package tour components and tour experience and the detailed item-wise impacts were revealed in the final refined model. The study recommends that tour operators should focus on the least satisfactory components and further, they should be more flexible with the tour planning and conducting.*

**Keywords:** *Package Tour, Tourism Experience, Package Tour Satisfaction, Outbound, Sri Lanka Tourism*

## 1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the flourishing industries in Sri Lanka. As well as around the globe. As a tourist destination, Sri Lanka is endowed with a significant place in the global tourist market. Correspondingly, Tour agencies focus on inbound tourists over outbound tourists in the Sri Lankan context. Though, lack of studies is evident there is a substantial number of outbound tourists originating annually from Sri Lanka.

According to the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) annual statistical report, foreign travel is 1,475,929. Compared to 2017, it is increased by 2.53 percentage. The total

foreign travel in 2017 is 1,439,429. The 99.7 percentage used BIA, Katunayake for the departure, and 0.09 percentage Colombo Harbor (SLTDA, 2018).

Tourists are expecting total experience from package tours and if one of any dimension of tour package faced shortfall then the tourist dissatisfaction can happen (Chan et al., 2015). Tourist satisfaction is a very sensitive area. This depends on the tourist choice of destination (Silvestri et al., 2017). Even though, outbound package tours are created by the tour operators. But the tour package satisfaction is not only enough to make the tourist holiday experience a successful one. Tour experience is very important for the tourist.

With Globalization, tourism has developed in many aspects. Specially in global mobility and ease of travel (Thomlinson, Geoffrey Bird & Eugene, 2016). Due to the ease of travel and global mobility, people can travel from one country to another. To make this more comfortable and effective for the travelers' tour operators have introduced package tours for them.

With the emerging trend to travel outside of the country, travelers seek more than the tour package at a satisfactory price. Tour operators are responsible for creating tour packages but the Tour operator's role is limited in creating a successful package tourism experience (Räikkönen & Honkanen, 2013). There is a general idea that the satisfaction of a tour package is the outcome of the successful tour experience but tourists are not traveling for the sole purpose of satisfaction there are traveling to collect experiences (Carmichael, Sarah Quinlan Ctluer & Babara A., 2010). Many scholars have conducted researches regarding customer satisfaction on tour packages. But so far only a few numbers of researches are on regarding the tourist's satisfaction and successful holiday experience for the tourist. As well as in the local context. Therefore, this study strives to explore the relationship among the components of the tour package with a successful tour experience. The study expects to draw both theoretical and empirical implications to this significant component of the global tourism industry.

The key research questions of the study are, "What is the relationship between package tour satisfaction and successful tour experience?", "Is tour package satisfaction leads to a successful holiday experience?" and "What are the factors that contribute to the successful holiday experience?"

And based on the questions two main research objectives are derived. Namely, "To identify the relationship of satisfaction of package tour and successful holiday experience" and "To identify the existing factors to attract the customers toward tour packages that satisfy their needs and wants of a successful holiday experience"

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 The Package Tourism*

Package tourism is a pre-arranged service that is formed when different tourists are joined to travel in an organized way. Package tour conducted by tour operators with a standardized price and for the agreed period with pre-agreed destinations. The tour is mostly organized on a group basis (Jafari, 2014). Tour operators are mostly creating package tours as per the traveler's requirements. So that they can add value to the tour package and there are various options are available for package tours that will be given to potential travelers (Jin et al., 2012). Around the world, the popularity of package tourism has been increased considerably in the last five decades (Moutinho et al., 2015).



According to Jafari (2014), Germany, the United Kingdom, and Japan are the world's largest package holiday markets. Within the last decades' package, tourism has widely spread in Asia than Europe and America. Group Package Tours are the main travel mode in Asian countries like China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, etc. (Heung & Cheng, 2000; Wang et al., 2007).

In a package tour few elements are definitely should be included; Accommodation, Transportation, Food and Beverage, Destination, Guiding Service, Attitude, Language, and Culture of the Destination (Avci, 2020). These components attributes of the package tours are varied from tour to tour. With the individualization in consumer behavior, many people thought that there will be a decline in package tourism but it is not the case in package tourism even though, backpackers are an emerging trend still the package tourism is popular among group travelers (Jafari, 2014). Package tourism is mainly focused on group travels. Also, package tours are time-saving and convenient for the tourist who has a busy daily schedule or lifestyle (Chen et al., 2014).

Package tourism is a collaboration of various tourism products and services that include customers' or tourists' requirements. The development of technology and the emergence of backpack tourism have mainly influenced package tourism in the present. Nevertheless, package tourism is still a main outbound travel mode in Sri Lanka than backpack tourism. Because Sri Lankans are still not into traveling individually, they are more preferred in traveling with a group.

### *2.2 Pre-Tour Service*

Pre-Tour service is provided before the actual tour start. Most of the times traveler are comparing their pre-tour service and the actual service of the tour. If the travelers found that there is a better performance than what they expected then there is a positive disconfirmation, if not it will give negative disconfirmation. Whereas, the traveler will not repurchase from the tour operator again (Neal & Gursoy, 2008). According to Neal and Gursoy (2008).

### *2.3 Transportation and Destination Service*

Package tour transportation is expanding from land to air transportation modes. Therefore, package tour operators have to meticulously plan their tour packages according to the destination. Neal and Gursoy (2008), stated that transit route service has an impact on tourist satisfaction.

Destination service is a service provided at the destination when tourists travel to a particular destination. This is an important component in the tour package whereas tourists' satisfaction with the tour depends on the destination service that they received. According to Neal and Gursoy (2008), tourists are likely to compare their destination service and experience with their previous tours' destination services. The facts that mainly focused on the destination are the accuracy of information supplied by the tour operator, tour guide performance (Hudson et al., 2004), (Neal & Gursoy, 2008).

### *2.4 Accommodation*

According to (Nutsugbodo (2016), for travelers who travel temporarily away from home, accommodation serves as a psychological factor or a base. Accommodation satisfaction will determine by the friendliness of the staff, cleanliness of the premises, accessibility, etc. Wang et al., 2007), (Hudson et al., 2004)

### *2.5 Food and Beverage Service*

Numerous research studies have been studied relevant to the tourist's food and beverage service. Through these researches some characteristics of travelers were identified as time duration to find food services from the local region, visiting local food-producing places, spending and buying local foods and experiencing their cultures, or learning from locals how to cook local foods (Boyne et al., 2003). According to Frías et al., (2008), the desire to taste local foods at a travel destination was raised from the internet, and travel motivation for the destination.

### *2.6 Shopping and Entertainment Activities*

Shopping is considered an important part of the tour although, it is not the prime objective of traveling (Timothy, 2005). Gowreesunkar & Sotiriadis, (2015), stated that entertainment activities have a significant influence on the tourist experience. The time allocation for shopping and other activities in the package tour is one of the major factors that affect the tourists' satisfaction. Entertainment activities will provide attractiveness to the destination and appeal to the tourists' satisfaction (Gowreesunkar & Sotiriadis, 2015).

### *2.7 Tourists Satisfaction and Tour Experience*

Simply satisfaction is a fulfillment of the expectations or needs of people. Same as in the tourism industry, satisfaction with tourist products and service has a great impact on the overall tour or destination. In tourism-related researches, many types of satisfaction-based studies conducted by different researchers (Babolian Hendijani, 2016; Breiby & Slåtten, 2018; Heung & Cheng, 2000; Sangpikul, 2018; Silvestri et al., 2017) In the tourism field satisfaction is a very sensitive subject because the choice of destination and the recommendation of the destination will depend on the tourist satisfaction (Silvestri et al., 2017).

As per the study conducted by Chan et al., (2015), satisfaction with the tour service and experience had a huge impact on tour guiding in package tours. Tour guide performance is the dominant factor that affects tourist satisfaction in package tourism because the tourist always has to deal with the tour guide when they are encountering service within the tour (Huang et al., 2010). Also, people at the destination play an important role in tourist satisfaction during their tours (Sangpikul, 2018). Tourist satisfaction has hugely influenced in tourism field because without tourist satisfaction the outcome of the overall tour is negatively affected by the tour operator or the destination.

A collection of products and services that are consumed at the destination, and the community involvement or their interaction with tourists, will be included in the tourist experience (Cetin & Yarcan, 2017). According to Sangpikul (2018), interaction and engagement between tourists and service providers, exposure to the tourist destination environment, tourist participation, and involvement in events or entertainment activities at the tour destination is a travel experience. The revisit intention for the destination will arise with the successful experience, not from the satisfaction (Räikkönen & Honkanen, 2013). Therefore, the successful tour experience is crucial for the package tours where tourists are more encouraged to revisit or promote the destination to others.

## 2.8 Hypothesis Development

Based on the above account on the review of literature, the following hypotheses are proposed to be tested during the study.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a positive relationship between pre-tour services satisfaction and a successful holiday experience

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a positive relationship between transportation and destination service satisfaction and a successful holiday experience

H<sub>3</sub>: There is a positive relationship between accommodation satisfaction and a successful holiday experience

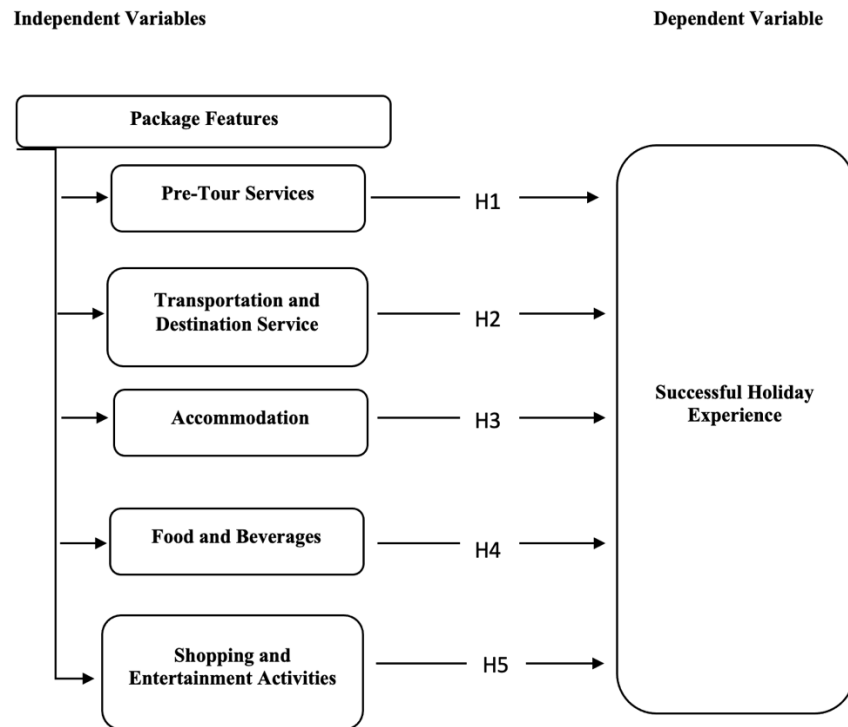
H<sub>4</sub>: There is a positive relationship between food and beverage satisfaction and a successful holiday experience

H<sub>5</sub>: There is a positive relationship between shopping and entertainment activities satisfaction and a successful holiday experience

## 2.9 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework developed based on the previous literature and the Dependent variable is Successful holiday experience. Independent variables are Pre-tour service, Transportation and destination service, Accommodation, Food and Beverage, shopping, and entertainment activities (Räikkönen & Honkanen, 2013), (Hudson & Shephard, 1998).

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Source: Developed based on mainly by Räikkönen & Honkanen, (2013) (Hudson & Shephard, 1998) and other studies in literature review and theoretical framework

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### *3.1 Research Design*

This study focuses on tourist satisfaction with the component of the package tours and adopts a quantitative approach. Research design is simply the structure of the research. According to Bryman (2004), research provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data. By gathering primary data using a quantitative analytical method this study will be conducted. The study is based on the quantitative analytical method because the study is coming under the deductive approach.

This study mainly focuses on the Package Tour Satisfaction and Successful Holiday Experience: Outbound Package Tourists Perspective and to test whether there is a relationship between tourists' satisfaction and tour experience as mentioned in early chapters. Therefore, to achieve the objectives of the study quantitative research design is the most appropriate research approach.

The study is based on the outbound travelers who travel through tour agencies under package tours. The data is analyzed using the structural equation model (SEM) to test the established relationships. Therefore, the population of the study is a package tour, outbound travelers in Sri Lanka. Correspondingly, the sample of the study is travelers who travel outside of Sri Lanka under the guidance of the Colombo District travel agencies package tours. A sample of 140 outbound travelers was surveyed to collect primary data through the self-administered questionnaire fielded.

#### *3.2 Sampling Technique*

To collect primary data 'the Convenience sampling method was used in the study. With the current situation of Covid-19, the relevant data required for the study which is outbound travelers who used tour packages are limited to be found out therefore, the convenience sampling method is the best method to collect data.

#### *3.3 Data Collection Method*

This research will be used both primary and secondary data whereas a questionnaire is the primary method of data collection and the sources of other authors (Journal articles, newspapers, books, reports, etc.) are used as secondary data for the study. The researcher focused on distributing questionnaires via the internet platform due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation and it is more beneficial whereas, the researcher can reach more respondents online.

#### *3.4 Questionnaire Design*

When designing the questionnaire researcher focused on the main objective of the research. Based on these objectives the structural questionnaire was developed including 20 questions under 3 sections.

In section 'A' the demographic factors of the participant are tour destination, gender, age, number of travelers in the package tour, source of information, employment. Education level, marital status, experience on traveling outside of the country. Section 'B' consists of the questions relevant to tour package components (Pre-Tour Services, Transportation and Destination Service, Accommodation, Food and Beverages, Shopping and Entertainment

Activities) that travelers have experienced during their tour. In section 'C' the questions are about the tour experience that travelers had during their tour.

Section 'A' questions were addressed on open-ended questions whereas section 'B' measured by 5 points Likert scale (Extremely Satisfied 5, Satisfied 4, Moderately Satisfied 3, Dissatisfied 2, Extremely Dissatisfied 1). Section 'C' questions are also measured by Five-Point Likert Scale (Strongly Agree 5, Agree 4, Moderate 3, Disagree 2, Strongly Disagree 1) and some of the general questions are in the form of paragraph answering.

### 3.5 Data Collection

The data were collected through the travel agencies in Colombo by using their outbound package tour participants. By using google forms as a questionnaire under the guidance of travel agencies.

### 3.6 Operationalization Construction

The operationalization chart was developed according to the objectives of the study.

Table 1: Operationalization chart for variables

Variable	Dimension	Indicators	Measurements	Source
Independent Variables	Pre-tour Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information about the tour</li> <li>Booking service</li> <li>Accuracy of information</li> </ul>	Five-point Likert Scale	(Räikkönen & Honkanen, 2013)
	Transportation and Destination Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flight Checking (Outbound &amp; Inbound)</li> <li>Tour guide performance</li> <li>Accurate destination information</li> <li>The professional and coordinating ability of the tour guide</li> </ul>		
	Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service of the staff</li> <li>Location accessibility</li> </ul>		
	Food & Beverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New food and beverage experience</li> <li>Local food and beverage</li> <li>The food culture of the destination</li> </ul>		
	Shopping and Entertainment activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time</li> <li>Cultural and social aspects of destination</li> <li>Entertainment activities</li> </ul>		
Dependent Variable		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fun and easiness</li> <li>Cultural entertainment</li> </ul>	Five-Point Likert Scale	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New friends and identified new personalities</li> <li>• Collection of memories</li> <li>• Throughout the tour, I was able to gain the experience that I expected from the tour</li> </ul>		
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Source – Developed based on literature by the researcher (2020)

### 3.7 Data Analysis Technique

To evaluate the hypothesis and to achieve the objectives of the study structural equation model (SEM) will be used to analyze the collected data. Smart PLS software will be used for the betterment of the data analysis to get more reliable results for the study. The data analysis of the study will be done by the primary data which have been collected through the questionnaire provided for the travelers.

## 4. Findings and Analysis

### 4.1 Descriptive Analysis

According to the results of the descriptive analysis for demographic factors, most of the respondents were traveled to Europe which is 50 percent of the total respondents. 43.57 percent were visited Asia which is the second-highest tour destination among the 140 respondents. The least number of visited can be seen in the Middle-East tour destination (6.43 percent). The gender distribution of the respondents was 52.1 percent of female and 47.86 percent male. This can be concluded as more of the females are interested in participating in the package tours than males. When it comes to the age distribution the highest number of respondents were in the age between 30-44 years (46.43 percent). Among the 140 respondents, 42.14 percent of respondents were in their late teens or late twenties (15-29). The middle-aged respondents were 11.43 percent (45-60). Which implied that they have low interest in traveling outside of the country than the other age categories. According to the findings of the research, most of the respondents travel with groups containing 11-15 people (63.57 percent). The other two categories, 6-10 and Above 15 have a low percentage compared to 11-15 people groups. This indicates that most of the package tours contain 11-15 people. The Source of information that respondents got to know about the tour destination was mostly social media which has 35 percent of the response. 34.39 percent of respondents were got to know about the destination through their family or friends. 29.29 percent of respondents' information source was the internet and 1.43 were other sources. In the other source section, they have mentioned the source as the newspapers. 68.57 percent of the respondents were employed in the private sector and 13.57 percent were employed in the government sector. The least number of participants (0.71 percent) were in the category of the other (entrepreneur). 13.57 percent were students and 3.67 percent were unemployed. The education level of the respondents was 51.4 percent graduates, 24.3 percent secondary education, 15.0 percent undergraduate, 9.3 percent post-graduates. Among the 140 respondents, 58.57 percent were married and 40.17 percent were single. 0.71 percent were separated. When it comes to the tour experience in traveling outside of the country, 44.29 percent of the respondents were mentioned as it is their first time and 11.57 percent were 3

times, and 28.57 percent as 2 times. 5.71 percent, 3.57 percent, 4.29 percent were respectively, 4 times, 5 times, and more than 5 times.

#### 4.2 KMO Bartlett's Test

In this study, the researcher uses KMO Bartlett's test to reliability and dimensionality of the research before using PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2011). In general, the KMO value should be greater than 0.5 to accept the factor analysis. As per the study, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was 0.917, Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ( $X^2=680.615$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) conforming to item correlation standards required for the analysis.

Table 2: KMO Bartlett's Test

<b>KMO and Bartlett's Test</b>				
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy				.917
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square			680.615
	df			15
	Sig.			.000

Source: SmartPLS output based on Online Survey (2020)

#### 4.3 Reliability and Validity of the data

Table 3: Reliability, and Validity of the data

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Accommodation	0.735	0.735	0.883	0.790
Food and Beverage	0.812	0.811	0.889	0.727
Pre-Tour Service	0.814	0.819	0.915	0.843
Shopping and Entertainment Activities	0.806	0.823	0.885	0.721
Transportation and Destination Service	0.847	0.850	0.897	0.685
Successful Tour Experience	0.913	0.915	0.935	0.742

Source: SmartPLS output based on Online Survey (2020)

In table 5 shows the outcomes of CFA which indicate the reliability and validity of the study. Cronbach's Alpha value of the study lies between 0.735 and 0.847. Bonett & Wright (2014) stated that the Cronbach's Alpha 0.7 or above its value is acceptable. The accommodation has 0.735 and Food and beverage, Pre-tour service has respectively 0.812, and 0.814. Shopping and Entertainment Activities has .806 of alpha value which has an excellent level of reliability. The highest reliability level shows in the dependent variable successful tour experience are 0.913 and transportation and destination service has .847. The value of the AVE lies between 0.685 and 0.790. The AVE acceptable level is above 0.5 whereas, in this study, all the variables are above

0.5. The composite reliability level lies between 0.883 and .935. Its accepted level is above 0.5, which indicates that all variables are at the acceptable level.

#### 4.4 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Table 4: Outcome of CFA

Variable	Factor/Item	$\alpha$ , AVE, CR	Loadings
Pre-Tour Service	The accurate information regarding the destination given by the tour agent	$\alpha$ - 0.814 AVE - 0.843 CR - 0.915	0.926
	Booking Services		0.910
Transportation and Destination Service	Flight Checking (outbound and Inbound)	$\alpha$ - 0.819 AVE - 0.721 CR - 0.880	0.808
	The transportation service provided from airport to hotel		0.845
	Comfortable and Enjoyable service provided from hotel to destination		0.825
	Tour Guide Performance		0.833
Accommodation	Friendliness of the service staff	$\alpha$ - 0.735 AVE - 0.790 CR - 0.883	0.888
	Location of the accommodation accessibility for tour destinations		0.890
Food and Beverage	Experience of new food and beverages throughout the tour	$\alpha$ - 0.812 AVE - 0.727 CR - 0.889	0.846
	I have had the chance to experience local food and beverage		0.824
	I have experienced the street food and food culture of the destination		0.887
Shopping and Entertainment Activities	Time allocated for the shopping	$\alpha$ - 0.806 AVE - 0.649 CR - 0.885	0.886
	Tour provided time to enjoy cultural and social aspects of the destination		0.890
	Satisfy with the entertainment activities provide to enjoy their unique culture		0.767
Successful Holiday Experience	During the tour, I have experienced the expected fun and easiness	$\alpha$ - 0.913 AVE - 0.742 CR - 0.935	0.883
	I have experienced the expected cultural entertainment		0.844
	During the package tour, I got to experience new friends and identify new personalities		0.843
	I got to collect memories during the tour		0.883
	Throughout the tour, I was able to gain experience that I expected from the tour		0.851

Note:  $\alpha$  =Cronbach's Alpha, AVE=Average Variance Extracted, CR=Construct Reliability, Cronbach's Alpha>0.70, AVE>0.50, CR>0.60

Source: SmartPLS output based on Online Survey (2020)

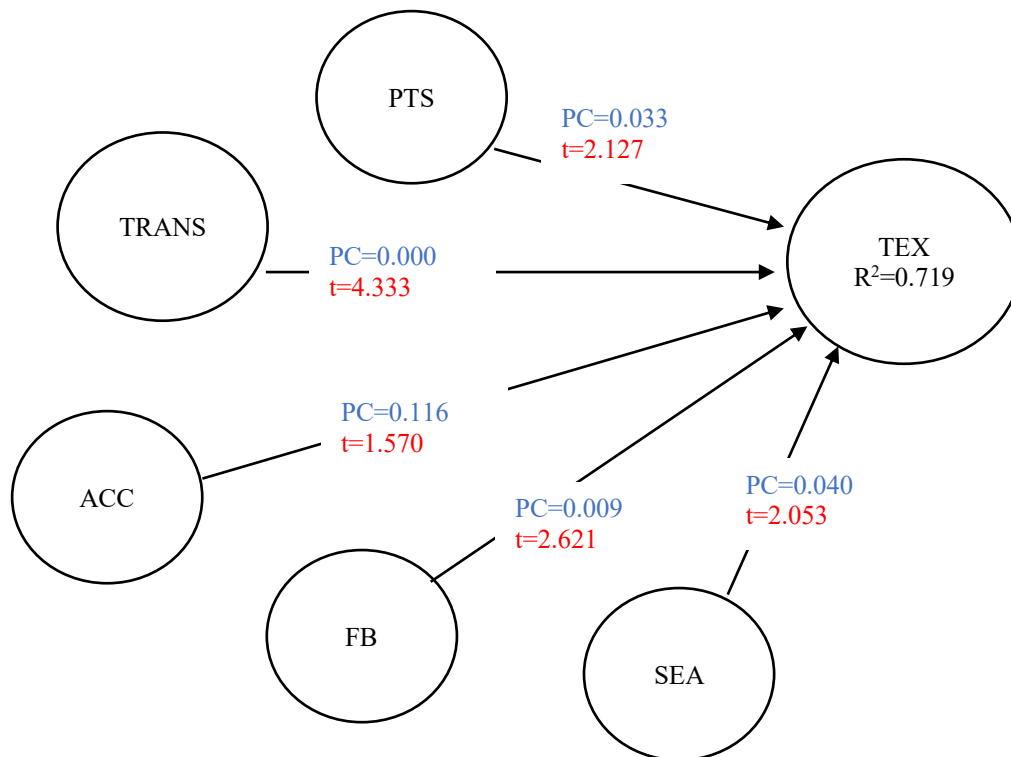


As displayed in table 6 loadings are between the range of 0.926 and 0.767, and all the factor loadings are positive. After the completion of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis, 14 independent variable factors and 5 dependent variable factors are remaining.

#### 4.5 Evaluation of structural model and Hypothesis Testing

Model fitness was measured by the  $R^2$ , which implicates the coefficient determinant as well. It explained the variation of the dependent variable in a linear model. Chin (2010), stated that the amount of the variance in the question construction explained by the model represented by the value of PLS  $R^2$ . Based on the findings of the study, the structural equation model illustrates the figure 1 the findings of the partials least square algorithm output which indicates the  $R^2$  value of the model. Value of  $R^2$  0.25 as weak, 0.50 as moderate, and 0.75 as substantial predictive power endogenous latent variables (Hair et al., 2013). Hair et al. (2013) have explained  $R^2$  0.25 as weak, 0.50 as moderate, and 0.75 as substantial predictive power endogenous latent variables.

Figure 2: Estimated Structural Equation Model



Note: PC=Path Coefficients, t=t-statistics, \*\*\*=significant at  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*=significant at  $p < 0.05$ , \*=significant at  $p < 0.10$ ,  $R^2$ =R Square, PTS=Pre-Tour Service, TRANS=Transportation and Destination Service, ACC=Accommodation, FB=Food and Beverage, SEA=Shopping and Entertainment Activities, TEX=Successful Tour Experience

Source: SmartPLS output, Author's estimation using Online survey (2020)

#### 4.6 Results of Path Coefficient

Table 5: Results of Path Coefficient

Hypothesis	Variable	Path Coefficient	T-statistic	P-Value	Status
H1	There is a positive relationship between pre-tour services satisfaction and a successful holiday experience	0.128	2.127	0.033**	Accepted
H2	There is a positive relationship between Transportation and Destination Service satisfaction and a successful holiday experience	0.335	4.333	0.000***	Accepted
H3	There is a positive relationship between Accommodation satisfaction and a successful holiday experience	0.176	1.570	0.116	Rejected
H4	There is a positive relationship between Food and Beverage satisfaction and a successful holiday experience	0.178	2.621	0.009**	Accepted
H5	There is a positive relationship between Shopping and Entertainment Activities satisfaction and a successful holiday experience	0.156	2.053	0.040**	Accepted

Note: \*\*\* = Significant at  $p < 0.01$  level, \*\* = Significant at  $p < 0.05$ , \* = Significant at  $p < 0.1$

Source: SmartPLS output based on Online Survey (2020)

#### 4.7 Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1 proposed a positive relationship between pre-tour service satisfaction and successful holiday experience. According to figure 4.10 and table 4.13, H1 is supported with the significant path coefficient of 0.128 which has a weak positive relationship with the t value of

2.127 and H1 is significant at the level of 0.05 and 0.1 ( $p=0.033$ ). It has 95 percent of the confidence level which indicates that the H1 is accepted.

Hypothesis 2 proposed a positive relationship between transportation and destination service satisfaction and successful holiday experience. As table 4.13 stated, the significant path coefficient of the H2 is 0.335 ( $\beta=0.335$ ),  $t=4.333$ , and  $p<0.01$  which has a 99 percent confidence level. This indicates a weak positive relationship between the two variables. When considering the proposed H2 it is accepted.

Hypothesis 3 proposed a positive relationship between accommodation satisfaction and successful holiday experience. There was a 0.176 ( $\beta =0.176$ ) significant path coefficient in the H3 with the weak positive relationship. In figure 4.10, displays that the t value is 1.526 whereas, the p-value is 0.116 which is not significant at any confidence level (90 percent, 95 percent, 99 percent). Therefore, the H3 was rejected.

Hypothesis 4 proposed a positive relationship between food and beverage satisfaction and a successful holiday experience. H4 is supported by the significant path coefficient of 0.178 ( $\beta=0.178$ ). It has a weak positive relationship. The t value of the H4 is 2.053 and it is significant at the level of 0.05 ( $p=0.090$ ) with the 95 percent confidence level. The H4 has been accepted.

Hypothesis 5 proposed a positive relationship between shopping and entertainment activities satisfaction and successful holiday experience.  $\beta=0.156$  level of significant path coefficient is shown in figure 4.10 and has a weak positive relationship. H5 has 2.053 of the t-value and 0.040 of the p-value. As for the p-value, there is a 95 percent confidence level in H5. Therefore, H5 is accepted.

Table 6: P-Value, T Value, and Outer Loadings of Variables

	<b>P-Value</b>	<b>T Value</b>	<b>Outer Loadings</b>
Pre-tour service	0.033	2.127	PTS_1=0.926 PTS_2=0.910
Transportation and destination service	0.000	4.333	TRANS_1=0.808 TRANS_2=0.845 TRANS_3=0.825 TRANS_4=0.833
Accommodation	0.116	1.526	ACC_1=0.888 ACC_2=0.890
Food and Beverage	0.090	1.526	FB_1= 0.846 FB_2=0.824 FB_3=0.887
Shopping and Entertainment Activities	0.040	2.053	SEA_1=0.886 SEA_2=0.890 SEA_3=0.767

Source: SmartPLS output based on Online Survey (2020)

According to the above table 6, The exciting factors that attract tourists into the package tour satisfaction and successful holiday experience are Transportation and destination service, Pre-tour service, Shopping and Entertainment, food and beverage, and lastly accommodation.

## 5. Discussion

The first question of the study is 'What is the relationship between package tour satisfaction and successful holiday experience?' and the second question of the study is 'Is tour package satisfaction leads to successful holiday experience?'. To answer these questions, the researcher has done the above calculations and analyses. According to the findings of the SEM, there is a positive relationship between package tour satisfaction and the successful holiday experience. But Huang et al. (2010), argued that the satisfaction with the holiday experience depends on the greater level of tour guiding and tour operators' service.

The researcher identified transportation and destination service, pre-tour service, and shopping and entertainment as the most influenced factors in package tour satisfaction and successful holiday experience. Rääkkönen & Honkanen, (2013) has stated that the most important factor in the tour operators' service is the destination service which supports the findings of the study.

The main purpose of this study is to identify the relationship between package tour satisfaction and successful holiday experience. The results of the study are more important for the travel agencies that operate the outbound tour packages in Sri Lanka. This study is more impactful because there are no studies have been done in this area in the local context. Most tours that have been conducted by tour agencies during the last few years were Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and Europe. And with this pandemic situation, most of the countries are banned their tourist activities is also a huge negative mark on the outbound tourism industry in Sri Lanka. With help of this study, tour agencies can come up with strong tour plans for package tours with memorable experiences considering the customers' feedback evaluation in post-COVID-19.

## 6. Conclusions

To fulfill the first objective of the study, the researcher used SmartPLS Structural Equation Modeling. As reported in the previous chapter results of the findings, there is a positive relationship between package tour satisfaction and successful tour experience. According to Wang et al. (2010), tour experience and satisfaction will depend on the tour guiding and tour operator service. In this study, the researcher concentrated on package tour satisfaction and the success of the holiday experience. Therefore, the researcher focused on the package tour component and their satisfaction with relation to the successful holiday experience. This result is not implied that the successful holiday experience always has a positive relationship with tour package components. The success of the tour experience can differ for many other reasons than the tour package features. Nickerson (2006), stated that the success of a vacation can be related to the traveler and local communities other than the tour product itself.

Rääkkönen & Honkanen (2013), argued that the components of the package tour were not equally important for the successful holiday experience. This study has proven that there is a significant difference between package features that have satisfied tourists and led to a successful holiday experience. As the researcher findings, the most satisfying tour package feature is transportation and destination service. Next pre-tour service and shopping and entertainment. The least satisfying package feature is accommodation. Therefore, in future tours travel operators should be focused on accommodation features. There is a limited impact on the success of package tour experience and package tour components (Rääkkönen & Honkanen, 2013).

## 7. Recommendations

First, the tour operator should focus more attention on the Least Satisfactory components. The researcher was identified that transportation and destination service, pre-tour service, and shopping and entertainment as the most satisfying factors. Food and beverage and accommodation were the least satisfying factors. Therefore, to overcome the issue of the other two factors that have the least satisfactory level tour operators should cater to customer needs and wants. As well as customer suggestions and feedbacks should take into account. Another point is that the tour operator should understand not only the satisfaction of package features is enough to make a successful tour experience. To satisfy tourists, tour operators should provide accurate information about the destination and tour plan before the tour. Finally, the researcher suggests that tour operators should be flexible within the tour period because many travelers complained that the time allocated for the tours is not enough and they are rushing the tour. These issues should be considered and make adjustments in the following package tours.

## 8. Future Research Directions

With the ongoing pandemic situation of COVID-19, the researcher has faced many limitations during the research period. Future studies can be conducted employing more package features and expanding sample size. Also, Internal and external factors affecting the tour experience can be studied further. Other than that, with the development of technology and the restrictions on the travel industry due to COVID-19, the future researcher can conduct a study on the field of virtual tour and tourist's satisfaction of the service and they can conduct studies on the field of post-COVID-19, travel behaviors as well.

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# The impact of socio-demographics on film tourism satisfaction of local residents: The case of Muğla

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## Abstract

*This paper aims to reveal the local residents' film tourism satisfaction in an emerging film tourism destination, namely in Muğla, Turkey. Besides, it is aimed to examine whether some demographic features and film-related habits make a difference on film tourism satisfaction of local residents. In this study, 757 valid data were collected via questionnaire, between July and September in 2020. The results showed that local residents were satisfied with film tourism in the destination. The results indicated that not only the local residents' participation in film tourism, but also their interest in movies or watching films and/or TV series affected their satisfaction from film tourism at the destination. However, gender, marital status, education level, age, income, frequency of going to the cinema or participation of a film shooting in the destination didn't make a significant difference on film tourism satisfaction. Consequently, it is suggested to develop some activities by the destination management organizations that lead local residents to visit film stages and enable them to participate into film tourism more and thus increase their satisfaction. It is recommended to determine variables that may affect the satisfaction of local residents from film tourism and to investigate their effects in future studies.*

**Keywords:** *Film tourism, satisfaction, local residents, socio-demographic features*

## 1. Introduction

Film tourism, which is an effective tool in promotion of the destination, is the purposeful visit that includes the movement of the tourists to the place they've seen on the screen. It is important for all stakeholders to examine the development of the film tourism in the destination visited by tourists and where residents have been living (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004). The attitudes of residents on tourism has been discussed in many researches but it is limited in film tourism. The residents' support for tourism or their film tourism satisfaction in film tourism destinations is of great importance for the development or improvement that go on in the region (Kim et al. 2017). In the development of sustainable tourism, significant socio-economic principles include the protection of social and cultural values, supporting local business and the local economy, ensuring the local development and social welfare. Therefore, it is important to realize planning and implementation by getting the opinions of local residents. Being one of the most important elements of the destination, the local residents, welcoming the tourist coming to the region,



being hospitable and seeing themselves as a part of the intercultural interaction affect the tourism potential of the region. Sustainable development of film tourism can be only possible with the strategic planning of film tourism activities, preparation and implementation of road maps, considering the principles of involvement of the local residents in the process and increasing their welfare. This research paper has two purposes, within that the insufficient research on film tourism in the relevant literature and there is still a gap in this subject. The first one is to evaluate the film tourism satisfaction of the residents living in Muğla, where film tourism has recently developed. The second one is to determine whether or not the residents' film tourism satisfaction differs according to the demographic variables such as gender, marital status, age and participation in a film shooting.

## **2. Literature Review**

Film tourism is made up of tourism activities that emerge after/when people see and visit the places shown on screens owing to the images or stories they watch in movies and TV programs (Roesch, 2009). In other words, film tourism takes place with the increase of recognition, tourism potential and the number of tourists in a region by shooting a movie or TV series (Lopez vd., 2018). Considering the impact of film tourism on national and international tourism movements, it is expected to benefit the local and national economy. At the same time, film tourism creates new cultural landscape by both creating the desire to travel and shaping parts of the destination identity (Jewell & McKinnon, 2008).

The primary purpose of movies and TV series is not to promote the place screened to large audience or to develop film tourism in that region. However, the natural, historical and architectural beauties of the region which are screened in films and TV series, create an awareness in the audience. Later, this awareness turns into a travel motivation and creates a film tourism potential in that region (Bolan et al., 2011; Macionis, 2004). The locations where films are shot are important for the movie or TV series to be successful and to be compatible within the script (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006).

Movies and TV series are the activities that affect people's perspective and understanding of the world and form the culture of a society. Film tourism takes place with the production of a movie or TV series in a region and the increase in the recognition of a place, its tourism potential and the number of tourists. Researchers emphasize that movies and TV series are an effective marketing tool in the creation of a new tourism center (Wen vd., 2018).

In order to talk about film tourism in any region, it is necessary to consider the film tourists as well as the producers, local authorities and residents as a stakeholder. In this research, local residents have been chosen as the research subject. Local residents are directly in the sphere of influence of film tourism, as the mentioned increase and developments occur in the living space of the local residents of that region. Therefore, the point of view of local residents living in places visited by film tourists during or after filming is significant in terms of ensuring a sustainable tourism policy (Lopez et al., 2018). Accordingly, it is the residents that decides which effects of the tourism are acceptable or not (Jimura, 2011). The development of tourism in any region positively or negatively affects the quality of life of the local residents of that region (Gursoy et., al. 2002). In such development processes, developing tourism without excluding local residents from the scope and including them into the development process increases the success.

It has been frequently emphasized that residents should be a stakeholder in tourism policy (Lee, 2013; Woo et al., 2015) and planning regulations and the needs of residents should be taken into consideration in the changes and new decisions to be made in tourism (Nunkoo & So, 2015). Not only the natural beauty and service quality but also the hospitality of local residents is extremely effective in gaining competitiveness in tourism. During holiday, encountering anger, rude behavior or any negative attitude instead of the hospitality and kindness of the local residents may result in the dissatisfaction of the tourist (Jimura, 2011; Singh & Wright, 2011).

For this reason, the film tourism satisfaction of residents is greatly important in decision-making in the region. However, it is also argued that residents prioritize more the economic effects of film tourism than its social and environmental effects, due to their contribution such as earning more, employment opportunities and development of infrastructure (Mendes et al., 2017). In this case, if the film tourism activities in the region meet the expectations of residents, there is satisfaction from film tourism or tourists visiting the region, and if not, dissatisfaction occurs.

### 3. Research Methodology

Muğla is located in the southwest of Turkey, at the intersection of Mediterranean and Aegean regions of the country. Muğla has an area of 12.980 km<sup>2</sup>, a coastline of 1.480 km and hundreds of beaches, 105 of which have blue flag. Muğla has famous tourism destinations such as Bodrum, Marmaris and Fethiye, tourism attractions such as Akyaka, Blue Lagoon, Bodrum Castle and Museum of Underwater Archeology, Kaunos Ancient City, Knidos Ancient City, Saklikent Canyon, Sedir Island, Stratonikea Ancient City, Tlos Ancient City. Consequently, Muğla is one of most important tourism destinations in Turkey after well-known destinations İstanbul and Antalya. As sea-sand-sun tourism is common in Muğla especially in the coastline of Bodrum, Marmaris and Fethiye, tourism activities commonly indicate seasonal characteristics.

At the same time, Muğla has started to become an important attraction for local and foreign films and TV series in recent years. Muğla where more than 300 TV series, movies, documentaries, advertisements, music videos, food and travel programs have been shot in the last 15 years, is a natural film stage with its natural, cultural and historical attractions. Aforementioned characteristics create a film tourism potential for Muğla and for this reason Muğla has been chosen as the study field of this research.

In this research paper, it has been aimed to examine the satisfaction levels of the residents from film tourism in Muğla, and to analyze whether their satisfaction levels differ according to the variables. For this purpose, the model of the research is given in Figure 1 below.

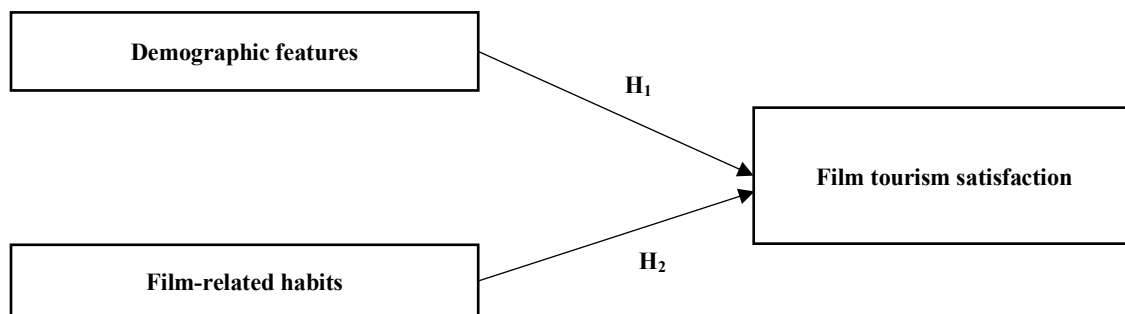


Figure 1. The Research Model

The hypotheses to be examined in the research are as follows:

*H<sub>1</sub>. The residents' satisfaction from film tourism differs according to their demographic characteristics.*

*H<sub>1a</sub>: The residents' satisfaction from film tourism differs according to their gender.*

*H<sub>1b</sub>: The residents' satisfaction from film tourism differs according to their marital status.*

*H<sub>1c</sub>: The residents' satisfaction from film tourism differs according to their education level.*

*H<sub>1d</sub>: The residents' satisfaction from film tourism differs according to their age.*

*H<sub>1e</sub>: The residents' satisfaction from film tourism differs according to their income.*

*H<sub>2</sub>. The residents' satisfaction from film tourism differs according to their film-related habits.*

*H<sub>2a</sub>: The residents' satisfaction from film tourism differs according to their film watching habits.*

*H<sub>2b</sub>: The residents' satisfaction from film tourism differs depending on whether they visit the filming location or not.*

*H<sub>2c</sub>: The residents' satisfaction from film tourism differs depending on whether they participate in film shooting or not.*

*H<sub>2d</sub>: The residents' satisfaction from film tourism differs according to duration of film watching duration*

*H<sub>2e</sub>: The residents' satisfaction from film tourism differs according to frequency of going to the cinema.*

Quantitative research methods were used in the research and questionnaire technique was preferred as a data collection tool. The questionnaire had three main parts. There are questions of demographic features in the first section and questions of film-related habits in the second section. The last part is dedicated to the scale assessing the film tourism satisfaction of residents. The scale of film tourism satisfaction was consisted of five statements which were developed based on the relevant studies conducted by Gursoy et al., (2002), Kim et al. (2017), and Mendes et al., (2017). Five-point Likert-type responses, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, were used for the assessment.

The data of this research, which was carried out as part of a broader project, was collected by the researchers and fellows of the project. Before starting to collect the data of the study, written statements of public and private institutions and organizations that they support the research project and approval of the ethics committee were obtained. In order to test the research hypotheses, data were collected in the districts and towns where film tourism activities are carried out throughout the province of Muğla. Muğla province had a population of 1.000.773 in 2020 (TURKSTAT, 2020). The data were gathered using convenience sampling method between July to September in 2020. Participation in the study was on a voluntary basis, and data were collected from people who accepted to fill out the questionnaire. 757 valid data were collected in the study.

The obtained data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and Structural Equation Method (SEM) by using AMOS. Reliability of the scale was tested by Cronbach Alpha. Confirmatory Factor Analysis was performed for the construct validity of the scale and the goodness of fit indices were examined. In addition to descriptive statistics conducted to determine the film tourism satisfaction, independent sample t test and variance analysis were used to test the hypothesis of the research.

#### 4. Findings and Analysis

Descriptive statistics regarding the demographic characteristics of residents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Profile of the Participants

<b>Gender</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>			
Female	377	49,8	Married	448	59,2			
Male	375	49,5	Single	294	38,8			
Missing value	5	,7	Missing value	5	2,0			
<b>Income</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
1.500 ₺ and ↓	89	11,8	Primary school	55	7,3	20 and ↓	64	8,5
1.501 – 3000 ₺	171	22,6	High school	161	21,3	21-30	178	23,5
3.001 – 4.500 ₺	166	21,9	Associate	100	13,2	31-40	225	29,7
4.501 – 6.000 ₺	179	23,6	Bachelor	345	45,6	41-50	152	20,1
6.001 and ↑	95	12,5	Graduate	84	11,2	51 and ↑	95	12,5
Missing value	57	7,5	Missing value	12	1,6	Missing value	43	5,7

It was determined that the participants were predominantly married (59,2%) and there was balance distribution of female and male participants in gender. Moreover, the participants' income levels were close to each other but %23,6 of total respondents within income level were the most in the range of 4501-6.000₺. Furthermore, it was provided that the education level of the residents was also high. %45,6 of the respondents had obtained a bachelor's degree. The average age of the participants who are between the ages of 18 and 77, was calculated as 36 (st. dev.: , 450). After age was examined, the highest number of respondents was % 29,7 from the group of years "31-40" and plus %23,5 from the group of years 21-30, the third group %20,1 from the group of years 41-50 and the least number of them from the group of 51 and over. The rest of them was indicated as missing value (Table 1).

Descriptive statistics of the participants' film related habits are presented in Table 2. So, participants have nearly equal film watching habit (respectively %51,0-%47,2). The most of the participants didn't visit the film stage (%71,6) and participate in film shooting (%92,9). The participants watch most with the %41,3 percentage for 1-5 hours per week, followed by %22,2 for 6-10 hours, %14,9 for 11 hours and more, %5,5 for 1 hour and less. While nearly half of them go to the cinema 1 in 3 months, the rest of them go to the cinema more frequently than it.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Participants' Film Related Habits

<b>Film Watching Habit</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Duration of Film Watching</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	386	51,0	1 hour and ↓	42	5,5
No	357	47,2	1-5 hours	313	41,3

Missing value	14	1,8	6-10 hours	168	22,2
<b>Visiting Film Stage</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	11 hours and ↑	113	14,9
Yes	190	25,1	Missing value	121	16,0
No	542	71,6	<b>Frequency of going to the cinema</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Missing value	25	3,3	1 in 3 months and ↓	360	47,6
<b>Participation in Film Shooting</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	1 in 2 months	137	18,1
Yes	38	5,0	1 in a month	128	16,9
No	703	92,9	2 and ↑ in a month	103	13,6
Missing value	16	2,1	Missing value	29	3,8

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed for the construct validity of the scale in the study. CFA is the verification of previously confirmed relationships between variables with a model or hypothesis test (Hair et al., 2014). After covariance was added between the error terms (e1-e4 and e3-e5) in the scale, the goodness of fit indices was scored  $\chi^2=14,116$ ;  $sd=3$ ;  $CMIN=4,705$ ;  $CFI=,994$ ;  $GFI=,993$ ;  $AGFI=,963$ ;  $NFI=,992$ ;  $TLI=,979$  and  $RMSEA=,0,70$ . The fit indices demonstrated that the overall statistics for the scale was acceptable. CFA result confirmed the unidimensionality of the scale. The factor loads of the items were calculated between ,66 and ,85, hence no item was required to be removed from the scale. CFA results of film tourism satisfaction scale is shown in Figure 2.

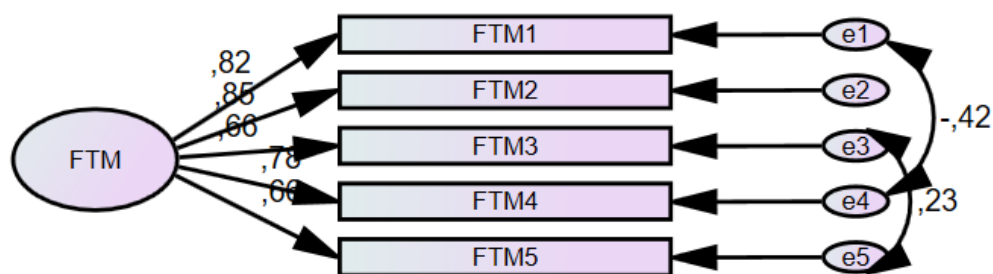


Figure 2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results of film tourism satisfaction scale

Subsequently confirming the factor structure of the scale, descriptive statistics of the items were examined. Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviations of the items in film tourism satisfaction scale.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of items

Items	Mean (X)	St. Dev.
1. I am satisfied with the quality of life in this community, where was filmed and visited by film tourists.	3,57	1,138
2. Film tourism activities impact the community life positively.	3,48	1,165
3. Film tourism provides an increase in the number of tourists visiting the destination.	3,92	1,056

4. Film tourism activities always attract my attention.	3,36	1,226
5. Film tourism activities are important for local government.	3,60	1,191
Film Tourism Satisfaction	3,59	,908

As seen in Table 3, all of the items in the scale had a mean score higher than the average value of the 5-point Likert scale. The participants were most satisfied with item no 3 (Film tourism provides an increase in the number of tourists visiting the destination), followed by item no 5 (Film tourism activities are important for local government) and item no 1 (I am satisfied with the quality of life in this community, where was filmed). Although there was no extreme difference between the mean values of the items, item no 4 (Film tourism activities always attract my attention) was ranked in the last place. The mean score of the scale (mean=3,5868; sd=,90785) indicated that participants were satisfied from film tourism

Independent sample t test and variance analysis were applied to determine the differ of film tourism satisfaction according to the socio-demographic characteristics of the residents. T test results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. T test Results

	Responses	n	Mean	St. Dev.	t	p	Result
<b>Gender</b>	Female	377	3,5933	,89523	-,024	,981	No difference
	Male	375	3,5949	,5949			
<b>Marital status</b>	Single	294	3,5596	,92101	-,772	,440	No difference
	Married	448	3,6123	,90018			
<b>Film watching habits</b>	Yes	386	3,6665	,88864	2,277	,023	Yes > No
	No	357	3,5158	,91577			
<b>Visiting the film stages</b>	Yes	190	3,7507	,92303	2,812	,005	Yes > No
	No	542	3,5376	,89019			
<b>Participation in film shooting</b>	Yes	38	3,8318	1,08576	,175	,083	No difference
	No	703	3,5688	,90032			

According to the t-test analysis, it was observed that film tourism satisfaction of the participants did not differ according to their gender, marital status, participation of a film shooting. But it was determined that the participants who had regularly film watching habits were more satisfied with film tourism than those who had not. Similarly, the participants who visited the film stages were more satisfied than those who did not (Table 4). Consequently, H<sub>2a</sub> and H<sub>2b</sub> were supported while H<sub>1a</sub>, H<sub>1b</sub>, H<sub>2c</sub> were not supported.

One-way Variance Analysis (ANOVA) was conducted on each variable to examine whether educational level, age groups, income, film watching duration and going to the cinema make a significant difference in film tourism satisfaction.

Table 5. ANOVA Results

Education		n	Mean	St. Dev.	F-value	p-value	Result
SAT	High school and ↓	55	3,8247	,90536	2,427	,064	No difference
	Associate	161	3,6750	,82471			
	Bachelor	445	3,5678	,91200			
	Graduate	84	3,4555	,96529			
Age		n	Mean	St. Dev.	F-value	p-value	Result
SAT	30 and ↓	243	3,5892	,93064	,537	,585	No difference
	31-40	225	3,5560	,93651			
	41 and ↑	246	3,6411	,83727			
Income		n	Mean	St. Dev.	F-value	p-value	Result
SAT	1.500 ₺ and ↓	89	3,4057	1,16288	1,310	,265	No difference
	1.501 – 3000 ₺	171	3,6777	,86018			
	3.001 – 4.500 ₺	166	3,6167	,85129			
	4.501 – 6.000 ₺	179	3,5797	,91992			
	6.001 and ↑	95	3,5939	,92457			
Film watching duration		n	Mean	St. Dev.	F-value	p-value	Result
SAT	1 hour and ↓	42	3,5834	,83430	3,624	,013	4>2
	1-5 hours	313	3,5527	,89286			
	6-10 hours	168	3,6516	,90635			
	11 hours and ↑	113	3,8641	,74887			
Frequency of going to the cinema		n	Mean	St. Dev.	F-value	p-value	Result
SAT	1 in 3 months and ↓	360	3,5874	,87907	1,113	,343	No difference
	1 in 2 months	137	3,5683	,86711			
	1 in a month	128	3,7085	,81957			
	2 and ↑ in a month	103	3,5019	1,04182			

As a result of the analysis, the participants' education, income, age groups and frequency of going to the cinema did not make any significant difference on their satisfaction from film tourism. However, duration of film watching present statistically significant difference. The test of Tukey was employed to see the difference in which groups. Accordingly, the participants who watch film for 11 hours or more per week had higher film tourism satisfaction than those who watch film for 1-5 hours per week (Table 5). Consequently,  $H_{2d}$  was supported while  $H_{2a}$ ,  $H_{2b}$ ,  $H_{2c}$ , and  $H_{2e}$  were not supported.

## 5. Discussion

Film tourism is based on the increase in the recognition of a place, its tourism potential and the number of tourists due to the shooting of a movie or series in a region. Local residents are directly in the sphere of influence of film tourism as the mentioned increase and developments, occur in the living space of the local residents in the region. For this reason, the perspectives of the local residents living in places visited by film tourists during or after filming, is important in terms of developing a sustainable tourism policy (Lopez vd., 2018). In this respect, the satisfaction of the local residents is among the essential issues for the sustainable development of film tourism. In this context, this study is important as it attempts to reveal the satisfaction of the local residents with film tourism and some socio-demographic characteristics that affect this satisfaction in Muğla, which is a newly emerging film tourism destination.

The study concluded that local residents were satisfied with the film tourism in the destination. It was determined that local residents were satisfied mostly with the increase in the number of tourists visiting the destination due to film tourism. This result is consistent with the relevant literature on film tourism emphasizing that film tourism causes a (sudden) increase in the number of tourists (Riley et al., 1998; Mordue, 2001; Connell, 2005). However, it should be also noted that there are some studies stating local residents can not perceive the whole effects of film tourism in the destinations where film tourism is newly developing (Beeton, 2001; Yoon et al., 2015). It is thought that the inability of local residents to clearly notice the effects of film tourism at the initial stages may cause the perception of satisfaction in other statements to be lower. On the other hand, the increase in the number of visitors is more easily noticeable as it is a clearly visible change, hence the local residents may have rated it higher.

The study result showed that participants who had the habit of watching films and/or TV series regularly were more satisfied than those who did not. Similarly, local residents who visited film stages in the destination were more satisfied from the film tourism than those who did not. Besides, it was also determined that participants who watched film and/or TV series more than 11 hours per week were much more satisfied than residents spent 1-5 hours per week for watching film and/or TV series. The result indicated that not only the local residents' participation in film tourism, but also their interest in movies or watching films and/or TV series affected their satisfaction from film tourism at the destination. However, it was seen that gender, marital status, education level, age group, income, frequency of going to the cinema or participation in a film shooting in the destination didn't make a significant difference on film tourism satisfaction. The study contributed to the limited subject in the literature by providing empirical findings on an emerging film tourism destination.

## 6. Conclusion

Exploring the perceptions and attitudes of local residents in a film tourism destination is important for the development of film tourism. For the sustainable development of film tourism in the destination, it is of great importance to ensure the active participation of local residents in the process as well as economic continuity and local development. In this context destination management organizations should be aware of the elements that effect local residents' satisfaction from film tourism. Consequently, it is suggested to develop some activities by the destination management organizations that lead local residents to visit the film stages and enable



them to participate into film tourism more and thus increase their satisfaction. It is recommended to determine variables that may affect the satisfaction of local residents from film tourism and to investigate their effects in future studies.

In this research, the case of Muğla province where film tourism has started to develop has been examined and evaluated. For this reason, it is not possible to generalize the results of the research to destinations with different economic, socio-cultural and environmental characteristics in terms of film tourism. In further studies, film tourism satisfaction of local residents of Muğla could be re-examined and findings could be interpreted by respecting changes in different years and stages of film tourism development in the destination. By means of a longitudinal study, more comprehensive findings can be obtained and contribute more to the literature.

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# Work Values in Tourism: A Comparative Study between Polish and Turkish Students

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## Abstract

*This study aims to investigate and compare the work values of tourism students in different countries, namely in Poland and Turkey. The Work Values Scale developed by Gürsoy et al. (2013) was used to measure work values of tourism students. A total of 493 valid data collected via survey technique. Factor analysis results showed that work values consisted of six dimensions which were labelled in accordance with the original scale. The findings indicated that work-centrality was the least valued for tourism students in Poland, while it was the most valued dimension for the latter. According to t test results, work centrality, power, work-life balance, technology challenge, and non-compliance sub-dimensions of work values differed for tourism students in Turkey and Poland. The results showed that mean score of work values for tourism students in Turkey were significantly higher than tourism students in Poland, partially supporting the hypothesis of the study. The study contributed literature by providing empirical findings indicating that work values varied in different countries. It is suggested international tourism businesses to develop tools and methods respecting these differences of employees not only in practices of human resource management, but also in strategic management process to gain competitiveness power.*

**Keywords:** Work Values, Tourism Students, Turkey, Poland

## 1. Introduction

The concept of value has been the subject of different disciplines such as anthropology, economics, psychology, sociology and political science since the beginning of the 20th century. Values which are defined as beliefs and personal standards are also described as an individual guide to a particular feature of human behavior and function in a society. The different attitudes and values of employees are amongst the significant determinants of the diversification in the organizational behaviour. Values affect decision-making processes in both individual and organizational decisions and have an important place in the functioning of organizations as they are one of the core elements of organizational culture. Hence, the concept of value cannot be ignored in the field of business management due to its effects on employees' attitudes and behaviors. Work values are considered as a sub-dimension of values and their reflection on working life. Work values refer to the elements that individuals need and care about in their work life.

Tourism, a labor-intensive sector, is one of the fastest growing and most employment sectors in the world. Seasonality and high employee turnover are among the features of the tourism sector.

Employees in tourism are in intense interaction with other employees and customers. Moreover, due to the sector's nature, in most cases, different cultures and nationalities are involved in this interaction. Therefore, the tourism organizations should be aware of not only the work values of the employees but also the differences in work values of employees from different cultures and nationalities. Identifying the differences in work values among frontline and service employees in tourism sector can be beneficial for the organizations, in particular where multi-cultural employees are working, to improve their human resources policies (Gürsoy, Chi & Karadağ, 2013). Besides, recruiting students and/or international employees are very common in tourism organizations (Boella & Goss-Turner, 2020). In tourism organizations, students work as interns as it is a compulsory part of tourism education and/or as seasonal employees during the holiday periods that coincide with the high season of the sector. Therefore, knowledge about work value differences among tourism students in different cultures can also contribute to the development of curricula of institutions providing international tourism education (Seraphin et al., 2021). In this respect, this study aims to investigate the work values of tourism students and to compare the work values in different countries, namely in Poland and Turkey.

## **2. Literature Review**

Values are defined as “a great tendency for certain situations to be preferred over other situations” (Hofstede, 2001: 5). People have a system of values originating from their place, society and environmental factors. By examining the values that people have, the reasons for the behaviour of individuals can be determined and also analysed. In addition to the general life values of people, there are also values that they display in the workplace. Work values refer to the core values that people have in the work environments and this condition gives work values a more specific meaning than general values (Gürsoy, Maier & Chi, 2008). Schwartz (1999: 24 - 25) defines value as a concept that guides the actions of social actors, such as organizational leaders, politicians, and individuals, to evaluate choices, people and events, and to explain their behaviours. Schwartz (2012: 3) also claims that values characterize cultural groups, societies and individuals, monitor their changes over time, and explain the basis of their attitudes and behaviours.

Values affect the identity of individuals and their view of the world, so the lifestyle of individuals and their interaction with others are shaped in line with their values. Considering that work life constitutes an important part of life, it is clearly evident that work values affect the decisions about working life in general, such as the career choices of individuals, some expectations regarding the characteristics of the work environment they prefer (Dose, 1997: 235-236). Work values are beliefs about desirable situations, such as high salary and working with good people in the workplace. Work values are ranked according to their importance as guiding principles for evaluating different goals, outcomes and environments of work and choosing among various business alternatives (Ros, Schwartz, & Surkiss, 1999). In fact, work values function as a bridge between the individual employees and the organization as their work settings. The individuals seek certain kinds of jobs or working environments and work strictly according to their work values (Gürsoy, Maier & Chi, 2008). It proves that work values not only determine career choice but can also affect work motivation and lead to effective job performance and job satisfaction (White, 2005). Work values influence perceptions and behavior in the work setting. It is generally

considered that individuals establish own values through life experiences and later implement them in the organization environment (Köroğlu & Gezen, 2013).

The concept of work can mean different things to an individual in any society. Similarly, work values can have a different expression of basic values in the work environment for employees in an organization. This relationship may cause that the work values can become the source of the important differences among the employees and major source of conflict in the workplace. On the other hand, those differences can be a source of significant strengths and opportunities (Gürsoy, Maier & Chi, 2008). An important way of recruiting and integrating employees into the business is to respect their work values (Avci, 2011). Understanding the individual work values and the way how they are compared to the values of others in the workplace can help to avoid conflicts and, in some cases, help to decide if the work environment is suitable for everyone (Gürsoy, Maier & Chi, 2008; Veljković, 2015).

Work values can provide important gains for the organizations. Development of internal recruitment strategies, increasing the employees' organizational commitment and motivation to achieve the organizational goals, and improving the managerial processes are among the topics that benefit from work values in the organizations (Veljković, 2015). Many of the value theorists agree that understanding work values may develop businesses and create new motivational strategies, can improve job structure, redesign working conditions and change social atmosphere (Lyons, Duxbury & Higgins, 2005; Gürsoy, Maier & Chi, 2008).

The relationship between work values of hospitality and tourism students and their attitudes to economic security was examined by Pizam and Lewis (1979), so that they explored their students' hierarchy of work values. The researchers found out that economic security, relations with superiors, altruism, social relationships and interactions, work environment characteristics and values of management were the work values of hospitality and tourism students. The researchers also compared work values chosen by hospitality and tourism students with business administration students and public health students. Pizam, Reichel and Neumann (1980) discovered significant differences regarding their work values and motivations. It was revealed that good wages, good working conditions, and managerial positions were the most considered work values by the hospitality and tourism students, followed by the social values and aspirations as being available and helpful to others. Consequently, it was claimed that hospitality students have more humanistic values than the others (Pizam, Reichel & Neumann, 1980).

Recently, studies on work values of tourism students have started to gain attention in tourism literature. Studies exploring the dimensions and/or the structure of work values that represent the uniqueness of work values perceived by the tourism or hospitality university students and presenting the comparison of the work values among the university student groups in different disciplines and grades are augmenting in Asian cultures. Various studies related to work values of tourism students conducted in Chinese universities showed that university students in the field of tourism and hospitality management had highly valued in the work settings the self-development, social status and prestige of profession, income, safety insurance (Chen & Choi, 2008). The studies also found out that some socio-demographic features, such as gender, family background, education level of parents affected the work values of tourism students in China.

Similar results have been found by Köroğlu and Gezen (2013). They confirmed that tourism students in Turkey valued the most, the success, safety, work environment and relations with colleague. It was claimed that socio-psychological dimensions of work values are more important

than economic dimensions such as economic profit for the tourism students. The researchers also indicated that several dimensions of work values of tourism student differed according to their gender, age and departments where they study. According to the analysis of the work values conducted by Luo and Huang (2011), tourism graduates tended to value self-development, material gains and the job congeniality the most. They also confirmed that the gender influences the work values. Female graduates valued more on the economic benefits, working physical environment and the need for satisfying job which can guarantee them a stable life. On the other hand, male graduates showed an interest on social environment.

Work values in different cultures and countries are among the topics that tourism researchers examine. In their comparative study, Aygün, Arslan and Güney (2008) showed that Turkish university students reported greater scores both in work ethics and work values than American university students. In another study emphasizing the role and importance of values in multicultural work environment, Knap-Stefanuk and Burkiewicz (2020) indicated that different values were significant for Czech, Polish and Spanish managers. Grobelna (2015) underlined the importance of cultural diversity of the hospitality employees. The researcher asserted the importance of improving educational process by considering cross-cultural interactions in multicultural hospitality environment and increasing the intercultural competence for the competitiveness of the hospitality businesses. Woldu, Patel and Crawshaw (2013) found out that cultural value orientations of employees from Poland and Turkey were different. The authors concluded that Turkey exhibited higher cultural values in most of the criteria implying a more readily acceptance of free market philosophy than Poland's cultural characteristics. They also suggested to examine the diversity of cultural values not only at macro-level, but also at the micro-level with reference to controlled demographic groups. In another study examining the business culture in Poland and Turkey, several differences were found between Polish and Turkish businessperson in tourism industry (Nieżgoda, Szutowski & Szulczyńska, 2017). They revealed that the role of good manners, politeness and the knowledge of culture, arts and geopolitics was dominant in Turkey, while the opinion about the business partner was formulated according to their competencies in Poland. The authors underlined the research gap related to differences in business culture in Poland and Turkey. In this respect, this study attempts to measure and compare the work values of tourism students in Poland and Turkey. In accordance with this, below given hypothesis was developed.

*H<sub>1</sub>: Work values of tourism students in Poland and Turkey are different.*

### **3. Research Methodology**

The aim of the study is twofold. Firstly, it is aimed to investigate the work values of tourism students in different countries, namely in Poland and Turkey. Secondly, it is purposed to compare the work values of tourism students in different countries. The study was conducted with quantitative research methods. The data were gathered from undergraduate students of tourism departments in several universities in Turkey and Poland. Research data were collected between April and June 2019. Convenience sampling technique was applied in the study. Out of 645 questionnaires in total, 517 questionnaires were collected back. The 24 of the questionnaires were excluded from the analysis because of incomplete responses, and 493 valid data were analyzed within the study.

The survey of the study consisted of two sections. First section was dedicated to socio-demographic features of the participants. After the questions about the socio-demographic features of the students, items of the work values scale were listed in the survey. The Work Values Scale developed by Gürsoy, Chi and Karadağ (2013) was used to explore work values of tourism students. The original scale was consisted of seven dimensions and 25 statements using a 5-point Likert scale, anchored at 1 = Strongly disagree and 5 = Strongly agree. The sub-dimensions were stated as work centrality (5 items), non-compliance (4 items), technology challenge (3 items), work-life balance (5 items), leadership (2 items), power (4 items) and recognition (2 items) in the original scale. The authors calculated Cronbach alpha value of the scale in their study as ,803 (Gürsoy, Chi & Karadağ, 2013).

Before the analyses, normal distribution assumption of the data was examined through Skewness and Kurtosis values. The calculated Skewness values were between -,562 and ,589; while the calculated Kurtosis values were between -,976 and -,137. Aforementioned values of the data showed that both criteria were within the lower (-2) and upper limits (+2) as suggested by Kline (2011) and hence it was assumed that the research data were normally distributed.

#### 4. Findings and Analysis

The demographic profile of the tourism students was examined and presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Profile of Tourism Students

Country	N	%	Gender	N	%	Level of Study	N	%
Turkey	278	56,4	Female	270	54,8	Associate degree	212	43,0
Polish	215	43,6	Male	223	45,2	Bachelor's degree	281	57,0
Age Group	N	%	Industrial Experience	N	%	Employment Time	N	%
18-19	91	18,5	Yes	366	74,2	Trainee	145	39,6
20-21	230	46,7	No	127	25,8	Part Time	106	29,0
22 and over	172	34,9				Full Time	115	31,4

As shown in Table 1, 56,4% of the respondents were from Turkey, while slightly less than half of the students were from Poland. When the distribution of the tourism students by gender is examined, it was seen that slightly over half of the respondents (54,8%) were female. The respondents studying at bachelor's degree (57,0%) were more in number compared to the respondents studying at associate's degree. Tourism students' age was differing between 18 and 37, while the average age of the respondents was 21 (st. dev. 3,134). It was seen that the majority of respondents (46,7%) were 20-21 years old. The respondents were also examined in terms of having work experience in the tourism industry. About three-fourth of the tourism students had an industrial experience (%74,2). Out of 366 respondents with industrial experience, 39,6% were trainees, following by full time employees (31,4%).

Using the 493 valid data, explanatory factor analysis was conducted to test the construct validity of the Work Values scale. Promax rotation technique was applied within the explanatory factor analysis due to the fact that sub-dimensions of the scales were expected to be related (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2018). Within the explanatory factor analysis 4 items (Item no 2, item no 5, item no 18 and item no 19) were excluded from the scale due to the fact that having factor loadings lower than ,40. Besides, item no 9 was removed because of having low intercorrelation (< ,1) between other items of the scale. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value (,816) and Bartlett's test of sphericity results (,000) indicated that sampling is adequate to apply explanatory factor analysis. Explanatory factor analysis results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Explanatory Factor Analysis Results

Factors & Items		Factor Loading	Eigenvalues	Variance Explained (%)
Work Centrality			4,300	21,498
WV1		,750		
WV3		,794		
WV4		,861		
WV6		,768		
WV12		,415		
WV16		,459		
Power			2,043	10,215
WV20		,733		
WV21		,782		
WV22		,739		
WV23		,585		
Work-Life Balance			1,698	8,489
WV13		,506		
WV14		,639		
WV15		,741		
WV17		,645		
Technology Challenge			1,440	7,201
WV10		,710		
WV11		,850		
Recognition			1,112	5,560
WV24		,825		
WV25		,845		
Non-compliance			1,009	5,043
WV7		,671		
WV8		,817		
Work Values Scale				58,007
KMO	,816	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	App. Chi-Square df	2181,364 190



Factors & Items	Factor Loading	Eigenvalues	Variance Explained (%)
		Sig.	,000
Cronbach's Alpha	,772		

Explanatory factor analysis results showed that work values consisted of six dimensions with eigenvalues greater than one, and the six-factor structure explained %58,007 of the total variance. These dimensions were labelled respecting the sub-dimensions of the original scale: work centrality, power, work-life balance, technology challenge, recognition and non-compliance. *Work Centrality* dimension was consisted of 6 items of which factor loadings were between ,415 and ,861. There were 4 items with factor loadings between ,585 and ,782 in *Power* dimension, while there were 4 items of which factor loadings were between ,506 and ,741 in *Work-Life Balance* dimension. *Technology Challenge* dimension was consisted of 2 items with factor loadings ,710 and ,850. There were 2 items with factor loadings ,825 and ,845 in *Recognition* dimension. Lastly, *Non-Compliance* dimension was consisted of 2 items of which factor loadings were ,671 and ,817. Leadership dimension didn't emerge and some items of the scale were included in dimensions different from the original scale. After explanatory factor analysis, Cronbach Alpha's value was calculated for the reliability of the scale. As also shown in Table 2, the results of the reliability test indicate that Cronbach's alpha value is greater than 0,6 and the scale has composite reliability (Hair et al., 2010).

The data were analyzed to find out the level of work values and its sub-dimensions in different countries. The independent sample t test was applied to determine the differences in work values between Poland and Turkey. Results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Independent Sample T test results

Dimensions	Country	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig.
Work Centrality	Turkey	278	4,1655	,78186	,000*
	Poland	215	2,7946	,47937	
Power	Turkey	278	3,7419	,94677	,000*
	Poland	215	3,4558	,75336	
Work – Life Balance	Turkey	278	3,3660	,89058	,004**
	Poland	215	3,1558	,65131	
Technology Challenge	Turkey	278	4,0144	,98168	,000*
	Poland	215	3,4209	,89300	
Recognition	Turkey	278	3,1871	1,31332	,536
	Poland	215	3,1233	,84412	
Non-Compliance	Turkey	278	3,6996	,96448	,000*
	Poland	215	3,2605	,92199	
WORK VALUES	Turkey	278	3,6903	,52093	,000*
	Poland	215	3,0493	,27769	

\* p < ,001 \*\* p < ,005

The results showed that *Power* had the highest average value (3,4558), following by *Technology Challenge* (3,4209) and *Non-compliance* (3,2605) for tourism students in Poland. On the other hand, *Work-centrality* had the lowest average value (2,7946) while the *Work values* had an average value (3,0493) slightly over 3 (Neither agree nor disagree) for tourism students in Poland. The findings revealed that *Work-centrality* had the highest average value (4,1655) for tourism students in Turkey. This dimension was followed by *Technology Challenge* (4,0144), *Power* (3,7419) and *Non-compliance* (3,6996), respectively. It was determined that while the *Work Values* had an average value (3,6903), which is close to agree, *Recognition* had the lowest average value (3,1233), for tourism students in Turkey.

Independent sample t test results indicated that there was a significant difference between work values of tourism students in Poland and Turkey. It was revealed that work values in general and *work centrality*, *power*, *work-life balance*, *technology challenge*, and *non-compliance* sub-dimensions of work values differed for tourism students in different countries. It was found out that the mean scores of work values and its sub-dimensions, except the recognition dimension, for tourism students in Turkey were significantly higher than tourism students in Poland. The difference in work-life balance dimension was significant at the  $p < ,05$  level while the differences in in other dimensions were significant at the  $p < ,00$  level. Hence the hypothesis of the research is mostly supported as some sub-dimensions of work values for tourism students differed in Poland and Turkey.

## 5. Discussion

Socio-cultural background could affect the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors in the tourism industry. Work values are related to basic values of individuals in the work setting and therefore work values mean has a specific meaning rather than values in general. Therefore, revealing the differences in work values is of importance, especially in the tourism industry where multicultural teams work extensively. Despite some research on the work values of tourism students, there is a lack of research that provides empirical comparisons specific to countries. Based on the data gathered from tourism students, this study examined the work values of tourism students in Poland and Turkey. The conducted research indicated that *work centrality*, *technology challenge* and *power* were the most valued dimensions, and *recognition* had the lowest average value for tourism students in Turkey. The results are in accordance with the previous studies revealing that work values are highly considered by tourism and hospitality employees in Turkey (Özkan & Gümüş, 2013; Eşitti, 2018) and by tourism students in Turkey (Köroğlu & Gezen, 2013). However, tourism students in Poland valued *power*, *technology challenge* and *non-compliance* dimension the most, while the *work centrality* was the least considered for them. The result seems similar to study conducted by Swadźba and Horáková (2019), claiming that work place is an essential but not the most important value for the students from V4 countries and one-fifth of Polish students showed a negative value and attitude towards.

According to independent sample t test results, significant differences were found in the work values of tourism students in Poland and Turkey. It was revealed that in addition to *work values* as a whole, sub-dimensions of work values, namely, *work centrality*, *power*, *work-life balance*, *technology challenge*, and *non-compliance* differed for tourism students in different countries. The result is supportive the previous research revealing that cultural value orientations of employees from Poland and Turkey were different (Woldu, Patel & Crawshaw, 2013) and

concluding that Polish and Turkish businessperson in tourism industry had differences in their business culture (Nieżgoda, Szutowski & Szulczyńska, 2017). The result has the significance because of contributing relevant literature by providing empirical findings that showed the work values differed for tourism students in different countries. The study has a novelty due to the fact that revealing the presence of aforementioned differences for tourism students in Poland and Turkey.

## **6. Conclusions**

The study concluded that work values of tourism students in Poland and Turkey were varied. The findings of this study suggested that work is more central for tourism students in Turkey. These kinds of differences could cause conflict in work place where Polish and Turkish employees work together. In this respect, managers of international tourism businesses should be aware of these differences in work values and a holistic management approach should be developed for the multicultural teams. It is suggested the international tourism businesses to develop tools and methods respecting these differences of employees not only in practices of human resource management, but also in strategic management process to gain and/or increase their competitiveness power. Not only the entrepreneurs but also the educational institutions should consider the work value differences among tourism students in different cultures. In this respect it is suggested tourism education institutions to enrich their curricula to provide more qualified and internationalized education service, and to raise more conscious and responsive students about the differences in work values.

The research has some limitations such as small sample size, cross-sectional survey and convenience sampling. Hence, further studies needed to be conducted to reveal to differences between work values of tourism students in Poland and Turkey. For future studies, it is suggested to investigate the reason of the differences of work values of tourism students in aforementioned countries. In this manner, the antecedents and/or results of work values could be analyzed in future research. Researchers interested in this topic could also examine the work values in different cultures, by providing more comprehensive perspective, such as investigating relationship between work values and cultural differences of the societies or organizations.

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# Consumer Behaviour and Experience towards FSC Airlines: A Study on International Students as Travellers

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## Abstract

*This study explores travellers' consumer behaviour towards Full-Service Carriers (FSC) airlines by analysing the factors that influence their customer experiences, particularly linked with the current pandemic and international students. Based on the framework of customer decision-making, this study proposes and tests a research model to improve understanding of the interrelationships between the two dimensions of airline and passenger characteristics, as well as their influences on passenger's choice of airlines. This research presents a goal-oriented view of customer journeys in response to demands for a more customer-centric approach. Consequently, it offers recommendations for airline practitioners to lift sales and generate a positive consumer experience, satisfaction, repurchase intention, and loyalty. Owing to the nature of consumer behaviour research, the mixed approach (sequential exploratory) was selected as the best choice for this study. In the first phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted in the UK. The quantitative data were gathered through a self-administered questionnaire survey of international students with FSC experience in the United Kingdom. This study found that price is the most important factor when choosing the airlines for international students. Furthermore, because of Covid-19, international students expect good quality cabin crew service and high hygiene standards, as this will greatly improve their flight experience, and onboard service from the cabin crew is the most influential factor contributing to customer satisfaction and loyalty. Other factors such as facilities, recommendations from friends and family (WOM), and brand equity also play roles in travellers decision making.*

**Keywords:** Airlines, Consumer Behaviour, Customer Experience, International Students, Customer Journey

## 1. Introduction

Aviation provides a worldwide transport network and is crucial to global business development and the enrichment of tourism (Rodríguez & O'Connell, 2018). Air transport is, therefore, one of the most vital services in providing substantial economic and social benefits. The airline industry is unique and fascinating, capturing the interest of a massive audience due to its glamour, reach and impact, on the rapidly growing number of consumers around the world (Acar & Karabulak, 2015; Skapinker, 2020; Tigu & Stoenescu, 2017). Data shows that there were more than 4.5 billion

global air passengers in 2019, contributing 873 billion US dollars to the global GDP (IATA, 2020). The figure of air traveller journeys worldwide is projected to soar to 8.2 billion by 2037 (IATA, D., 2016; Sarker, Moniruzzaman, Mohd-Any, & Kamarulzaman, 2021). Airlines need to attract and retain customers in such a highly competitive market, and they need to consider their competitive advantages. Hence, the analysis of consumer behaviour to improve their provision of services is needed (Chen, C. & Liu, 2017; Wafik, Abou-Shouk, & Hewedi, 2017).

Despite the global importance of international students, there is still a debate about what constitutes an international student (Lipura & Collins, 2020). According to UNESCO, it is students [who] leave their country or territory of origin and move to another country or territory to study (World Tourism Organization, 2016). In addition to studying in a tertiary country, as international students participate in a variety of activities, the dynamics of their travel motive and behaviour can vary from those of typical travellers. International students embody the global economy in a significant, growing market (Dębski & Nasierowski, 2017). It is estimated that the youth and student travel market accounts for approximately US\$165 billion and a quarter of world travel (Confederation, 2013). The rising number of university students participating in holiday breaks can attest to the attractiveness of the student market (Thrane, 2015). Students were shown to have greater mobility (De Wit, Ferencz, & Rumbley, 2013), are time-rich (Thrane, 2016), and play a significant role in the growth of the market for Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) (Shani & Uriely, 2012). Thus, international students are viewed as a lucrative market for the tourism industry (Gamil, 2021; UNESCO, 2009). As a result of the phenomenon's rise, size, and effect on the tourism industry, tourism marketers are paying closer attention to this market (Mggeogr & Rancâne, 2019).

This market is a good potential for airline companies to focus on developing a continuous flow of passengers over the next five to ten years, which can be accomplished by establishing a good level of trust and familiarity (Cavagnaro, Staffieri, & Postma, 2018; Xie & Ritchie, 2019). Thus, given the importance of international students in the tourism sector, this group needs more attention from tourism and hospitality researchers (Gheorghe, Moraru, & Anton, 2017; Song, H. & Bae, 2018). While several studies have been carried out to assess the quality of airline service and personal characteristics among a variety of airline passengers, limited research has been carried out to identify what international students expect when considering travelling to an international destination by air transport (Lim, S. S. & Tkaczynski, 2017). Moreover, most of the literature in the past three years has focused on customer satisfaction and loyalty instead of consumer behaviour as a process, and mainly focused on Low-Cost Carriers (LCC) rather than Full-Service Carrier (FSC) (Cristina & Gheorghe, 2017; Deeppa & Ganapathi, 2018; Yang, F., Shih, Nha, & Wang, 2017).

The Engel-Kollat-Blackwell model is arguably the most well-designed consumer behaviour framework, as it defined the customer as a central control mechanism engaged in an almost continuous problem-solving process and incorporated external influences on the purchase decision-making process (Dimitriou & AbouElgheit, 2019). In addition, the model was remarkable because it generated a feedback loop (Osei & Abenyin, 2016). This traditional purchase decision-making process model consists of five stages: problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behaviour (Karimi, Holland, & Papamichail, 2018). This model is perhaps the most widely used framework for analysing

consumer purchasing behaviour and has been extensively used in consumer research (Plantin & Wendt, 2020).

The focus of attention is on the three key components: 1) Individuals: their psychological process, ones underlying needs and drives, their handling of information, their interpretation of communications, their attitudes and beliefs, and their choices. 2) Social environment: social media, word of mouth communication, influence of the family and other consumers, marketing activities, regulations, and suppliers. 3) Physical environment: people behave differently in different settings and experience and respond in different ways to their environments (Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1995; Gabbott & Hogg, 2016).

## 2.Methods

Consumer behaviour research is challenging - some of these challenges include complexities of examining the inner lives of consumers, their personality traits, their self-expression, their truths, and lies. These factors add dynamism to the behaviours of consumers (Majeed, 2019). Consumer behaviour research involves three forms of research; (a) cognitive processes involved in gathering and analysing information on products or services which are subject to the extent of involvement of the product or service itself; (b) what consumers decide or do; and (c) the emphasis on gaining an understanding of behaviour (Majeed, 2019; Rubinstein, 2018).

Due to the nature of consumer behaviour research, a mixed-method is the best option as it can increase confidence in the accuracy and dependability of the result (Brotherton, 2015). The author chose sequential exploratory because qualitative research is better suited to issues that are under-researched within the existing body of knowledge, such as those that require theory to be built, rather than tested, then a survey is created based on an analysis of the qualitative data to test the theory and generalise the findings to the general population (Creswell, 2015; Crick, 2020).

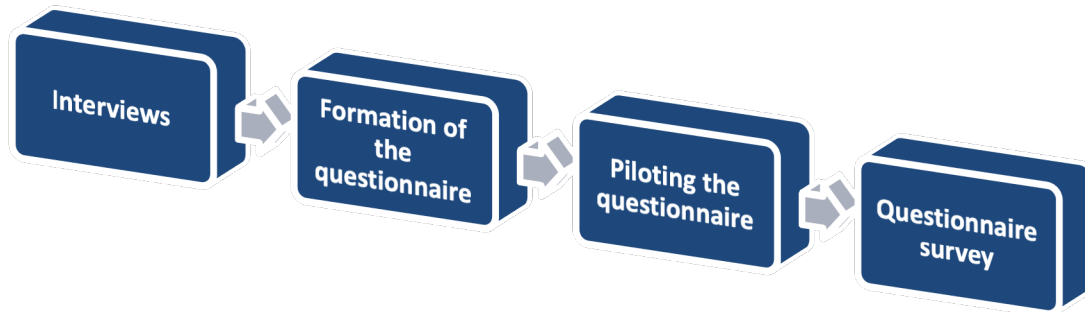


Figure 1: The link between two data collection methods in this study.

Among the numerous qualitative research designs, the author chose the grounded theory. Like other types of qualitative research, the investigator, as the primary instrument of data collection and interpretation, employs an inductive approach to derive meaning from the data. The outcome of this type of qualitative analysis is a theory that emerges from or is based on, the data (Mills & Birks, 2014).

For this research, the author employed purposive samples with heterogeneous or maximum variation sampling, which uses the author's judgement to choose participants with sufficiently diverse characteristics and backgrounds to provide the maximum variation possible in the data



collected (Dawson, 2019; Saunders et al., 2019). It also serves to validate and generalise the findings by complementing and cross-checking the evaluation with intentionally different cases (Ruckdäschel, 2015). According to Glesne, it is important to take a sample size that meets the level of saturation required to support a qualitative analysis (Glesne, 2016). The author reached the point of theoretical saturation in the sixth interview, where the information obtained appears to validate the analysis rather than add something new (Denscombe, 2017).

Table 1 *Demographic profile of the interview participants.*

Participants	Gender	Age	Nationality	Occupation
Participant 1	Female	26	Indonesian	Full-time student.
Participant 2	Female	21	Saudi Arabian	Full-time student.
Participant 3	Male	30	Chinese	Full-time student.
Participant 4	Male	31	Taiwanese	Full-time student.
Participant 5	Female	25	Thai	Full-time student.
Participant 6	Male	25	Indian	Full-time student.

The researcher who chooses the quantitative approach predominantly uses a questionnaire for data collection methods as it provides an efficient way of collecting responses from a large sample (Saunders et al., 2019). Participants included a convenience sample of international students in the United Kingdom. The survey was conducted online during the period of August 2020 to April 2021 using the Qualtrics platform and distributed through links on social media. A total of 183 survey responses were gathered.

Table 2 *Survey participants' socio-demographic profiles.*

Profile	Category	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	38.36
	Female	61.64
Age	18-24	54.72
	25-34	36.48
	35-44	8.81
Nationality	Indonesian	46.54
	Indian	10.06
	Chinese	6.29
	Malaysian	4.40
	Thai	1.89

	Other (Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Nigerian, Hispanic, Canadian, German, Moroccan, Ghanaian, Hungarian, Syrian, French, Greek, African, and Saudi Arabian.	30.82
<b>Income (British pound)</b>	Under 20,000	50.94
	20,000 - 29,999	25.16
	40,000 - 49,999	7.55
	50,000 or more	13.21
<b>Employment status</b>	Employee in full time job	14.47
	Employee in part-time job	10.06
	Full-time at college/university/training	59.12
	Unemployed	16.35

### 3.Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Qualitative

Qualitative data analysis starts by listening to the recordings, reading the verbatim in the transcription of the interviews, and getting immersed in the text. The next step is to develop initial codes and then group them thematically with a thematic map to illustrate the direction of connections between themes and sub-themes (Vagle, 2018). Two common themes are derived from the transcript, which include price and service.

#### *Price*

The participants mentioned the issue of price numerous times when they were asked regarding their flight purchase decision.

#### **Price comparison & switching behaviour.**

Before purchasing their flights, all participants stated that they compared prices. Most of them used the price comparison/metasearch website to gather information. Of the many purchases made over the Internet, airline tickets are particularly significant due to the massive growth in sales over this network in recent years (Andrés Martínez, Alfaro Navarro, & Trinquencoste, 2017). Compared to the purchase of general merchandise in a store-based retail environment, purchasing airline tickets online entails a high risk, which makes consumers more critical (Jeng & Lo, 2019). Online searches using travel sites have expanded over the last two decades: more than 2.2 billion visits are made to online travel websites (Julia, Christopher, & Prinz, 2018).

The Internet helps customers to increase their bargaining power by comparing various airlines and selecting the most competitive flight (Kim, J., Cui, Choi, Lee, & Marshall, 2020; Moreno-Izquierdo, Ramón-Rodríguez, & Perles Ribes, 2015). It is evident that price knowledge is essential

for customers, and therefore, online price comparison tools are an indispensable part of the purchasing decision (Kentistos-Rannos & Chatzoglou, 2017).

Other participants claimed that price comparison could have an impact on their decision to purchase a brand that they would usually prefer. It reflects the findings of previous research that concluded that the perceived use of price comparison websites is closely linked to online switching behaviour (Chuang & Tai, 2016; Kwarteng, Jibril, Botha, & Osakwe, 2020).

### **Price is the most important factor when choosing the airlines.**

Participant 3 emphasised the price points several times during the interview, he stated that price is more crucial than the brand, word of mouth (WOM), and the feature of the airlines. Other participants also ranked price as the priority amongst other considerations.

A study has shown that low-cost carrier (LCC) customers are generally more price-sensitive than full-service carrier airline (FSC) customers (Shen & Yahya, 2021). However, the statements suggest that international students are also price-sensitive when selecting FSC. Price and value for money were the most significant considerations in the choice of airline, not only for LCC passengers but also for FSC passengers (Deepa & Jayaraman, 2017).

Price is therefore one of the most significant key indicators that full-service airlines need to pay attention to in order to improve their competitiveness (Delbari et al., 2016). In addition, preliminary studies revealed that airline passengers show more tolerance for unpleasant service when the price is low (Deepa & Jayaraman, 2017; Yeoh & Chan, 2011).

### *Service*

Although costumers are likely to be drawn by lower prices, service quality has consistently been identified as a key factor influencing behavioural intentions in recent years (Chiou & Chen, 2012; Etemad-Sajadi, Way, & Bohrer, 2016; Ford, Pappas, & Chumpitaz, 2015; Haghghat, 2017; Lim, S. S. & Tkaczynski, 2017; Liou, James J. H., Chuang, & Hsu, 2016; Park, E. et al., 2019; Sarker, Md Moniruzzaman, Mohd-Any, & Kamarulzaman, 2019). Airline service is a sequence of services in which passengers' expectations of service quality vary at different stages, it is divided into three stages: pre-flight, in-flight, and post-flight (Anggrayni et al., 2020; Arora et al., 2020).

### **Pre-flight**

Pre-flight services are the service or experience available to passengers before entering the aircraft. Some of these services include purchasing process, check-in services, a good image of the airline, and on-time departure (Hapsari et al., 2017; Khudhair et al., 2019).

### **Booking process**

Airline operators have sought to determine ways to enhance their offerings to sustain the existing customer base and to retain users of other services (Shaw, 2016). In line with these initiatives, most airlines offer online services to enable consumers to conveniently book their flights and to access details about additional services offered by the companies (Guercini, Misopoulos, Mitic, Kapoulas, & Karapiperis, 2014; Park, E., 2019; Prentice & Loureiro, 2017). When asked about the booking process, most participants said the process was relatively easy. Platforms used to book the ticket, including airline websites, apps, and travel/airline agents.

### **Punctuality**

Airlines are generally known to compete on prices; however, on-time flight performance (OTP) has become a source of competitive advantage as passenger expectations for on-time arrival/departure have risen in recent years. Studies find that passengers value OTP and are willing to pay a premium to avoid delay (Greenfield, 2014; Yimga, 2017). When asked about the participants' frustration with the delay, some of the participants stated that they did not mind the delay if it was not too severe.

In the airline industry, service delays are common; a variety of issues can cause delays, and customers have grown accustomed to waiting for the required services to become available (Kim, N. & Park, 2016). However, delays can trigger negative emotions from customers and lead to an unsatisfactory experience, which is costly to an airline because it reduces future demand (Jiang, Y., Li, Huang, & Scott, 2020). In addition, prior research indicates that flight delays also reduce market fares (Greenfield, 2014).

### **In-flight**

In-flight services refer to the services that passengers receive on their flight. Airline passengers typically spend most of their time in contact with the airline on the aircraft. Thus, the quality of in-flight facilities plays a key role in assessing the level of customer satisfaction. The variables used to evaluate in-flight customer satisfaction include comfort, environment, safety, meal service, and the attitude and behaviour of the cabin crew (Khudhair et al., 2019).

### **Comfort**

A study found that seat comfort is the most important factor when it comes to perceived value for money. Seat width and seat legroom for long-haul flights are the two most significant variables in the overall perception of passenger comfort in an aircraft, followed by seat recline, TV screen view and aisle space/access (Šebjan, Tominc, & Širec, 2017). Another study suggests that in-flight comfort is determined by the precise cabin announcements, safety demonstrations, crew competence and politeness, a pleasant aircraft interior, well-maintained facilities, and a diverse range of entertainment programs (Bogicevic, Yang, Bujisic, & Bilgihan, 2017).

Participant 2 claimed that she had chosen the airline because of the comfort when asked regarding online/offline advertising. While Participant 3 mentioned the comfortable seat as one of the important features that make him selected the airline, Participant 4 stated that he compared the legroom before purchase.

### **Safety**

Safety is vital when it comes to the quality of airline services and is perceived to be the greatest asset of the airline industry, regardless of whether they are low-cost or full-service carriers (Hussain, Al Nasser, & Hussain, 2015). Passengers expect a good level of service quality in proportion to the amount paid for the flight ticket, but high standards of safety and security-related quality are essential in any case, and passengers would not be willing to compromise on this (Šebjan et al., 2017). However, passengers' confidence in the air transportation system's reliability and service offerings is eroding. External shocks such as wars, terrorist attacks, negative press, and accidents can have a major impact on the travel business. The global aviation industry has been undergoing various stages of market recovery, adjusting to new business models and

strategies for business transactions to stay afloat. Air carriers around the world are continually seeking to improve business models to achieve profitability while ensuring safe and efficient operations as part of the strategy process. Only the most adaptable businesses succeed in the new operating environment (Deepa & Jayaraman, 2017; Rhoades, 2018).

Covid19's ongoing pandemic has had a global impact on air transport mobility and the airline industry in general. Several restrictions have been placed on airline transportation, which could have serious long-term consequences for the global airline industry (Nižetić, 2020). When asked what measures airlines should take to convince participants that flying with them is safe, some said they expect vital protocols such as thorough cleaning, social distance, and face covering, while others said they only trust themselves and do not rely on others/airlines.

### **Meal service**

Meal service and waste collection have a significant effect on the perception of the overall quality of the airline's service, as they are delivered personally and interactively to passengers during the flight (Romli, Rahman, & Ishak, 2016). The importance of airline food and beverage quality is particularly emphasised for passengers travelling long distances, as the foodservice becomes a critical service touchpoint (Han, H., Lee, Chua, Lee, & Kim, 2019; Han, H., Lee, Chua, & Lee, 2020). Studies have shown that punctuality and menu variety of in-flight meals were important service measures for both international and domestic airline services (Lim, J. & Lee, 2020). When asked regarding the meal service, most participants are pleased with the punctuality of the meal, whereas some participants find that the quality of the food was not impressive.

### **Cabin crew**

Previous researches have concluded that cabin crew service is one of the most important airline's attributes (Kim, S. & Park, 2017; Medina-Muñoz, Medina-Muñoz, & Suárez-Cabrera, 2018; Milioti et al., 2015). To establish customer loyalty, flight attendants must be patient, attentive, and professional when dealing with passengers, supporting them in problem-solving, and meeting passengers' needs (Chen, H. & Chao, 2015). Furthermore, passengers experience service interaction, such as extra attention, perceived authenticity during the interaction, and competency, with flight attendants, play a pivotal role in in-flight service performance (Ali et al., 2016; Han, H., Shim, Lee, & Kim, 2019; Park, S., Lee, & Nicolau, 2020). Consequently, good interaction between passengers and cabin crew is central to the quality of service (Hussain et al., 2015). When asked about their expectations before boarding the plane, half of the respondents said they expected the cabin crew to be accommodating, friendly, and engaging.

### **Post-flight**

Post-flight refers to the services offered at the destination, after the flight. It can also be measured using five factors including arrival on time, behaviour and attitude of the crew after landing, complaint system, handling of delays, and programs such as the frequent flier program (Khudhair et al., 2019). Passengers tend to use their flight experience to evaluate offerings between airlines objectively (Koklic et al., 2017; Yang, J. et al., 2018). It is therefore valuable for airlines to receive feedback from passengers as a guide for improvements. However, all the participants stated that the airline did not ask for any feedback at the end of their journey.

### 3.2 Quantitative

The author employs descriptive statistics to portray the cases in the collection of data, depict patterns in the data, explore the distributions or shapes of the data, and summarize the basic features of the data (Vogt, 2014). According to the data, most of the participants (31.68%) travel three to six times per year. Furthermore, majority of the participants (42.86%) fly with the FSC airlines one to three times a year for long-haul flights. While the qualitative phase of the study concluded that recommendations/word-of-mouth (WOM) from friends and family, as well as online reviews, did not influence the selection process, the quantitative data showed that WOM (26%), online reviews (25%), and metasearch (21%) are the main sources of information when choosing an airline for most participants.

Price and promotions are the most important factor that influences participants' decisions when selecting an airline, followed by facilities (2nd), recommendations from friends and family (3rd), online reviews (4th), brand reputation (5th), loyalty program (6th), airline country of origin and culture (7th), and CSR and sustainability (8th). This result confirms the conclusions of the qualitative study that price is the most significant factor affecting participants' decisions when selecting an airline.

Most participants are extremely dissatisfied with the legroom (3.75%) and punctuality (2.50%), somewhat dissatisfied with the legroom (18.13%) and baggage allowance (15.63%), neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with complaint response (57.50%) and value for money (35.63%), somewhat satisfied with the overall service (63.13%) and ground service (59.38%), and extremely satisfied with on-board service (30.63%), punctuality (28.75%), and facilities (28.75%).

Emirates (28.38%), Garuda Indonesia (17.57%), and Qatar Airways (17.57%) are the top three favourite (most frequently used) airlines among international students. The top three factors influencing international students' choice of favourite airlines are the quality of service (29.56%), facilities (20.44%), and affordable price (17.96%).

Out of the participants (38.13%) who travelled during the COVID-19 pandemic; 42.62% said that they were pleased with their flight experience, however, some complained that the social distancing rule was not enforced effectively; 14.75% claimed their journey was challenging, stressful, and unsatisfactory; and 4.91% stated they did not feel or notice anything different except the rule of wearing face coverings. On the other hand, out of the participants (61.88%) who have not travelled during Covid-19, 29.29% stated that they are planning to travel in 2021/2022.

The top three measures that airlines should implement to persuade international students to fly during the Covid-19 pandemic are enhanced hygiene measures for passengers, crew members, and staff (18.30%), intensified facilities cleaning (18.30%), and physical distancing (17.98%).

Customer behaviour has been defined as a series of choices and actions involving the selection of a product or service, the purchase, consumption, and disposal of that product or service. The purchase decision is at the core of the above process. However, the purchasing decision process does not end with the purchase event. Based on previous consumption experiences, the consumer develops new ideas about the next purchase decision during the post-purchase phase (Atalik & Ozdemir, 2014). Figure 2 illustrates the purchasing process of international students and the factors influencing them.

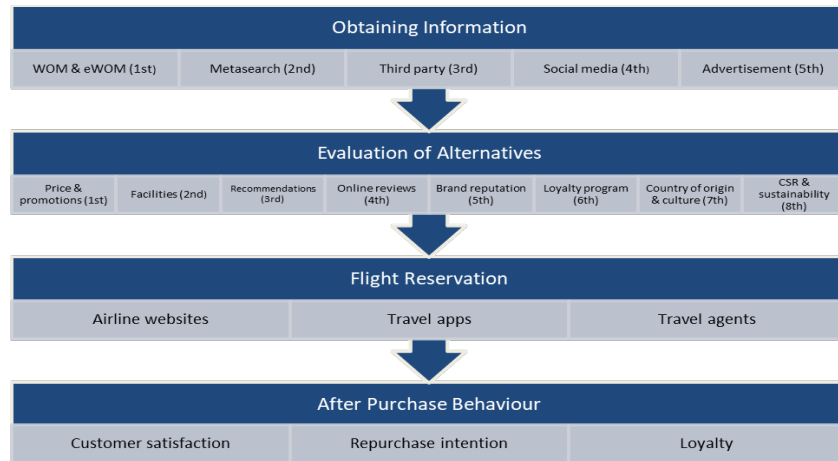


Figure 2 International students' purchasing decisions process.

Understanding passengers experience is essential for an airline's success because favourable experiences lead to higher customer satisfaction and positive behavioural intentions (Ha, 2020; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). A customer journey map is an important tool for deepening understanding about customers' experiences by dividing the stage into phases, telling a story of customers' experiences from their perspective, and defining their key interactions with the organisation from start to finish (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Kandampully, Zhang, & Jaakkola, 2018; Kranzbühler, Kleijnen, Morgan, & Teerling, 2018; Villani, 2019). Figure 3 displays the variables influencing positive and negative experiences on the international students' flight journey at several touchpoints based on the findings of this study.

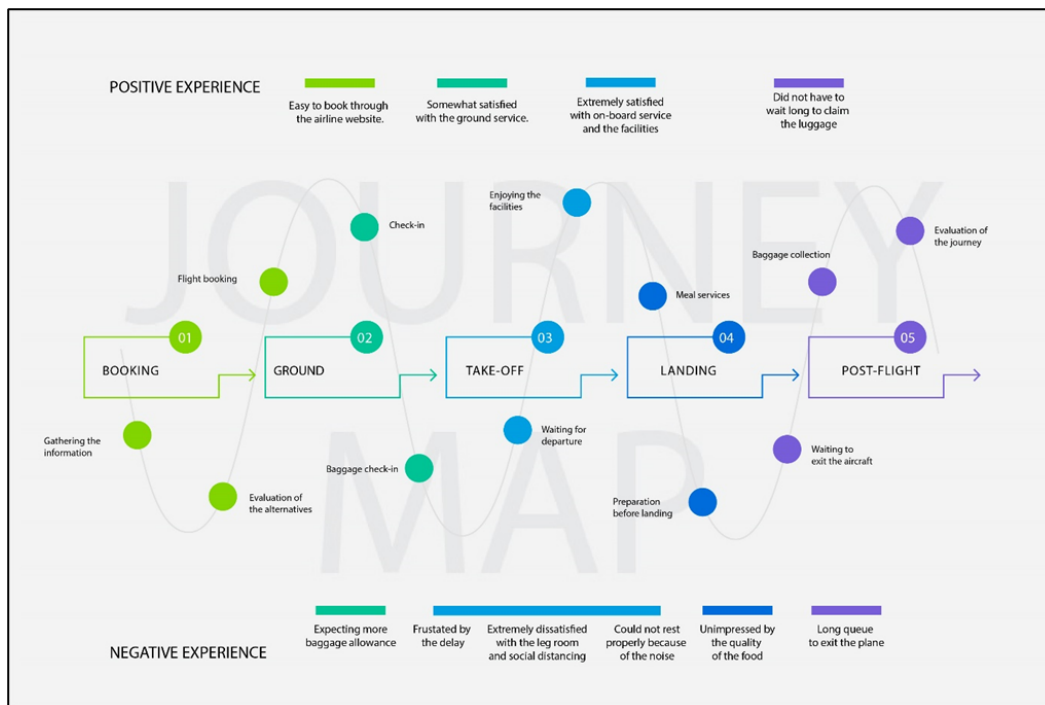


Figure 3 International students passenger journey map with touchpoints.

#### 4. Conclusion

International students embody the global economy in a significant, growing market and are viewed as a lucrative market for the tourism industry. It is a promising potential market for airline companies to focus on building a continuous flow of passengers over the next five to ten years. Thus, airlines should pay closer attention to their specific needs. This study provides a deeper understanding of international students' consumer behaviour towards full-service carriers' airlines (FSC) by analysing the factors that influence their purchasing decision, variables that determine their positive and negative customer experiences, and their repurchase intentions and loyalty.

The findings revealed that price is the most important factor when choosing an airline, more important than other factors such as facilities, recommendations from friends and family (WOM), and brand equity, in contrast to Ukpere et al., who concluded that an airline's reliability was more important than ticket price (Ukpere, Stephens, Ikeogu, Ibe, & Akpan, 2012). Furthermore, some participants claimed that price comparison could have an impact on their decision to purchase a brand that they would usually prefer. The statement above reflects the findings of previous research that concluded that the perceived use of price comparison websites is closely linked to online switching behaviour (Chuang & Tai, 2016; Kwarteng et al., 2020).

Price is therefore one of the most significant key indicators that full-service airlines need to pay attention to in order to improve their competitiveness (Delbari et al., 2016). According to the findings of the interviews, even when participants had a negative experience/service failure, such as delays, unsatisfactory meal service, and facilities, they still considered repurchasing because of the airline's competitive price point. This study supported the findings of other studies, which demonstrated that when the price is low, airline passengers are more tolerant of poor service (Deepa & Jayaraman, 2017; Yeoh & Chan, 2011). However, because of Covid-19, international students expect good quality service from the cabin crew and high hygiene standards, as it will greatly improve their flight experience, and onboard service from the cabin crew is the most influential factor contributing to customer satisfaction and loyalty.

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# The Significance of Smart Hotels in the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic Process

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## Abstract

*This study aims to discuss the significance of smart hotels against the social/physical distance that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic in a theoretical framework. In this study, COVID-19 and the concept of smart hotels were tried to be defined, and these two concepts were discussed depending on the cause-effect relationship for the purpose of the research. It has been determined that smart hotels are the most appropriate concept in terms of being able to abide by the social/physical distance rules that emerged with the novel COVID-19. According to the research findings, smart hotels have contactless entry-exit and payment options. In addition, guests can enter their room without using a key, thanks to smartphones and data matrix applications. Simple foods can be prepared by the designed robots, and small services such as bottled water and towels can be performed in room service. While smart robots are playing an active role in the transportation of goods, automatic vacuum cleaners/robots perform room and area cleaning without an employee. In addition, kiosk applications provide information about facilities inside and outside the hotel without the need for any employee. The research results indicate that smart hotels will play an important role in contactless accommodation activities. In this direction, supply determiners need to realize their marketing strategies by considering smart hotels.*

**Keywords:** Tourism, Novel coronavirus, COVID-19, Smart Tourism, Smart hotel.

## 1. Introduction

Tourism activities are one of the industries most affected by disasters. One of the most important of these disasters is outbreaks that are biological disasters. Since tourism is a global interaction activity, it causes epidemics to increase, while epidemics damage the development of tourism and even its sustainability to a significant extent. There have been many epidemic diseases affecting tourism negatively (bird flu, foot-and-mouth disease epidemic, sars, swine flu, ebola)

until this time. Today, a new one has been added to the epidemics that deeply affect tourism. The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is one of today's notorious epidemic diseases that can be easily and rapidly transmitted through respiration.

The effects of COVID-19 on tourism have been much more effective than the epidemics that have survived due to its high contagiousness (Li et al., 2020: 1205; Wang et al., 2020: 1068). Due to the fast and easy spread of the virus, the people of many countries in the world have been obliged to keep social/physical distance between each other (Kiper et al., 2020). As a result, people's use of common areas such as restaurants, hotels, and meeting rooms in tourism has been restricted (Saraç, 2020). For this purpose, it has become necessary to establish a contactless environment by using technology in tourism activities. The acceptance of tourism activities as social activities has delayed the entrance of technology to hotels until this time. However, the continuing pandemic process makes it essential for tourism facilities to benefit from technology (BW Bureau, 2020).

One of the most critical areas of technology in hospitality businesses is smart hotels. Today, smart hotels have become the most appropriate concept for maintaining social distance and increasing security. Additionally, smart hotels have contactless check-in, check-out, and payment facilities (Leung, 2019). Furthermore, small services such as bottled water and towels in room service can be performed by robots designed in smart hotels (Solomon, 2014). Robots can quickly meet the guest's needs, such as toothbrushes and extra towels in housekeeping (Lin, 2017). They can also help carry luggage to rooms (Williams, 2018).

The purpose of this research is to discuss the significance of smart hotels against the social/physical distance caused by COVID-19 in a theoretical framework. In the study, answers are sought for the questions of whether smart hotels are against social/physical distance and whether they will accelerate the development of smart hotels during the pandemic process.

In the research, the concepts of COVID-19 and smart hotels were investigated through secondary data, and according to these data, the COVID-19 pandemic process and the concept of smart hotels were explained in detail. The advantages of smart hotels against the social / physical distance rules that emerged with COVID-19 were discussed and analyzed according to the cause and effect relationship.

In this regard, this epidemic disease was first defined under the title of novel coronavirus (COVID-19), and it was tried to explain the nature of the disease left in the world. Later, under the title of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) tourism relationship, the effects of the epidemic on the world global economy and tourism economy were revealed. Then, the face of tourism will change depending on the physical distance during and after the pandemic was discussed. Later, under the heading of a smart hotel, information on what a smart hotel is and how it provides advantages during a contactless stay is given. Later, under the title of discussing the relationship between the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and the smart hotel, the contributions of smart hotel contactless accommodation applications to the stays during the pandemic period were presented, and it was tried to be examined as an important alternative for this period and beyond. Finally, suggestions have been given with reference to the results obtained with the conclusion section, contributions to the theory, and applied field.



## 2. Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19)

COVID-19 first emerged as a result of examinations in people with respiratory tract symptoms such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath in Wuhan, the capital of Hubei province of China (The Ministry of Health in the Republic of Turkey, 2020). This epidemic comes from a large family of viruses that cause various serious ailments, such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV) (The Ministry of Health in the Republic of Turkey 2020).

The mortality rates of COVID-19, according to the number of cases encountered, are much lower with 0.45% compared to global epidemics such as Ebola (50%) and SARS (10%) (Bai et al., Wang 2020). However, its propagation power is quite high, unlike other epidemics (Li et al., 2020: 1205). For this reason, this virus crossed the country's borders in a very short time and became a global problem, as seen in Table 1. For this reason, the coronavirus, which is considered as an epidemic (regional epidemic), was declared as a pandemic (global epidemic) by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020.

Table 1: Coronavirus Data in Detail (BBC News (2021a)).

No	Country	Deaths	Death rate	Total Cases
1	US	718,062	218.8	44,560,628
2	Brazil	602,099	285.3	21,612,237
3	India	451,814	33.1	34,037,592
4	Mexico	283,574	222.3	3,744,574
5	Russia	216,403	149.9	7,773,388
6	Peru	199,746	614.4	2,186,246
7	Indonesia	142,848	52.8	4,232,099
8	UK	138,237	206.8	8,317,439
9	Italy	131,461	218.0	4,709,753
10	Colombia	126,759	251.8	4,977,043
11	Iran	123,498	148.9	5,754,047
12	France	117,185	174.7	7,074,276
13	Argentina	115,633	257.3	5,270,003
14	Germany	94,530	113.7	4,355,169
15	South Africa	88,506	151.1	2,914,827
16	Spain	86,917	184.6	4,982,138
17	Poland	76,018	200.2	2,931,064
18	Turkey	67,044	80.4	7,570,902
19	Ukraine	64,049	144.3	2,730,491
20	Romania	40,765	210.6	1,414,647
21	Philippines	40,221	37.2	2,698,232
22	Chile	37,583	198.3	1,665,916
23	Ecuador	32,899	189.4	513,026

24	Czech Republic	30,528	286.1	1,705,971
25	Hungary	30,341	310.6	831,866
26	Canada	28,474	75.8	1,681,669
27	Pakistan	28,228	13.0	1,262,771
28	Bangladesh	27,737	17.0	1,564,485
29	Malaysia	27,681	86.6	2,369,613
30	Belgium	25,732	224.1	1,276,221
31	Tunisia	25,053	214.2	710,322
32	Iraq	22,681	57.7	2,030,498
33	Bulgaria	22,102	316.8	534,312
34	Vietnam	20,950	21.7	853,842
35	Bolivia	18,811	163.4	505.157
36	Myanmar	18,255	33.8	484,317
37	Netherlands	18,231	105.2	2,036,628
38	Portugal	18,071	176.0	1,077,963
39	Japan	18,063	14.3	1,714,060
40	Thailand	18,029	25.9	1,751,704

As can be observed from Table 1, the high number of deaths and cases worldwide has made it necessary to take some precautions. Under the name of precautions, schools, shopping centers, restaurants, and cafes were closed (Wilder-Smith & Freedman, 2020), curfews were introduced, and travel restrictions were imposed (Aydın & Doğan, 2020). Although vaccination activities related to COVID-19 continue today, no absolute success has been achieved yet. This situation causes the social/physical distance to continue. On the other hand, it has been stated that if the vaccination activities are successful, there will not be too many compromises from the measures taken and that people should live a contactless life for a while.

### **3. Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) Tourism Relationship**

The nature of the economic damage left by COVID-19 to the world is at a much higher level than what other global epidemics have left (Demir et al., 2020: 94). In fact, the economic loss caused by COVID-19 to the world is far higher than the damage caused by SARS, which is described as the most important epidemic of the last 50 years (WTTC, 2020).

One of the sectors that COVID-19 will affect economically in the world is undoubtedly tourism. As a matter of fact, the high spreading power of COVID-19 has caused the introduction of new hygienic principles in human life and the initiation of social/physical distance practices between people. As a result of this situation, the closure of the borders to all transportation routes at the local and global levels has affected and damaged the tourism industry as a result of travel by affecting many industries as well (Saraç, 2020: 122).

Travel restrictions imposed as a requirement of the measures taken with COVID-19 are already profoundly affecting tourism (Gössling et al., 2020). According to the Covid-19 report of the World Tourism Organization, there has been a 98% decrease in the number of international tourists. In addition, the World Tourism Organization has announced that without solutions such

as vaccines or treatments, there will be no five to seven years of growth due to the pandemic (UNWTO, 2020). According to WTTC's (2020) estimates, close to 50 million travel and tourism jobs are at risk (WTTC, 2020), and employment is expected to decline by 12-14%. However, the course of COVID-19 indicates that global tourism will be adversely affected by this epidemic for an indefinite period of time (Kiper et al., 2020).

According to the report published by the Norwegian tourism organization NHO Reiseliv (2020) on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on national tourism, by 26 March 2020, 90% of tourist establishments had temporarily laid off staff, and 78% of enterprises had reduced at least three-quarters of their workforce. In addition, hotels and touristic places experience the biggest decrease in terms of personnel (Gössling et al., 2020).

The tourism development of many countries around the world has been adversely affected by COVID-19. Countries such as Malaysia, Japan, and Thailand have made a great economic effort against the virus. In Singapore, on the other hand, companies in the tourism sector, which was in a stalemate due to lack of demand, sent personnel on leave (Sim & Kok, 2020). Northern Ireland's tourism industry was also affected by this crisis. Chinese tourists canceled three thousand bookings in January and March (BBC News, 2021b).

The local and global plane, bus, train, maritime transportation, and intercity travel restrictions on private vehicles had a significant negative impact on tourism expenditures. With the epidemic, the measures are taken by governments and individuals, mobility limits, physical distance, and hygiene rules prevent people from using common areas such as restaurants, hotels, and meeting rooms (Saraç, 2020), causing the cancellation of cultural events (Hoque et al., 2020). In today's world, where normalization efforts continue during the pandemic process, the aforementioned practices are taking place. It has been thought that implementations requiring precautions will be experienced in common areas where tourism activities are maintained for a long time. These practices will bring a new face to tourist consumer behavior (Demir et al., 2020: 84).

As a result of the coronavirus necessitating the protection of social distance (Demir et al., 2020: 97), it is estimated that there will be significant changes in mass tourism activities and the capacity will be reduced at a high rate. In addition, since it is a more risky type of tourism compared to other tourism types, it is thought that demand will decrease, and there will be less participation. Instead, it is predicted that the boutique hotel and room only or bed and breakfast pension type will be preferred. On the other hand, it is thought that demand will shift to accommodation centers such as camping pensions and apart-hotels. In addition, it is among the expectations that a trend towards secondary homes will increase (Saraç, 2020: 124).

It has been predicted that the concept of social/physical distance and non-contact life standards that emerged with COVID-19 will also show itself in service applications in hotel businesses, and technology will be used as much as possible in labor-intensive tourism facilities (BW Bureau, 2020). Today, smart hotel technologies, where accommodation, food and beverage, and rest needs are compensated without contact, are gaining importance day by day and are considered as an important alternative during and after the pandemic.

#### **4.Smart Tourism And Smart Hotel Concept**

The word "smart" refers to technological, economic, and social events based on IT - technologies based on new ways of providing information and change, considering specific databases. The rapid spread of the "smart" concept in the production of goods and services in the industry has

increased the importance of applications such as smartphones, smart TVs, and smart homes (Huang, Goo, Nam & Yoo 2017; Wang, Li, Zhen & Zhang, 2016; Li, Hu, Huang & Duan, 2017). Since tourism is an industry with high information density, the smart council has also found a presence in tourism activities.

The concept of smart tourism was used internationally for the first time by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in 2009. Smart tourism, which aims to be clean, green, ethical, and high quality at every level of the service chain, has been developed by the inclusion of information and communication technology and smart destination concepts since 2015. In 2017, it was emphasized that the smart destination concept constitutes the future of tourism. Smart tourism is also defined as establishing smarter, meaningful, and sustainable connections between tourist and destination through mobile digital connection (Yalçinkaya, Atay & Karakaş, 2018). One of the most valuable tourism instruments in the smart tourism concept is smart hotels.

Smart hotel applications have emerged with the development of smart building applications. In smart building applications, sustainable technologies such as heating and lighting systems are tried to be developed in direct proportion to the quality of life (Boukhechba et al., 2017). The concept of smart hotels is not only related to hotels, but also includes businesses with special certificates such as motels, hostels, and holiday villages (Yalçinkaya, Atay, & Karakaş, 2018).

Smart hotels make use of smart devices powered by the Internet of Things (IoT) to provide a better travel experience in their applications. This system provides valuable information that provides ticket information for a waiting show or warns in line with the traffic congestion on the road to the hotel (Jenet, 2016). Therefore, smart hotel applications are extremely important. The reason for this is that the operation of hotels in this century indicates that more information technology will be needed to increase the quality of personalized service (Tarrow and Muehsam, 1992). Petrevska, Cingeski & Gelav (2016), the general concept of a smart hotel is to have great technical features, to enable guests to benefit from this technology from the moment they enter the lobby until they leave the hotel.

Smart hotel applications have also important advantages for hotel businesses. These can be listed as reducing costs, faster service to guests, and needing less staff at the reception thanks to online transactions, business and employee productivity (Melián-González and Bulchand-Gidumal, 2016). On the other hand, it can be stated that the information and technology system in smart hotels provides customers with the features in the room, private messages, wake-up service and room service, on-demand movies, and personal programs (Conner, 1995).

There are NFC-enabled smartphone identification, the ability to use the phone instead of the room key, and RFID-enabled membership card facilities in smart hotel applications (Hozak, 2012). On the other hand, concierge service to provide information about other units of the hotel such as the pool and spa, easy access to the hotel guide, multi-media content service to benefit more from the visuals, easy payment within the hotel with contactless payment, customers' activities in the hotel with voice command in the room and again features and conveniences such as being able to have information about and adjusting the temperature of the water in the bathroom with voice commands are among the applications that benefit from the scope of the smart hotel (Gökalp and Eren, 2016; Ovio, 2021).

Additionally, artificial intelligence technology is used in smart hotels. Automatic vacuum cleaners-robots (Xiaomi Mi Robot Vacuum Mop Pro) are suitable for unmanned use in hotels to ensure that the work is done faster and without contact with less personnel (Saraç, 2020: 132).

On the other hand, the Starwood Hotel group, which uses artificial intelligence technology, presented its smart robot instead of the floor attendant in 2014 (Solomon, 2014). Likewise, M. Social Singapore used an autonomous robot called “Aura” to be used in room services in 2016. Aura can provide small services such as bottled water and towels to the rooms. When the robot comes to the room door, it can call the customers by phone, and when it detects that the door is opened, it delivers the items to the customers. At the same time, M. Social Singapore introduced Chef Robot Ausca, which has the capability of making omelets for customers (Lin, 2017).

## **5. Discussion of the Relationship Between the Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) and the Smart Hotel**

The significant shrinkage in tourism with the COVID-19 pandemic causes hotel operators to turn their eyes to smart hotel applications. Considering the contamination and infection risks, the contactless service offered by smart hotels has made smart hotels extremely advantageous, primarily because it reduces direct physical contact between individuals (Peng and Zhang, 2020: 536).

Based on the Internet of Things (IOT) FlyZoo, intelligent control (e.g., access, lights, speakers, curtain, air conditioning, and TV), contactless entry and exit, food delivery robots and room service, kiosks, face recognition, voice applications, and digital mobile payment provides smart and contactless service facilities (Hao, Xiao & Chon, 2020: 9-10). This situation reduces interpersonal communication and the risk of cross-infection. Besides, it provides a more protected accommodation.

Smart hotel applications can offer contactless check-in and check-out. Even during the reservation phase, guests have the opportunity to open their rooms without visiting the reception utilizing a square card that they can obtain and use with their phones. On the other hand, smart hotel applications also offer contactless payment. These situations are undoubtedly very important in terms of keeping social/physical distance with both receptionists, hotel guests waiting for entry or exit at the reception, and people in the lobby.

It is one of the other important factors in terms of maintaining the social/physical distance with the hotel employees and non-contact operation by the portable robots, which assume the bellboy task during the entrance and exit processes in the transportation of goods. In addition, such robots, which are employed in food and beverage departments, can be used to prepare simple food that can be requested by the guests, while also helping them to be carried and served to rooms. While this situation is important in terms of choosing robots instead of employees who are likely to be infected while preparing the food, it also plays an essential role in creating a physical and contactless environment.

Portable vacuum cleaners/robots that do not require a human workforce are also used in room and area cleaning in smart hotels. Especially, the rooms that continue to stay are generally vacuumed. In such a case, the portable robots situated in the rooms complete the vacuuming job. The hotel guests ensure that the social/physical distance that is overcome in terms of room cleaning during their stay becomes contactless. On the other hand, these portable robots are also left in the areas to clean the empty areas of the hotel. In this way, the physical contact that will occur due to the work of employees instead of robots, especially in the room corridors and in the lobby, is blocked.

With smart hotel applications, guests, who want to participate in entertainment or cultural events, can get the necessary information without talking to the concierge staff. This situation is definitely important for social/physical distance and contactless communication. Likewise, their ability to receive traffic congestion information does not require them to communicate with any staff in the hotel. With the kiosk applications in the hotel, it is possible to obtain information about the applications and facilities of the hotel without exceeding the physical distance with a hotel employee.

## **6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

With this study, it was attempted to determine how social life and, accordingly, tourism activities were affected during the COVID-19 epidemic by using secondary data. In addition, it has been tried to reveal whether the technology is at a sufficient level to ensure the continuity of tourism activities during the pandemic period and what place and importance smart hotels have in this technology.

In line with the data obtained from the research, there are social/physical distance rules that must be followed during the COVID-19 pandemic process, and this situation causes a significant negative impact on hotels, which require social interaction, and thus tourism activities. Technological developments in today's globalizing structure have reached a sufficient level to provide a maximum level of contactless environment in hotels. In this research, it has been concluded that the features of smart hotels can provide a contactless hotel environment.

In this direction, findings have been reached that benefit the easy realization of tourism activities in the pandemic process of smart hotels. These can be listed as follows;

- Contactless check-in and check-out
- Contactless payment
- The option of entering rooms with a square code or smartphone instead of a key
- Robots used in simple food and beverage preparation
- Robots used in room service
- Robots used to transport goods
- Automatic vacuum cleaners/robots
- Kiosks

According to the research findings, smart hotels are regarded as an important solution against the social/physical distance rules that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic process, and this epidemic threatens the sustainability of hotel businesses. The development of smart hotels has been postponed until this time, as hotel guests want to see a person in front of them. However, the development of smart hotels is essential for tourism activities to continue. This situation certainly triggers the development of smart hotels. Although vaccination activities of COVID-19 continue today, it is stated that a non-contact life should be maintained for a while.

Accordingly, it has been thought that benchmarking in management will bring smart applications of hotel owners and managers to their hotels. In the applied field, it is considered that supply determiners should deploy their policies at the point of development of smart hotels. It has been highly recommended that researchers, who want to work on this subject, should conduct

statistical research to determine whether smart hotels have increased during the pandemic process.

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# Community Involvement and Participation in Sustainable Development of Cultural Heritage Tourism: A case from South Africa

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## Abstract

*This paper investigated community involvement and participation in sustainable development of Cultural Heritage Tourism, in and around Mapungubwe World Heritage Site in Limpopo Province, South Africa. Qualitative research design was adopted for the study in a form of semi-structured interviews. Being a non-probability study (actual population scattered and largely unknown), purposive sampling method was used to select fourteen descendants' group representatives from six Mapungubwe descendants groups in Limpopo Province, South Africa. The representatives included chief/s, headman, senior descendants' members and members of the traditional council. Content analysis was used to analyse the data collected. The key finding is that it is important to involve communities, in particular the immediate community members, from the initial stage of CHT opportunities development because they know better the dynamics of the area where the development will be taking place and they can advise of which opportunities to prioritise. It cannot be denied that community involvement and participation comes with its own challenges, however greater sustainable benefits can be realised, if managed properly. Development processes, with its participation challenges, should endeavor not to exclude the communities from taking part on meaningful roles that could assist with gaining trust of these communities to see the development as their own.*

**Keywords:** *Community engagement, Community participation, Cultural heritage tourism development, Sustainable development.*

## 1. Introduction

The declaration of a community or site as a World Heritage Site (WHS) is seen as a way of increasing the number of visitors to such places, and also as a means to increasing income from expected tourism activities (Lopez-Guzman & Santa-Cruz, 2016:310). A strong relationship exists between tourism and Cultural Heritage (CH) because cultural tourism involves the existence and experience of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Belokurova (2020) reflected on the experiences of the social movements, civic initiatives and NGOs in St. Petersburg and other cities of Russia as they have effect on the promotion and raising awareness of local community about the world heritage value. These effects are often possible because most local community have no knowledge about the UNESCO world heritage status and its implications. As a result, these

communities are not sufficiently able to speak out for the protection of their site and do not know how the status of world cultural heritage can help them (Belokurova, 2020:30). Furthermore, at times these communities have little understanding of both the cultural value for their own community and what it means to be a world heritage in general, leading to an insufficient realisation of the potentials in the status of world cultural heritage. Jimura (2019) concurs with Lopez-Guzman and Santa-Cruz (2016), noting that, these days, world heritage status is recognised as a strong tourism brand and a marker of the value of cultural heritage. Findings by Keitumetse and Nthoi (2009) advocate that giving a site a world heritage status in the developing world, encourages tourism and on that note, this means both tangible and intangible heritage must be considered and safeguarded. Though the safeguarding initiatives ironically cast out local players and communities, the heritagisation process greatly influenced local perceptions toward the related cultural practices. In the same way, heritage sites are expected to provide the space and place for peaceful social interaction and contemplation (Boswella & O'Kan, 2011:362). Consequently, local communities' awareness and practices toward intangible cultural heritage (ICH) safeguarding were fundamentally and variedly reshaped (Boswella *et al.*, 2011: 362). Nevertheless, UNESCO (2007), view Cultural Heritage Tourism (CHT) as a growing sector that allows sustainable development through sustainable cultural tourism projects and other related practices within the space of the local people. This view translates to community participation as crucial for successful heritage tourism and community development, though levels and ways of participation vary, depending on nature and context of heritage sites (Sue *et al.*, 2012:146). Koščak *et al.*, (2019) concur with Sue *et al.*, (2012) by viewing participatory planning as a critical success factor in seeking to satisfy the requirements of the modern paradigm of sustainability and responsibility in tourism. The modern paradigm appreciates and views community-based approach to tourism development as a prerequisite to sustainability due to its focus on community involvement in the planning and development process, and developing the types of tourism, which generate real social and economic benefits to local communities (Koščak *et al.*, 2019:3). On the other hand, findings by Mogomotsi *et al.*, (2018) suggest that cultural heritage does not have a direct economic benefits. However, when proper management takes place, the realisation of stimulation of social cohesions, environment improvement and beneficial economic spin offs for the local communities are realised (Mogomotsi *et al.*, 2018: 171). Based on the presented literature, discussions around the role of communities in the formulation of the policies concerning their local environment and cultural heritage becomes crucial. Since community participation is regarded as a key part of heritage management, this process will allow policy makers to appreciate and exercise community engagement and participation in its true sense because it is important in giving legitimacy and ownership of the policies. Lastly, representing the interests and fulfilling the needs of various users is one reason for enabling community participation. Therefore, focusing in detail on the role of participatory process on developing sustainable tourism at a local level is important, also appreciating that planning for sustainable tourism development is an effort to shape the future.

The objective of this study is to investigate community involvement and participation in sustainable development of Cultural Heritage Tourism. The focus is in and around Mapungubwe World Heritage Site in Limpopo Province, South Africa. The study area is suitable as it presents the dynamics around historical and socio-economic aspects and the population that is key in the investigation of the study. This study will contribute to the body of knowledge by proposing a

conceptual stakeholders participation model. The next section will present literature review regarding the research topic.

## 2.Literature Review

A world heritage status is used by tourism managers through destination marketers as a competitive tool when marketing their sites to the world, and also as a possible way to ensure proper heritage management and conservation activities. A study conducted by Landorf (2009) investigated the relationship between heritage tourism and sustainable development with special reference to World Heritage Sites (WHSs). The study established that although a WHS status is not necessarily linked to tourism growth, WHSs could develop suitable models and propose a management plans that can mitigate the negative impacts of tourism and enhance the sustainability of cultural heritage assets (Landorf, 2009:53). Therefore, it is vital for WHSs managers to engage and involve their respective communities when developing management plans that will recognise the role of all stakeholders. This section consists of four sub-sections that will engage with relevant literature around the title of this study, namely: study area, cultural heritage tourism, community participation in tourism development projects, challenges and opportunities of involvement and participation.

Historically, Mapungubwe landscape now known as Mapungubwe World Cultural Heritage Site (MWCHS) belonged to its indigenous inhabitants also known as the forefathers of the Mapungubwe descendants. The area was named Mapungubwe National Park, which today has gained universal value. The Mapungubwe World Cultural Heritage Site (Figure 1) was known as Vhembe Dongola National Park.



Figure 13: Mapungubwe World Heritage Site Map

The park comprises the Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape and the Mapungubwe World Heritage Site, with 169 hectares of savannah (Schoeman *et al.*, 2011:1). Today, "Mapungubwe is protected

and celebrated both as National Park, declared in 2004 and World Heritage Site, declared by UNESCO in 2003.” (South African National Parks – Mapungubwe National Park, 2014:2). The most celebrated part of the site is associated with farming communities and the development of southern Africa’s first state system (Chirikure, Munyanga, Ndoro & Pwiti, 2010:34). The MWCHS is a Greater Trans-Frontier Cultural Area (GTFCA) bordering Botswana and Zimbabwe including Shashe River and the Limpopo River confluence. Claims of ownership of the land are rather complex as people living there today are believed to have migrated there to seek for farming jobs after the land was seized from its original owners by colonialists. It is understood that the closest local communities are residing 80km away from the park (All-Days on the South and Musina on the North). There are six groups who claim Mapungubwe World Heritage site as their ancestral land. They regard themselves as the owners of the land and the descendants of Mapungubwe land. The descendants reside about 350 km away from the park except for the Sematla people who are residing in one of the farms inside the park. The Mapungubwe descendants’ groups are as follows: the Vhangona Cultural Movement, the Tshivhula Royal Family, the Lesheba Royal Family, the Machete Royal Council, the Lemba Cultural Association and the Sematla people. Each group has its own traditional leaders called chiefs, headmen or royal council.

### *2.1 Cultural Heritage Tourism*

Cultural Heritage Tourism (CHT) is understood as a vehicle that can be used to mitigate poverty; it also submits to the existence and experience of cultural treasures. It is also viewed as coordinated and mutually supportive application of cultural, heritage and tourist resources for the improvement of the overall quality of community life. A study by Jimura (2019) found that heritage is constructed in the context that is unique and linked with specific local community of that particular area/site (in this case Mapungubwe descendants). It is also regarded as one of the essential components of human society with opportunities and challenges for heritage management and its conservation activities (Jimura, 2019: 29). Heritage is originally a very personal thing, which can be viewed as someone’s being and value that can be shared at a local, regional, national and international level. Graham *et al.* (2000) report that heritage can be regarded as local phenomena and recently, more local communities insist on their independence from the control of national governments which often lead to higher levels of exposure such as globalisation, westernisation and standardisation. In the same vein, Cros and McKercher (2015) note that unique and place-based culture is already under increasing pressure from globalisation, standardisation and internalisation, with tourism often seen as a key threat. Jamal and Stronza (2009) as well as Chirikure and Pwiti (2008) highlight the importance and impact of power in the possible exclusion of local and indigenous communities, especially by those who own and have interests in archaeological sites. For example, it has been reported that archaeologists sometimes kept interesting sites out of the public eye to protect them from destruction (Chirikure & Pwiti, 2008:467-468). This may be seen as a safeguard against the destruction of sites. However, the same act can be perceived as one that keeps the community in the dark, away from the truth and reality about the concerned site. In this regard, Boyd (2001) reports that heritage is influenced by the context in which it is presented. Due to the complexity of the social dimension of conservation, management and tourism sustainability, cultural heritage has become a cornerstone of the debate in WHSs.

## *2.2 Community Participation in Tourism development projects*

Community-based tourism (CBT) has been widely identified for its ability to improve local economies and it has been introduced in many countries. CBT is defined by Curcija, Breakey and Drimlas (2019) as a “tourism owned and/or managed by communities and intended to deliver wider community benefit, benefiting a wider group than those employed in the initiative”. It is important for such projects to be aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which Robinson, Jr and Green (2011) describe as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainability can also be understood as the ability of humans and human society to continue indefinitely within a finite natural world and its underlying natural cycles. Although CBT can be advantageous for many communities, studies by Gascon (2013) and Curcija *et al.* (2019) explored its limitations as an instrument of development cooperation and poverty reduction, because of increasing peasant differentiation, social unrest, problems with local decision-making, lack of local tourism business knowledge and training, pseudo-participation, and work and time restructuring. The study uses a linear model of conflict management development to investigate conflict and conflict management during CBT. The model provides stakeholders with a tool to address conflict, thereby improving the outcomes of CBT. It is clear that the preservation and management of such sites becomes an important task not only for the national government but also for provincial governments, municipalities and the community. Several studies (such as Choi & Sirakaya, 2005; Johnson, 2010; Mgonja, Sirima, Backman, & Backman, 2015 (cited in Curcija *et al.*, 2019), conceive CBT as a means of empowering community members and encouraging not only their participation in decision-making process but also in sharing in the economic gains from tourism. Therefore, community participation should be encouraged, since the goal is not only about achieving more efficient and equitable distribution of material resources. It is also about the sharing of knowledge and the transformation of the process of learning itself in the service of people’s self-development. Okazaki (2008) views community participation as an integral part of sustainable tourism development which is beneficial when properly implemented. Furthermore, the efforts are envisaged to have the ability to increase a community’s carrying capacity by reducing the negative impact of tourism while enhancing its positive effects (Okazaki, 2008:511).

## *2.3 Challenges and opportunities of involvement and participation*

In spite of its positive contributions to stakeholders, tourism is still faced with several challenges in terms of capacitating host communities. Findings by Godwin (1998) identified sustainable local development and poverty elimination through the localisation of benefits as one of the challenges. In the same vein, Landorf (2009) has identified issues of ownership, access, economic leakage (from the local economy and through imports), local employment, benefit distribution, social and environmental impacts and dependency as important problems. In addition, the concept of sustainable heritage tourism identifies two key principles of sustainability namely, holistic long term planning and multiple stakeholder participation (Landorf, 2009:53).

The emergence of community participation and its derivatives have significantly shifted the pendulum of disciplinary practice in heritage management across the world (Chirikure *et al.*, 2010:30). Nowadays, community participation is seen as an effective way of making heritage management appealing to host communities by reducing conflicts and frictions between legal custodians (Chirikure *et al.*, 2010:31). The South African National Department of Tourism (NDT)

revised the 1996 Domestic Tourism Growth Strategy which included a programme that expands access to tourist sites for South Africans limited by cost, travel accessibility and other factors. This programme involves encouraging a culture of travel among South Africans by introducing activities that provide improved access to key heritage (natural and cultural) sites through travel facilitation and improved accessibility of other tourism offerings to targeted domestic markets. In addition, this strategy has the potential of playing a vital role in job creation and the stimulation of rural tourism development since the majority of natural and cultural heritage sites such as Mapungubwe are located in rural or remote areas.

Benefits to communities in some protected areas remain a concern in the management of cultural heritage sites, which is linked to lack of community engagement and participation. From the researchers’ personal knowledge, local communities and descendants living in and around Mapungubwe feel estranged from the World Heritage Site and therefore seem not to participate in the management of this world heritage site adequately. This means that the South Africa’s National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS) vision is not visibly realised in this study area. The NTSS focuses on harnessing the strengths of the public and private sectors to ensure alignment, the sensible use of resources as well as drawing on pragmatic planning and prioritisation. Therefore, investigating Mapungubwe community engagement, involvement and beneficiation in Mapungubwe becomes important. Previous researchers (such as Curcija *et al.*, 2019; Lopez-Guzman & Santa-Cruz, 2016; Chirikure *et al.*, 2010; Keitumetse & Nthoi, 2009) reported on the importance of developing local communities so that they benefit from tourism development taking place around them. These authors note the complex relationships that could exist among stakeholders, and how creating and maintaining synergies could become a precursor (not a panacea) of sustainable tourism development practices. In the next section, we will present how data were collected, analysed and placed in the context of existing literature.

### 3. Research Methodology

Qualitative research design was adopted for the study in a form of semi- structured interviews. Being a non-probability study (actual population scattered and largely unknown), purposive sampling method was used to select fourteen descendants’ representatives from the six groups of Mapungubwe descendants in Limpopo Province, South Africa (Table 1). The representatives included chief/s, headman, senior descendants’ members and members of the traditional council. SANParks staff members and Mapungubwe tour guide also participated in the study. Content analysis (development of themes and sub-themes, and identifying linkages) was used to analyse the data collected.

Table 1: Study participants

No	Groups Representatives Participants	Sample size	Research Method	Place & Date
1.	The Vhangona cultural movement (spokesperson)	1 person was interviewed.	Qualitative method (Semi-structured interview)	Mutale Village (Thohoyandou area), March 2019

2.	Tshivhula royal family (representatives from the Royal family )	2 people were interviewed.	Qualitative method (Semi-structured interview)	Elias Resort (Ndzhelele area), March 2019
3.	The Lesheba royal family (representative from the Royal family)	1 person was interviewed.	Qualitative method (Semi-structured interview)	Dzanani (Ndzhelele area), March 2019
4.	The Machete Royal family (representatives from five Council members)	5 members were interviewed	Qualitative method (Focus group)	Andermark Village ( All Days & Vivo area), March 2019
5.	The Lemba People (spokesperson)	1 person was interviewed.	Qualitative method (Semi-structured interview)	Tzaneen area, March 2019
6.	The Sematla family (one of the senior elders )	1 person was interviewed.	Qualitative method (Semi-structured interview)	Den Staat Farm (west boundary of Mapungubwe), May 2019
7.	Mapungubwe staff member (Tour guide)	1 person was interviewed.	Qualitative method (Semi-structured interview)	Mapungubwe WHS, April 2019
8	SANParks: Head Office Staff (Representatives from Tourism unit & Development unit)	3 members were interviewed.	Qualitative method (Focus group)	Pretoria: SANParks Head Office, March 2019
9	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>		

The social constructivist paradigm was considered for this study as it places emphasis on the socially constructed nature of reality and involves recording of the interviews, analysing and attempting to uncover deeper meanings and significance of human behaviour and experiences. Creswell (2013) describes the social constructive paradigm as an interpretive framework whereby individuals seek to understand their world and develop meanings that correspond to their experience. Critical theory and Complexity Science theory were both considered for the study. Morrow and Brown (1994) define critical theory as a social theory with an orientation of critiquing and changing society as a whole and to dig beneath the surface of social life to unearth the assumptions that prevent a full and true understanding of how the real world works. Critical



theory has been associated with many often-conflicting images and like other theories been subjected to criticism. This theory is suitable for this study's purpose to gain full understanding of the subject matter. In the case of MWCHS, this theory helps with reviewing the relationship between community development, engagement and beneficiation. It will further assist to uncover the perceptions, opinions and suggestions of key role players through the study research questions. Complexity science theory aims at finding possible ways of preserving the orders and structures of these complex systems. It provides an approach that acknowledges and embraces complex systems and seeks to identify solutions that can be designed to address the complex challenges facing MWCHS local communities and descendants. De Wet (2018) is of the view that complexity theory has become the dominant theoretical paradigm in the sciences. Critical theory in socio-cultural terms, as explained by Cahir and James (2017), Cham and Johnsons (2017) use the term 'complex' to refer to those "humanistic systems that are intricate, involved, complicated, dynamic, multi-dimensional, interconnected systems such as transnational citizenship, communities, identities, multiple belongings, overlapping geographies and competing histories.

#### **4. Findings and Analysis**

The key finding is that it is important to involve communities, in particular the immediate community members, from the initial stage of CHT opportunities development because they know better the dynamics of the area where the development will be taking place and they can advise of which opportunities to prioritise. In addition, this involvement will make the communities to feel part of the process, empowered, and as a result they will take ownership as the power of place where the development will be implemented remains with the community. The prior presented literature advocates for community engagement and participation in its true sense as it is regarded as a key part of heritage management, it also important in giving legitimacy and ownership of policies. The finding revealed that the respondents believe that "them not being involved and also not being engaged by the park management plays a role in them not receiving any benefits derived from the park". However, regarding the involvement of the descendants in the new park management plan development process, some groups felt that the time given to them to go through the new draft document and give input was too limited. Some descendants indicated that the different groups are not equally treated and not equally involved. Study participants said (Pers.com 2019b): *"On the 06<sup>th</sup> of March 2019 we were called to give input but it was already final. It was very difficult to give input on that document because it was already final. Management did not start the draft with the descendants, it was already final when it reached the descendants community it was just for them to give an approval"*.

The group further indicated that: *"The compilation of all the aspects of the park management plan did not involve the descendants' community. Therefore, the descendants are now under the impression that the main goal for management was just to present the slides, since it was very difficult to change it because of time, about 30 minutes was granted after the presentation for input which was very difficult. It was also noted that at times the park personnel could not reach some of the descendants groups on time in order to deliver the document"* (Pers.com 2019b).

Study participants said (Pers.com 2019f): *"We also sick and tired of people want to front us, but in actual business of Mapungubwe and what is happening they don't involve us. They always depend on researchers, professors, scientist, and ecologists. These are the people that they listen*

*to more than us; hence there are things that we know, that our parents have taught us which we were going to assist a great deal”.*

The findings have clearly indicated that community involvement and participation is important in any site such as MWCHS and as it may translate to fair benefits sharing. The findings also reveal that Mapungubwe community is under the impression that they are not taken seriously by the site management. Probably, the stakeholders feel this way due to the lack of communication, minimal (or no) community involvement or engagement and benefiting from the park and the other burning matters. These burning matters includes observation of protocols when one is visiting or ascending the hill, the meaning of Mapungubwe (which the descendants argue is not ‘the place of jackals’), the descendants’ history, tour guide scripts, rebranding of the park and the construction of a cultural village.

Study participants shared the same view: *“We want plan together with management; be involved in planning. We do not want a situation where the park management plan alone then later come and force the outcome or the resolution to us. We want to consulted from the initial stage and possibly discuss the matter use the language that we can understand since some of us have not attended school and do not understand the jargon of technicality when the park personnel present in the meetings. We wish to start afresh and be educated if we are lacking somewhere because it will be difficult to engage if we are not in a same level of understanding (Pers.com 2019 d&e).*

According to the study participants: *“They believe that they should go back to the drawing board with the park management (involve us), also bring descendants together whether the park accepts that in the past they did not take them serious or not. After giving them the park guidelines, management should enquire from the about their traditional practices and customs and its application. They feel that management should consult them and find out how they feel when management plan to do things in a certain manner or request them to tell management how they wish things should be done so that they can feel comfortable as descendants, also feel confident that this park also representing their heritage. They do not want to dictate but they want to be engage and be involved. Let’s go back to the drawing board like we did during the reburial” (Pers.com 2019f).*

Lastly, the study participants said: *“We are just being told when things are at the advanced stage or about to be finalised, but in the initiation we are not part, which is the challenge that we have” (Pers.com 2019b).*

## **5. Discussion**

The findings implies that community development is a social process involving residents in activities designed to improve their quality of life. In the case of Mapungubwe communities, a lack of engagement and participation of the communities especially in matters regarding the new park management plan, could present challenges between the park management and communities. The challenges could include community losing confidence in management of the site, also management failing to gain community buy-in on the new plan as some of the concerned stakeholders feel not equally engaged and involved by the site management. In the same vein, the legitimisation and ownership of policies by the concerned communities will be compromised. This case serve as evidence to the finding that revealed that community engagement and participation have a relation to community benefiting from the proceeds

derived from the site. This could mean that these communities will continue to be left out in tourism development opportunities, which will defeat the main purpose of cultural heritage tourism and tourism development. Studies by Koščak *et al.*, 2019 and Mogotsi *et al.*, 2018 advocated for focus on community involvement in the tourism planning and development process, and further argue that cultural heritage with proper management can present beneficial economic spin offs for local communities.

From the findings, the community is largely not able to see the importance of the initiated project and how they benefit as a community. In addition, the community may perceive the initiated project as not their own, and may view it as something that is being imposed on them if they are not involved. The practitioners such as site managers could be faced with a challenge of securing community buy-in including managerial challenges such as ensuring fair and transparent management process. Development processes, with its participation challenges, should endeavour not to exclude the community from taking part on meaningful roles that could assist with gaining trust of these communities and see the development as their own.

Informed by the findings, this study, proposes a stakeholder participation model (Figure 2) that recognises the uniqueness and complexity of the MWCHS drawing from the complexity theory. As discussed previously, the complexity science theory is concerned with complex systems and problems that are dynamic, unpredictable, multi-dimensional and consisting of a collection of interconnected relationships such as those present in the MWCHS. The findings established with no doubt that stakeholders' participation and engagement are the root of the majority of challenges facing MWCHS.

The starting point towards a solution to the current frictions between the park management, descendants, local people and the farmers, is a clear communication line. The proposed model will not only ensure a structured participation model but also will clarify who reports to who and how. The model assists in identifying the key role players, for them to be assigned meaningful tasks accordingly, taking capabilities into account. Areas of improvement for role-players can easily be identified and mitigating measures put in place without delay. For instance, trainings or workshops will be held to enable stakeholders carry out certain duties. This model has the potential to address the challenges raised by the study participants in regard to dealing with community engagement by the site management, involvement, equal treatment and participation which is line with assignment of duties.

The proposed model has the following five structures – (I) sub-forums (local community sub-forum, descendants' sub-forum and Farmers/mines and other local business sub-forum); (II) Mandatory Consultation Park Forum (consultation before decision-making); (III) Mapungubwe Management (decision-making); (IV) Park advisory board (Advise and recommend) and (V) South African National Parks (SANParks) – (gives mandate)

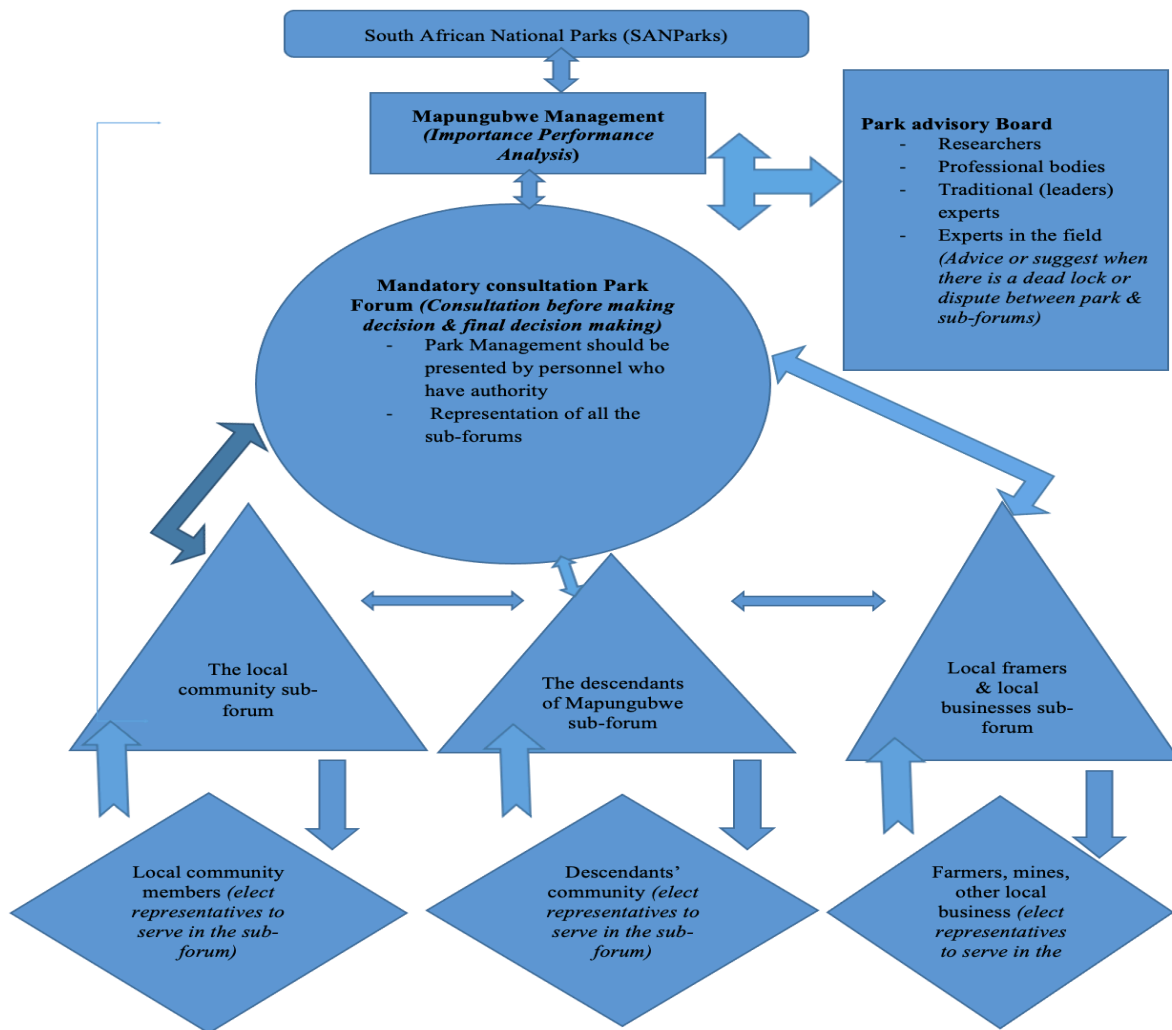


Figure 2: Conceptual Stakeholders Participation Model

### 1. Sub-forums

The representatives of this structure should be nominated and elected by their respective communities to fill the three top positions and deputies, namely, chairperson, deputy chairperson, secretary, deputy secretary, treasurer and deputy treasurer. The elected representatives will form a community sub-forum structure made up of the local community sub-forum, descendant's sub-forum and farmers/miners and other local business sub-forums. This is where the respective communities present their voices through community meetings scheduled by this structure. The community sub-forums have the responsibility to represent their respective communities and also sit in the Mandatory Consultation Park Forum (consultation before making decisions). It is advisable for representatives of all three sub-forums to hold formal meetings at least twice a year or whenever the need arises, also to consult frequently and give feedback to their respective community members. For the purpose of relevance, trustworthiness, quality

assurance and visibility, it is also advisable for sub-forum representatives to invite a Mapungubwe representative who holds authority in their community meetings frequently. This exercise will be very beneficial for both the community members and the MWCHS management, forge a new healthy relationship or possibly develop different views about each other. The elected leaders must ensure that they remain the voice of their community members and carry out their mandate ethically. The sub-forums should be granted a provision to engage with management directly in the case of urgent matters that cannot wait for the next sitting of the park forum. The park management should consult sub-forums whenever the need arises. The different types of arrows between the stakeholders or different communities and the sub-forums represent consultation with the stakeholders from the initial stage and feedback by the representative's (bottom-up strategy) after engagements from the mandatory consultation park forum.

#### *II. Mandatory Consultation Park Forum*

The mandatory consultation park forum is the second structure of the proposed model. This is where management consultations and decision-making should take place. The representatives should be given a chance to go back to their constituencies for consultation/approval before decisions are finalised. Park Management should be represented by personnel who have authority and are representatives of all the sub-forums. Maintaining the Mapungubwe management's decision making power will perpetuate the top-down problems.

#### *III. Mapungubwe Management (Importance Performance Analysis)*

This is where the action or the implementation of the finalised decision should take place. This is where reporting of decisions taken to SANParks occurs (or any other structure where they must be reported to). Management will also be expected to oversee the performance of tasks (Importance Performance Analysis) and also liaise, in terms of administration, with the park advisory board. Though currently the communities are not fully on board with the manner decisions are taken in park, it is important to ensure that the office of management eventually gets the full support of the communities through their structures and continue to trust the office with decision-making after consultations with the sub-forum. For the purpose of restoring the trust of the stakeholders, it is advisable to involve them in the process of appointing members of the management.

#### *IV. Park Advisory Board*

The park advisory board is the fourth structure of the proposed model. The mandate of the board is to advise, suggest or recommend when there is a deadlock or a dispute in the park forum depending on the matter. It is vital for both the sub-forum and park management to work together when recommending people who are deemed to have expertise and a good reputation to serve in the board.

#### *V. South African National Parks (SANParks)*

SANParks is the fifth structure of the proposed model. Connecting South Africa's national parks to society and to develop, manage and promote a system of national parks that represented biodiversity and heritage assets by applying best practice, environmental justice, benefit-sharing

and sustainable use is the mission of SANParks. Mapungubwe management reports to SANParks and SANParks can hold Mapungubwe management accountable.

## 6. Conclusions

In conclusion, it cannot be denied that community involvement and participation come with their own challenges, however greater sustainable benefits can be realised, if managed properly. The MWCHS management should consider adopting the proposed model of stakeholders' participation (Figure 2). The proposed model will not only present an opportunity to identify meaningful roles and a chance for active participation of the stakeholders but also will ensure fair benefits from Mapungubwe World Heritage Site in its true sense. At the same time, the model will be a step in the right direction in terms of addressing the problems presented by the descendants, local communities and farmers. This model will also require the descendants to put their differences aside and form one structure that will be their voice in the mandatory park forum. The success of the model depends on a positive attitude, team effort with a common goal, including resolving current burning issues. The study suggests a further investigation looking at the importance of adhering to traditional customs in World Heritage Sites.

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# The COVID-19 pandemic effect on stock prices of leading public chain hotels in Israel

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## Abstract

*The objective of this study is to explore the impact of the closures in Israel on the stock shares of Israeli public hotels during the year of pandemic. It is assumed that despite of the closures and low occupancy in the hotels, the stock shares were recovered after a year. The stock shares of the three hotel chains were obtained from Tel Aviv stock market for 12 months. This study followed the hotels stock shares during the period of the study and were compared with the base value on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, which defined as 100. In the beginning of the first closure in Israel on March 16th, 2020 both hotel shares dropped about 40%. As the hotel businesses were closed almost a year and their cash flow dropped significantly, the hotels employee went to a forced vacation, but the government supported the employee by paying part of their salaries. The shareholders of these hotel chains trust the companies and believe that once a vaccine is approved and many citizens are already immune, the hotel industry will return to full activity within several months. This outbreak is an opportunity for governments and businesses to develop new concepts of hospitality by reducing costs and implementing new technologies and strategies such as offering free cancellation, re-booking assistance and improved loyalty program membership. Furthermore, hoteliers should implement various services for the local communities using free spaces as co-working areas.*

**Keywords:** Hospitality, Closures, COVID-19, Stock-shares, Immune

## 1. Introduction

The impact of the current crisis is massive on the world economy in general and specifically on the international tourism economy. A negative effect on the service industry such as tourism, hospitality and food service are estimated due to the pandemic crisis as people are not allowed to gather and there are travel restrictions around the globe. Yet, the service industry is negatively affected and have more job risks. Countries that are more reliant on tourism will be more affected by the current crisis and the service organizations that supporting tourism also will be affected, such as hotels, airlines companies, travel agencies and more.

Service-oriented economies is particularly negatively affected and have more jobs at risk. Countries like Greece, Portugal, Mexico, and Spain that are more reliant on tourism (more than 15% of GDP) will be more affected by this crisis. This current crisis is generating spillover effects



throughout supply chains. Therefore, countries highly dependent on foreign trade are more negatively affected. The results suggest that on average, each additional month of crisis costs 2.5-3% of global GDP (Fernandes, 2020).

According to the Economic Impact Report by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2021), prior to the pandemic, Travel & Tourism (including its direct, indirect impacts) accounted for 1 in 4 of all new jobs created across the world, 10.6% of all jobs (334 million), and 10.4% of global GDP (US\$9.2 trillion). The Travel & Tourism sector suffered a loss of almost US\$4.5 trillion to reach US\$4.7 trillion in 2020, with the contribution to GDP dropping by a staggering 49.1% compared to 2019; relative to a 3.7% GDP decline of the global economy in 2020. This sector contributed 10.4% to global GDP in 2019, which decreases to 5.5% in 2020 due to ongoing restrictions to mobility. Furthermore, in 2020, 62 million jobs were lost, representing a drop of 18.5% to 272 million in 2020. The threat of job losses is continuing as many jobs are currently supported by government retention schemes and reduced hours, which without a full recovery of Travel & Tourism could be lost.

Governments implement various strategies since March 2020, such as bailout packages to assist businesses to survive and recover after the challenging period of the pandemic outbreak. Closures were also one of the strategies which implemented by governments trying to prevent the spread of the pandemic. As a result, stock markets around the world collapsed in March 2020 and companies lost more than 50% of their share values within few days. This study follows the share values of public hotel chain in Israel during a year from February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020.

## **2.Literature Review**

Tourism has been hit hard, with millions of jobs at risk in one of the most labor-intensive sectors of the economy. It is estimated (May 2020) that the potential impact on the tourist economy could decline between a 60-80% in 2020 and might decline to 80% if recovery delayed until December 2020 (UNWTO, 2020a). Local and international tourism restrictions such as stay-at-home policy and social distancing have also manifested the adverse effect of COVID-19, making the survival of firms operating in the hospitality and tourism industries a true challenge.

Recently, the World Tourism Organization estimated that the world tourism is the worst year on record in the history of tourism and is back to 1990 levels as arrivals fall by more than 70% during the first 10 months of 2020 (UNWTO, 2020b). In fact, global international arrivals fell by about 70% as there are restrictions on travel between countries. As a result, international arrivals worldwide had 1 billion fewer in 2020 than in the previous year, due to an unprecedented fall in demand and widespread travel restrictions. This compares with the 4% decline recorded during the 2009 global economic crisis. (UNWTO, 2020c).

In a recent study, Ozili and Arun (2020) state that the economic impact of COVID-19 on the hotel industry, for example, was even more severe than the 9/11 and 2008 recessions combined. Naturally, sectors such as airlines, hotels, restaurants, entertainment, leisure and tourism are facing significant shocks of supply and demand (Del Rio-Chanona, et al., 2020) and struggling to a new and challenging business reality.

The employees in the hotel businesses were suddenly unemployed and the job security was significantly lowered. Jung et al. (2021) studied the perception of five star-hotels employees in Seoul that provide comprehensive services such as restaurants and gyms, with 200 or more

bedrooms (22 hotels which have average of 500 employees in Food and Beverages). The study showed that perceptions of job insecurity had negative effects on the engagement of deluxe hotel employees. Also, employees' job engagement can decrease turnover intent, and job insecurity caused by COVID-19 had a greater influence on Generation Y (negatively) than Generation X in reducing job engagement.

Recently, Hao et al. (2020) reviewed the overall impacts of COVID-19 pandemic crisis on China's hotel industry. In China, the first country where the health crisis was started, the hotel industry suffered significantly which led to a sharp decline in the hotels occupancy and hence to loss of over US\$9 billion in revenue. About 74% of the hotels in China were closed in January and February 2020 for an average period of 27 days (Hao et al., 2020, based on China Hospitality Association). Furthermore, from January 14 to 28, the occupancy of the hotels dropped from around 70% to 8% and remained under 10% in the following 28 days. This led to minimize the employees in the hotel and tourism industry and as a result these sectors suffered significantly of cash flow and decreasing revenue. Another important impact on the hospitality businesses is travelers' expectations and perceptions of hotel services. Hu et al. (2021) investigated travelers' expectations during different stages of the novel COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the study in 98,163 Chinese hotels, they found a shift in consumers' evaluations well beyond hygienic requirements. They concluded that innovative approach for service and hospitality practice should be implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has generated an unprecedented level of public fear, sometimes because of incorrect information or fake news mainly in the social networks. Fake news that was spread in Peru was eliminated by the government's response to this information. Peru was relatively successful in controlling the fake news possibly because of the implementation of prison sentences for persons who created and shared fake news (Alvarez-Risco et al., 2020)

Zheng et al. (2021) studied the phenomenon of 'travel fear' in China. Their results show that threat severity and susceptibility can cause 'travel fear', which leads to protective travel behaviors after the pandemic outbreak. Furthermore, 'travel fear' can evoke different strategies, which increases people's psychological resilience and adoption of cautious travel behaviors. Another study by Villace-Molinero et al. (2021) explores the travel risk perception during the pandemic and proposes measures to improve traveler confidence based on the issue-attention cycle. Based on a survey conducted in 46 countries and a qualitative study in which 28 international hospitality experts were interviewed, the authors concluded that in a pandemic scenario, travel decision making is influenced mainly by confidence in communications from local government about personal safety and security.

During the COVID-19 crisis, governments have taken different interventions to minimize the spread of the virus and to control both the health and economic adverse effects of the COVID-19 outbreak. A brief review of such interventions reveal that governments imposed different restrictions such as canceling public gatherings and closing workplaces, restrictions of social distancing, economic supports, contact tracing and testing policy and many others. Del Chiappa et al. (2021) for example, showed that Italian entrepreneurs and managers were over-relying on interventions from the public sector and that there was a lack of business actions being made.

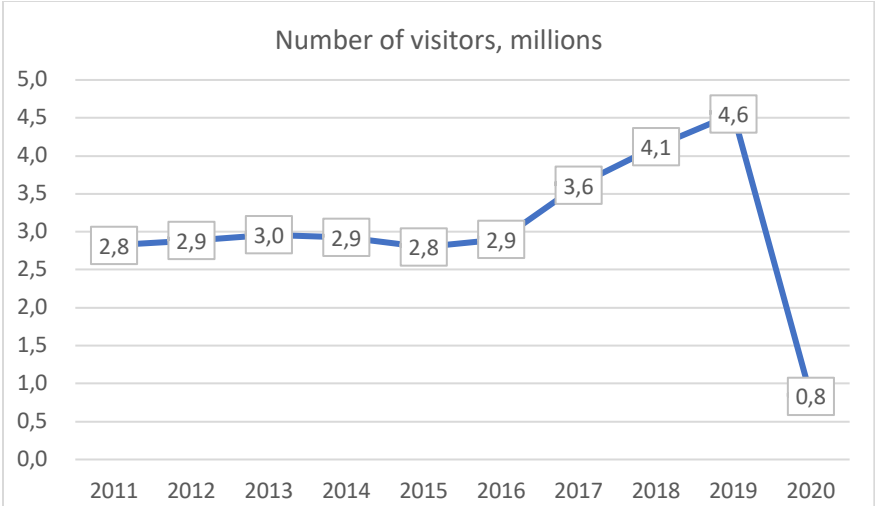
Ozili and Arun (2020) tested the impact of government measures during the COVID-19 epidemic on the performance of leading market indices from four continents FTSE 500 index (UK), SP 500 (US), the Nikkei 225 (Japan) and the SA Top 40 index (South Africa). They reveal that the

increasing number of lockdown days, monetary policy decisions and international travel restrictions severely affected the level of general economic activities and the closing, opening, lowest and highest stock price of major stock market indices. In contrast, the imposed restriction on internal movement and higher fiscal policy spending had a positive impact on the level of economic activities. These studies mainly employed the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker by Hale et al. (2020).

*2.1 Tourism in Israel*

Foreign arrivals in Israel were about 2.9 million per year, stable from 2011 to 2016 then increasing dramatically to 4.6 million in 2019 (see Figure 1). In the January and February 2020 there were still visitors arriving in Israel, but then towards mid-March 2020 the borders in Israel were closed for non-citizens, and foreign entry into Israel was approved under restrictions (such as humanity issues). In March 2020 only about 87 thousand visitors entered Israel compared to 456 thousand in March 2019.

Figure 1: Visitor arrivals in Israel (exclude day visitors)



Source: Central Bureau of Statistics (2021)

The first verified case of COVID-19 in Israel was on February 27, 2020 and then more people were identified as infected by the virus. The government adopted various restrictions and decided to close the entire economy in March 2020 (first closure). The restrictions included closing the entire education system, limitation of the transportation, gathering no more than 10 people, small and medium enterprises were closed as well as hotels and restaurants. During May 2020, the restrictions were lowered. The second closure in Israel was in September as people are gathering in synagogues and at home for the Jewish New Year meals. As a result of the closures, Israel had no foreign and local tourists, and most hotels were closed and only few people were employed, mainly for maintenance.

*2.2 Hotels in Israel*

There are about 430 hotels in Israel with about 56,000 hotel rooms. The hotels are in all over the country and most of them are in Eilat (about 11,000 hotel rooms), the main resort city in Israel,

Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Tiberias, and the Dead Sea (about 11,000, 8,800, 4,500 and 4,000 hotel rooms respectively). The overall occupancy in 2020 was about 25% compared to 70% in 2019. The average occupancy in Eilat was 38%, almost double occupancy than in the major cities of Israel. Most of the hotels were closed during 2020 except several hotels, mainly in Eilat and Dead Sea that were opened in May 2020 for domestic visitors.

Revenue from tourist hotels amounted to only NIS 4.3 billion (about US\$1.4 billion), compared to NIS 12.7 (about US\$4.0) billion in 2019. About 79% of the revenue was received from Israelis 40% of the revenue from Israelis was received from hotels in Eilat and the Dead Sea (30% in 2019). In year 2020, a 66% decrease in total revenue due to a 52% decrease in revenue from Israelis and an 84% decrease in revenue from tourists. Revenue from tourist hotels amounted to only NIS 4.3 (US\$ 1.388 billion) compared to NIS 12.7 billion (US\$ 3.994 billion) in 2019 (see Table 1). The drop of the revenue was mainly in April and in October due to the first and second closures and restrictions. April and October are regularly good months for the hotel businesses as the demand is high during the Jewish holidays in these months. However, when the hotels were open, the demand from local citizens was very high, therefore, about 79% of the revenue was received from Israelis.

Table 1: Revenue of Israel hotels during 2019 and 2020, US\$ (converted from Israeli New Shekels on average of US\$1=NIS3.5).

<b>Month</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
January	230	240
February	229	245
March	304	98
April	379	<b>6</b>
May	352	24
June	370	99
July	379	168
August	412	305
September	338	101
October	377	<b>4</b>
November	335	36
December	289	63
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,994</b>	<b>1,388</b>

The hotel industry employed about 41,000 employees but after the first closure on March 16th, 2020, most of them went to a forced vacation but the government supported the employee by paying part of their salaries. The average number of jobs per month (including manpower workers) dropped to 21,000 jobs (42,000 in 2019).

Hotels in Israel have been suffering for many years from a severe lack of workers in all departments. Despite endless attempts to persuade young Israelis to fill these positions by offering grants and other incentives. Tens of thousands of legal and illegal foreign workers in the

Israeli market are divided into three main groups: Infiltrators: mainly citizens of East African countries (Sudan, Eritrea) who infiltrated into Israel via the Sinai land border. Illegal foreign workers: Mostly foreign workers whose work permits have ended but have not yet left the country. Mostly citizens of Asian countries (Philippines, India, and Sri Lanka). Tourists: Tourists who remained in Israel after their tourist visa expired mainly from former USSR (Mostly citizens of Ukraine and Georgia). According to the Israel Hotel Association, the country is short of about 6,700 employees. This shortage is divided into three main groups of workers: (A). There is an immediate shortage of 1,550 workers in the cleaning fields (stewards, rooms, public areas). (B). There is a shortage of about 3,000 workers to replace illegal workers currently working in the hotel industry, while the Israeli government's policy is that they must leave the country as soon as possible. (C). A shortage of approximately 1,600 additional employees in other fields (such as professional kitchen workers and waiters).

The lack of workers throughout hotels' departments, but especially in the departments of cleaning, namely housekeeping, public areas cleaning and stewarding (i.e., dishwashing and kitchen cleaning) has been a major issue and challenge for several years. Great minds have the hospitality industry has been in a state of collapse. In Eilat alone, the main resort area of Israel, the lack of employees is estimated at over 3,000 workers in all departments. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that hotels are seeking for an appropriate solution. The Israel Hotel Association notes that the results of the satisfaction surveys of their guests in Eilat and the Dead Sea have deteriorated in recent months due to lack of cleanliness, and in some cases hotel managers even found themselves together with other managers forced to scrub the floors themselves.

The Israeli government's decision from June 2014, to allow the employment of 2,000 Jordanian workers in four stages (500 workers per beat) in Eilat, merely in the positions of housekeeping and stewarding, was a major breakthrough. "Employing 2,000 Jordanian workers is an appropriate solution from which all parties will benefit – the Jordanians and the Eilat hotels" (Silvan Shalom, Minister of Interior, 2015). This option provides a solution to the great distress of hoteliers in Eilat, who are currently facing a significant shortage of 3,000 workers. "I believe that beyond employment, this cooperation will contribute to the relations between the two countries" (Shimon Levy, Human Resources Officer, Fatal hotels).

### **3.Methodology**

To explore the effects of closures in Israel on the hospitality sector we examined three hotel chains: Isrotel, many of the hotels located in Eilat, a resort city of Israel and Dan hotels, most of the hotels are business hotels and located in the center of the country, and Fatal hotels (Leonardo hotels), a big hotel chain in Israel which operates also in Europe. The stock market shares of the three hotel chains were used to show the effect of the closures on the stock returns during a year from 1 February 2020 (the base value) to 2 February 21. The data of the stock shares were obtained from the official website of Tel Aviv stock market.

#### 4. Findings

The stock shares for 12 months were compared to the base stock share on February 1, 2020 which was defined as 100. In the beginning of the first closure on March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020 both hotel shares dropped about 40% (Isrotel by 43% and Dan by 36%, Fatal Holdings 80%). Both shares were recovered and reached about 85% of the value on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020. The second closure mostly influenced Isrotel share which dropped to 68% of its original value on February 1<sup>st</sup> while Dan share dropped only by 15%. From September 22<sup>nd</sup> both share values increased and reached almost their original values on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, with some fluctuations during the studied year. The industry, which has been working part-time for the studied year, has known mostly downs along the way. At the height of the first closure, the industry almost completely ceased operations from mid-March to around May. However, at the beginning of the Jewish New Year holidays, a second closure was announced in the country, (September 22<sup>nd</sup>) and hotels remained almost completely closed until mid-November. Then some of the hotels in Eilat and in the Dead Sea hotel area returned to business as part of the program called the "Green Tourism Islands" which allow visitors who had negative COVID-19 analysis to stay in the hotels of these two regions. According to The Israel Central Bureau of Statistics data (CBS, 2021), the total number of overnight stays in hotels in Israel was only 0.2 million in November 2020, compared to about 2.2 million in 2019. Yet, the highest occupancy was recorded in the city of Eilat was about 15%, very far from the occupancy rate in 2019 (76%). Fatal Holdings shares (Leonardo Hotels), which operates in Israel and in Europe (more than 150 hotels worldwide) has soared since its IPO in 2019, dropped in the wake of the crisis. Despite a recovery of about 54% in the share price, it is still about 40% far from its value at the beginning of the year. This is against the background of the downgrading and the cash flow difficulties that have accompanied it in the last year since the outbreak of the crisis (Gerstfed, E. 2020).

Even though the bad data that was also well expressed in the companies' financial statements, it seems that the market is choosing, at least for now, not to "punish" the companies. The Isrotel share is about 5% far from its pre-crisis value (February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020), with minimal damage considering the crisis that occurred the hospitality industry. Dan Hotel Company showed a better recovery during the studied year. This is partly due to the leasing of some of its hotels for the benefit of isolating Corona patients (Gerstfed, E. 2020). The third closure on December 27<sup>th</sup>, the most severely affected stocks in the sector refuse to go down. It seems that shareholders believe that once a vaccine is approved, the hotel industry will return to full activity within several months.

Vaccination of the population in Israel started in the beginning of December 2020 and by the end of January 2021 most of the adults over 60 years were vaccinated. The infection rate declined and on March 7<sup>th</sup>, hotels were open, still with low occupancy due to lack of employees. The hotel share values has been recovered and on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Dan Hotels share shows a full recovery and Isrotel share presents 12% increase of its original value on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020. Fatal Holdings share has not been recovered yet and still show about 33% lost value compared to the share value on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020. International hotel chains show similar performance. For example, Hilton Hotels Corporation and Marriott International Inc. present decline of about 50% and 47% (respectively) of their share values on March 14<sup>th</sup> comparing to February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020. After a year, Hilton Hotels Corporation share dropped by only 5% and Marriott International Inc. dropped by

18%. However, on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021 shares of both companies has been recovered, the Hilton Hotels Corporation share increased by 14% and Marriott International Inc. share value is almost as the value on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020.

In general, closures had a consistently negative effect on the hospitality industry. The closing of public transportation, domestic travel restrictions and stay at home requirements had a strong negative impact on the hospitality industry. The global tourism sector has traditionally shown considerable strength and flexibility in recovering after crises and disasters (Ioannidesa and Gyimóthy, 2020). However, the tourism activities have not been recovered yet and the intervention of local governments should be employed to assist recovering the tourism industry in general.

## **5. Conclusions**

The global tourism sector has traditionally shown considerable strength and flexibility in recovering after crises and disasters (Ioannidesa and Gyimóthy, 2020). This recovery has been assisted by the intervention of local governments. However, the tourism activities have not been recovered yet. For example, the airlines companies are still suffering of inactivity or low activity even though the US government has committed to provide the airline industry a rescue packet amounting to 25 billion dollars (BBC, 2020). It is estimated that between €275bn to €400bn will be lost for the tourism and travel sector because of the pandemic, and the European Union will allocate about one fifth of its COVID-19 funds for tourism, making the industry the largest beneficiary of its recovery plan (Ioannidesa and Gyimóthy, 2020, Nicolas, 2020). However, any intervention must come with plenty of extra support. Indeed, the COVID-19 crisis opens a unique opportunity whereby funders can request that recipient transnational companies must fix issues relating to resource and waste handling, labor exploitation and benefit redistribution (Ioannidesa and Gyimóthy, 2020). The hotel industry might not fully recover in the near future as there are still restrictions of movement between countries. According to Trevor Horwell, the chief executive of Novo Hotels and Restaurants who has headed the luxury hospitality company since 2009, the business is now should focus on domestic tourism and working with regional markets (Hancock, 2021). “Nobu, which operates hotels in major international hubs such as London, Las Vegas and Barcelona, has eight out of its 13 hotels open but said that in Miami, for example, 70 to 80 per cent of occupancy was domestic guests. With cross-border travel likely to remain far below historic levels for most of 2021, the hotel sector has rushed to find alternative revenue streams from empty rooms. Accor and CitizenM (a younger hotel brand, having entered the industry in 2008, the focus is on providing business travelers a unique experience built around the “new affordable luxury”) have both opened up unused spaces as co-working areas and fitness studios, while Radisson is working with Zoom to provide remote conferencing for business guests to connect with others around the world. For the hotels that are open, trade is tough” (Hancock, 2021).

Tourism is associated with movement of people and transport of food and merchandize from the global markets. This may cause the spread of pathogens and diseases. Hence, hygiene practices should be employed in any food handling. Furthermore, tourism and hospitality are involved with producing a huge amount of waste, tourism is a major source of emissions of greenhouse gases, and thus a factor increasing the risk of pandemics both directly and indirectly (Gössling et al.,

2020). They recommend the tourism policy makers to learn from the current global crisis to accelerate the transformation of sustainable tourism.

Governments and regulatory agencies need to come up with specific regulations and policies to prevent infection of COVID-19 disease. Owners and funders of tourism players, such as airline companies, cruise companies and multinational hotel chains must cooperate and develop fast testing methods for COVID-19 as well as disinfection of public areas and applying hygiene practices of food handling and preparing. To motivate tourists to travel, airline companies for example, might suggest flexible rebooking and free health insurance that cover COVID-19 disease during their journey. Fast COVID-19 test before departure and after landing will help airline companies and airport authorities to travel with confidence (see for example Cathay Pacific and Virgin Atlantic websites) to promote and encourage tourism activities and prevent infection. This outbreak is an opportunity for governments and businesses to develop new concepts of tourism and hospitality by reducing costs and implementing green/clean energy.

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# Creativity and Tourism in the Pandemic Period: The Case of the rural Community Chã de Jardim – Paraíba/Brazil.

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## **Abstract**

*During the pandemic in 2020, the Chã de Jardim community sought to adopt creative strategies to survive the period of isolation. The objective of this study was to identify the creative strategies used to face the pandemic in 2020. A qualitative and bibliographic study was carried out on a case study, having as locus the Rural Community of Chã de Jardim, located in the state of Paraíba/Brazil. The study started as a bibliographic survey on Covid-19, Rural Community of Chã de Jardim, Community Based Tourism and tourist marketing. Due to social isolation, data collection was done secondarily on websites and semi-structured interviews with community leader Luciana Balbino. The results showed that the community established various ways of dealing with isolation and restrictions at the beginning of the pandemic. The community chose to use technology to innovate and offer personalized services. Such initiatives helped to face the most restrictive period of the pandemic. Further studies are suggested on the economic and social impacts on the community during isolation, also understanding that the analysis of new events in the field of tourism can contribute to future research or to the observation and analysis of similar cases.*

**Keywords:** Covid-19. Community-Based Tourism. Competitive Strategies.

## **1.Introduction**

In the year 2020, the world economy had to deal with the consequences of the pandemic COVID-19. This disease was caused by the new coronavirus that started in China in late 2019 and quickly spread worldwide, causing unexpected circumstances that forced emergency measures, restrictions, and various adaptations. (Nascimento, et al., 2021) Authorities in general and health experts quickly began to warn the world population about the risks of contagion, suggesting immediate isolation, the use of masks, and basic hygiene care, as well as extra attention to individuals who had specific comorbidities.

Given this scenario, many economic sectors were affected, one of them was the travel, leisure, and tourism sectors. Considering that in the face of a threat of this magnitude, in which it is

extremely necessary to avoid the circulation and agglomeration of people, it is unfeasible to continue tourism activities, leisure, and events in general.

For this reason, trade and service companies linked to the sector felt the negative effect, observing a sharp drop in their sales. COVID - 19 arrived in tourist regions emptying hotels, restaurants, and tourist attractions, preventing passengers from disembarking on cruise ships, and forcing airlines to cancel their flights. In addition, sporting and academic events, concerts, congresses, trade fairs, and business conventions generated an even more significant loss as they were canceled. (Hall, Scott & Gössling; Zenker & Kock, 2020)

Measures and decrees have been carried out all over the world in an attempt to limit the advance of the virus. In Brazil, tourist sites such as the famous Sugarloaf Mountain Bond in Rio de Janeiro have temporarily suspended their activities. (Pires, 2020). For this reason, it was necessary for companies linked to the tourist activity to create restructuring strategies, evaluate the possible alternatives, adjust their annual planning, and build a new action plan to face this new unprecedented reality so that they could anchor themselves.

Creative measures, modernization, and cost reduction were the main measures used by most entrepreneurs in the sector, like the rural community Chã de Jardim, located in the city of Areia, in the hinterland of Paraíba, which sought in the technological means possibilities of mitigating the economic and social impact caused by the pandemic.

The rural community Chã de Jardim, located in the city of Areia - Paraíba/Brazil, has been developing its activities based on community-based tourism principles and during the pandemic, in the year 2020, sought to adopt safe and creative strategies to develop local tourism and survive the isolation period.

Given the above, the objective of this study was to identify the creative strategies used by the rural community Chã de Jardim to face the pandemic in the year 2020. To fulfill the proposed object, the specific objectives were: to characterize the rural community Chã de Jardim; to describe the main strategies in the promotion of tourism developed by local leaders.

This work is justified by the need to know how the tourism sector reinvented itself in the pandemic period and what measures can be used, in the post-pandemic period so that the sector can diversify its tourism offer.

## **2.Literature Review**

COVID-19 is a disease caused by the coronavirus, called SARS-CoV-2, the first case was reported in Wuhan city in China and was spread in a short period to different places in the world. (Ministério da Saúde, 2021) The first case recorded in Brazil occurred in February 2020 in the state of São Paulo. (Ministério da Saúde, 2021)

Its rapid spread has caused several countries to enact restrictions on the movement of people and cancel several activities that promote the agglomeration of people, causing some sectors of society to be closed, among them, activities related to the tourism sector. The tourism industry is considered to be one of the largest industries in the world and has been identified as one of the main means for economic growth.

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], (2021) observed a drop in the tourism sector's contribution to global GDP of \$4.7 trillion in 2020 (5.5% of the global economy), whereas this contribution was approximately \$9.2 trillion in the year 2019 (10.4%). In addition, 62 million jobs were lost, representing a drop of 18.5%, severely impacting this sector.

It is common for innovation actions to emerge during periods of crisis. Generally, an uncertain scenario enables entrepreneurs to develop a more attentive look at changes and new opportunities that can generate positive results in their revenues. When a crisis arises, a behavior change is required, and conventional approaches start to be questioned and reevaluated. According to Jacob & Aguiló (2008), in all economic sectors innovation is a fundamental tool for competitiveness and adaptation in an environment full of changes.

According to Azevedo & Neto (2017), tourism has undergone major transformations, which make the search for innovation become a major challenge, as activities need to be increasingly planned in order to become more competitive and meet market demands. In these terms, the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service [Sebrae] (2021) highlights that the search for exclusive experiences makes creativity and innovation essential in the creation of good tourism programs. Innovation is part of contemporaneity in all eras and is inherent to the growth process of the human being in all its dimensions and activities. It is one of the most powerful agents of change, but it is also a response to needs and a solution to concrete problems, and a means of enhancing the Self. It has simultaneously a utilitarian role (survival, growth, improvement of results) but at the same time a role in the realization of Being (arts, spirituality, ontology). [...] In tourism innovation can occur in the environment, modes of transport, gastronomy, forms of accommodation, occupation of leisure time, vocational training, the introduction of new technologies in marketing or the introduction of new products. The field of innovation is vast and varied, but when the destination where tourism activities are developed reaches the stage of stagnation, the focus area of innovation must be the destination itself with the aim of its rejuvenation or renewal.

Innovation is part of contemporaneity in all eras and is inherent to the growth process of the human being in all its dimensions and Innovation, in turn, is involved with the marketing area, which in turn enables all the marketing resources used by the tourism industry to remain in evidence and reach the consumer in a competitive and diverse market. According to Ignarra (2003), tourism is a product that needs marketing to bring products and consumers together, and this is due to the intangibility of the product.

According to Kotler (1998, p. 27) marketing "is a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating, offering and exchanging products of value with others." Inspired by this concept, Vaz (2001, p. 18) defines tourism marketing as being "a set of activities that facilitate exchanges between the various agents that operate, directly or indirectly, in the tourism product market."

These activities are carried out to meet the desires and wishes of travelers who have as a starting point their interest in a particular segment or location. Thus, we increasingly see the need to understand these characteristics to carry out the exchange actions. As Steil (2002, p. 68) highlights, "tourism has been diversifying more from the specific interests of groups and social segments, than in sacralized places or universal signs of consumption."

When it comes to tourism marketing, it is extremely important to consider the current market system, with constant changes influenced by the use of new technologies. Because it is an intangible product, a service that cannot be experienced before purchase, the aspects related to the promotion of the tourist destination should seek to meet and understand as much as possible the needs, desires and dreams of potential travelers. In this sense, it is extremely important to know and analyze the habits acquired in the process of choosing, buying, consuming, and

producing tourism. Keeping up with the changes and transformations in this sector may be the key to survive in an extremely competitive and competitive environment.

With the continuous evolution of technology, the consolidation of digital marketing has resulted in numerous innovations in the market, as well as an evident transformation in the way of doing business. However, it is important to emphasize that traditional marketing and digital marketing complement each other, and together form and transform the new sales strategies of the market. According to Kotler & Keller (2017), the most important role of digital marketing is to promote action and brand advocacy. Considering that digital marketing has the power of measurement greater than traditional marketing.

In general, we see that the trends of the tourism market have been changing rapidly. Currently, it is very common to observe that among most tourists, the search for information, accommodation, price comparison, flights, tours, and choice of destinations is done through the Internet. Such habit already started to take its first steps in the first decade of the 2000s. (Mindminers, 2007).

When observing this kind of behavior, one realizes how important the internet has been over the years in influencing decisions and offering practicality and economy to the tourist. In a certain way, it also contributes to the massification and popularization of tourism, not only in Brazil, but worldwide. For this reason, companies linked to the tourism sector need to know how to use the credibility and reputation of the most varied online channels to benefit their business. Since many tourists seek information on the Internet, read testimonials and travel reviews, especially when they need to choose options for tours, accommodation, food and services in general.

### **3. Research Methodology**

To meet the proposed objective, a qualitative, descriptive, bibliographical case study was carried out. This research had as locus the rural community of Chã de Jardim, located in the state of Paraíba/Brazil.

#### *Characterization of the study area*

The community Chã de Jardim is located in the rural area of the municipality of Areia, in the district of Muquém, in the microregion of brejo, in the agreste of Paraíba (Oliveira, 2018). Its population is estimated at 427 people (Nascimento, 2020) and its territory is cut by PB-079, adjacent to the Mata do Pau Ferro State Park and is approximately 6 km from the city of Remígio (Figure 1).

It is worth noting that Areia is a municipality in the state of Paraíba that is located in Brejo Paraibano, having 266.596 km<sup>2</sup> of territorial extension, its population is estimated at 23,829 people by the Brazilian Institute of Geography of Statistics [IBGE] (2019).

Regarding the relationship between tourism and the rural community Chã de Jardim, it should be noted that the tourist activity is associated with the Mata do Pau Ferro State Park, a conservation unit, which attracts many visitors to practice hiking trails, cycling, and other ecological activities. The community also has rich handicraft and cultural activities that can be experienced by its visitors. Tourism in the community is organized through the Association for the Development of the Community of Chã de Jardim (ADESCO), coordinated by Luciana Balbino de Souza (Nascimento, 2020).

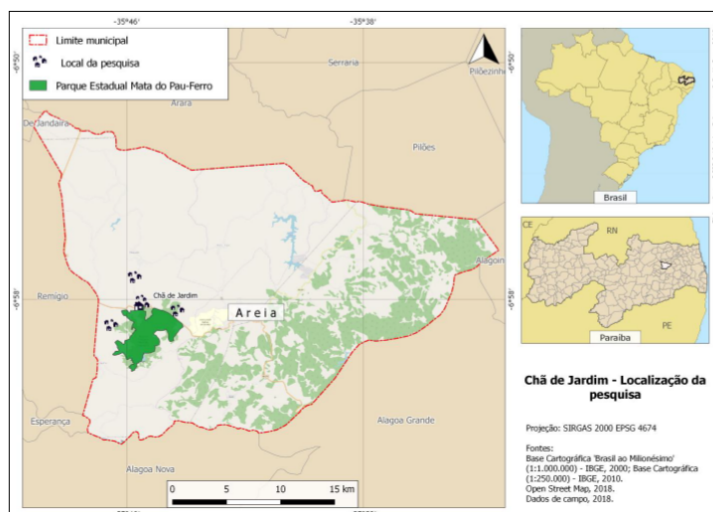


Figure 1: Location map of the Chã de Jardim community, municipality of Areia-PB  
Source: Rosa, 2018.

The association was founded in 2006 by a group of 20 young people from the municipality of Areia and has as its main objective, develop activities for the defense of social rights of community residents (Mendes & Detmering, 2017). It has 28 members divided into various activities such as local drivers, production in the fruit pulp factory, micro-entrepreneur, restaurant employee among others. They offer the following services to tourists: hiking in the Pau-Ferro forest, cycling in the Pau-Ferro forest; horseback riding; picnic in the forest; sunset at Grandma Maria's; the juice festival; the nursery and composting workshops; the handicraft workshop in banana straw (Nascimento, 2020).

#### Data collection and analysis

The study started as a bibliographical survey about Covid-19 and Tourism, the rural community Chã de Jardim, Community Based Tourism, tourism marketing and innovation.

Due to the social isolation, data collection to identify the creative strategies was performed secondarily on the websites of the Empresa Paraibana de Turismo S/A-PBtur, the official website of the community and other companies that promote tourism and reported how the community adapted to the pandemic period, as well as semi-structured online interviews with the community leader Luciana Balbino. All strategies developed from March to December 2020 were cataloged. The data were analyzed from the content analysis method.

#### **4. Findings and Analysis**

The interviews along with the bibliographical survey evidenced some strategies carried out by the Chã de Jardim community during the pandemic period from March to December 2020, they are: experiences with M-Commerce, post-pandemic Voucher, sale of fruit pulp, virtual visits during the quarantine, and safety measures in the resumption, both will be described for better understanding.

Experience with M-Commerce:

Like many other establishments, the community Chã de Jardim saw in the isolation an opportunity to start the process of marketing by delivery in the city of Areia. On March 20, when the City Hall issued the Municipal Decree that prohibited the opening of restaurants, community leader Luciana Balbino adapted her business to the new reality.

Through M-Commerce (Mobile Commerce, a term used to characterize the purchase and sale of products and services carried out through the mobile phone), the sale of lunch boxes, sweets, and baskets for commemorative dates was facilitated by WhatsApp, through bank transfer. In this way, the commercialization of products was made possible even without an e-commerce tool, an alternative that would demand time and a certain cost to the establishment. Figure 2.

For the sale of lunch boxes, we opted to add, free of charge, some fruits that were harvested in the community itself. In addition, handwritten messages of encouragement and comfort were also used and sent along with the product, personalizing the delivery and seeking to build customer loyalty.



Figure 2: Luciana Balbino preparing lunch boxes for commercialization.

Source: Instagram of Luciana Balbino, 2020.

Through this strategy, the commemorative dates throughout the pandemic period were well used, with the marketing of customized baskets (fruit baskets, breakfast baskets, baskets of rural products), as observed in Figure 3. Thus, Mother's Day, Valentine's Day, and the period intended for the June festivities were used by the restaurant as an alternative to continuing generating employment and income in the community. It is worth pointing out that the Brazilian June celebration is inspired by the popular festivals in Portugal in honor of the Catholic saints. In Brazil, the June celebration brings elements of rural culture and pays homage mainly to Saint John, although the dates related to Saint Anthony and Saint Peter are also part of the festivities because they are close to the June celebration.

The initiative was publicized on social networks (Instagram and Facebook) and was well accepted in the region. As the social networks were being promoted, the community continued to be seen by followers living in other states, and although they could not enjoy the products, they were eager for a future experience in the restaurant.

Brandão (2001) alerts to the fact that companies have a virtual space that brings a sense of equality since all companies are at the same distance from the customer. For Gabriel (2010, p.73)

"it is undeniable that digital technologies have become increasingly present in all aspects of human life - social, professional, personal - impacting and affecting society, culture, the way we live and interact with the world".



Figure 3: Basket commercialized by the restaurant  
Source: Instagram of Vó Maria Restaurant, 2020.

*The post-pandemic voucher and fruit pulp sales:*

During the isolation period, vouchers worth R\$ 70.00 (seventy reais) were sold, which gave the right to consume R\$ 100.00 (one hundred reais) after the pandemic. This initiative helped the community to obtain a certain financial return, even without receiving tourists during the period in which the restaurant was closed.

Another initiative that contributed to the inflow of financial resources during this period was the sale of fruit pulp in João Pessoa - João Pessoa, which is the capital of the state of Paraíba and is 134.1 km from Areia, and Campina Grande - Campina, which is the most commercial and developed city of Brejo Paraíba, the region where the community is located and is 50.5 km from Areia. The products were sent every Tuesday, one week to João Pessoa and another week to Campina Grande.

*Virtual visits during quarantine:*

The lives started after Luciana Balbino participated in a life with digital marketing consultant Thiago Akira. With this experience, Luciana decided to start a series of lives to bring unique experiences to those who were at home. She would perform what she called mini lives, making her followers get to know or remember the attractions of Chã de Jardim.

Through this initiative, Luciana made her followers visualize the opportunity to be in contact with nature, listen to the music, and crave the typical dishes served at the restaurant using the interaction she had with her audience on social networks.

The June festivities period was also broadcast live on youtube, with workshops on pamonha (food made from corn and cooked inside the corn straw in a cauldron of hot water), pé de moleque (regional cake made with local ingredients that have a dark color and is often consumed during the June festivities) and forró pé de serra, which is a regional dance accompanied by an accordion, a triangle, and a zabumba. The dance is performed with two people and is also typical of the June festivities. In addition, there was also storytelling and music to cheer up St. John and



St. Peter of all who were "**dendi casa**" (short for "*dentro de casa*" - inside home-, a way to refer to the linguistic elements of rural culture).

By producing content like this, the establishment was able to further engage its customers with a low-cost initiative that stimulated potential tourists. A simple initiative that can influence the decision of those who are already planning a trip after their period of confinement.

According to Vaz (2001, p.7).

In a scenario that shows tourism as one of the fastest-growing economic activities in the world, with a very strong tendency to progressively intensify its representativeness in the global market, all of these organizations, no matter how small they may be, start to need efficient marketing management of their activities, to remain competitive, as the activities become more specialized and new destinations gain prominence on the world tourist map, demanding agile and certain initiatives and decisions. This means knowing well and knowing how to adequately exploit marketing resources. [...]

The popularization of the internet has made possible, among many behavioral changes, a new relationship with consumption. Its uses have brought some facilities for the buying habits, more convenience and opportunity to consume a product without having to move to the establishment. This has also given the consumer the advantage of searching in a faster way, with a lower cost of time or transportation, which increases his decision-making power.

In the tourism sector, this has also caused major transformations in the way companies relate to their customers. As highlighted by Perinotto et al. (2017, p.4) "[...] with technological advances, tourism seeks to adapt more and more to this globalized and digital world, to get as close as possible to the tourist."

Safety measures at takeback:

Through a Municipal decree, Vó Maria (Granny Mary) restaurant was reopened on June 21st, 2020 with all the necessary safety measures. Among the care and rules adopted by the establishment was the requirement to wear masks, protective equipment for employees, service reduced to 50% of the capacity, sinks and dispensing of alcohol gel 70%, social distancing, signs on the floor, the time limit for staying in the restaurant, among others.

Being one of the first establishments to reopen in the region, the restaurant served as a reference and contributed to the local trade by performing wide dissemination of the destination Areia-PB. Weeks before the reopening and during the first weeks, Luciana Balbino made several lives presenting the main tourist spots, inns, hotels, and even other restaurants as a way to stimulate her followers to get to know not only her restaurant but the region as a whole.

This collaborative action shows us the need for joint initiatives, through partnerships, for the development of the tourism production chain. After all, a tourist who visits a certain region is not limited to a single product or service. In general, he looks for destinations that have several options for leisure, accommodation, and food.

Solutions like this contribute to the visibility of the destination and demonstrate security for the tourist, who will probably not find such detailed information about each establishment as was demonstrated in the lives.

## 5. Discussion

If before the experience tourism already conquered the tourist market, now we do not doubt that it will be of extreme importance at the moment of recovery. Considering the negative impacts of isolation, it is understood that a moment of leisure with unique, exclusive, and innovative experiences may be among the main needs of tourists.

The measures taken by community leader Luciana Balbino, were fundamental for the community to be able to continue working even in a period full of restrictions. According to Luciana, the initiatives had a positive effect and contributed to continuing generating income in the community.

After the most restrictive period and with the return of tourist activities in the region, the possibility of taking out a loan through Pronamp, a federal government program, arose. The amount was used for the conclusion of the grandmother's house enterprise, thus expanding the offer of tourist attractions in the community. (Figure 4).



Figure 4: A Promotion of isolation tourism at Sítio Casa de Vó (Grandma's House Farm)  
Source: Instagram Sítio Casa de Vó, 2020.

Even though the pandemic has brought adaptations in terms of hygiene, Luciana said that these changes have remained in a definitive way, such as the distance between the tables, the use of alcohol gel dispenser 70%, and the sinks that were implanted due to the sanitary measures.

In addition, the experiences lived by the community with the use of social networks to publicize the destination, will also continue due to the return and reach that the community took when presenting its attractions and relating to its followers, whether they are potential travelers or tourists who already frequented the community.

The main results showed that the community established several ways to deal with the period of isolation and restrictions that occurred at the beginning of the pandemic, adopting some strategies. Among them: the experience with m-commerce, adapting its service in the process of marketing by delivery in which the sale of meals, sweets, and baskets for commemorative dates was marketed through communication channels such as WhatsApp. Virtual guided tours: the local coordinator promoted virtual tours in some specific points of the destination, such as the

conservation unit, the restaurant, and the village, showing the attractions. There was also a financial incentive in partnership with the federal government and the private sector.

The case study demonstrates how technology has enabled and accelerated a modification caused in the tourism industry, in view that some actions were already being developed in some segments as secondary ways, but that showed itself as the most reliable way to minimize the economic impacts of the pandemic. The strategies adopted by the rural community Chã de Jardim is a reflection of the possibilities of reinvention that tourist activity can acquire in times of crisis, showing, this flexibility of realization of tourism.

## **6. Conclusions**

The rural community Chã de Jardim is characterized by the offer of community-based tourism, promoting the inclusion of residents in the production and supply of services. With the pandemic, the activity was weakened and all the agents involved suffered from the isolation impositions, but, using the established context, the community tried to reinvent itself and seek new ways to develop the activity. Thus, the objective of this study was to identify the creative strategies used by the Chã de Jardim community to face the pandemic in the year 2020.

The results showed that the community under study used innovation and creativity to face the health crisis that unexpectedly began in 2020. The community Chã de Jardim opted for the use of technology to innovate care and offer personalized services. Such initiatives helped the community to face the most restrictive period of the pandemic until it was able to receive tourists again. The main strategies used were experiments with M-Commerce, post-pandemic vouchers, sale of fruit pulp, virtual visits during quarantine, and safety measures upon resumption, both of which will be described for better understanding. They were important because they diversified the tourism product offered and softened the impacts suffered by the people involved in the activity.

It is noteworthy that the configuration of spaces like this one offered by Chã de Jardim, demands creativity and recognition of their cultural values so that in this way, they can transform the skills of its population into a tool for innovation in benefit of local development. Such characteristics were valuable to overcome the challenge of continuing to undertake in a time of great difficulty, besides contributing productively to the resumption of tourism in Areia - PB, as they provided more visibility to the destination.

It is noteworthy that other examples were seen and are still happening throughout this period. The success case of Chã de Jardim is without a doubt an example of the perseverance of Brazilian entrepreneurship. The way they search for intelligent solutions, creative and innovative alternatives to stand out in a tight and increasingly demanding market, is inspiring. An example of how tourism can transform a destination positively and sustainably, offering quality service and dignity to those who work in the sector.

It is suggested that further studies be conducted, focusing on the analysis of the economic and social impacts on the community during the isolation time and the perception and acceptance of the clients for the services provided.

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# Greek students' eating habits: the effects of gastronomic tourism marketing.

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this research is to examine whether gastronomic tourism marketing affects students' eating habits on their school trips, residing in Region of Central Macedonia and if there are other factors. The research has a theoretical and a practical side. Theoretical part has information from articles by foreign authors. The practical level has quantitative analysis where tables and charts that emerged from research and from answers that had given to the questionnaires through SPSS program are analyzed. The research has 200 closed-ended questionnaires that were sent electronically by random sampling to parents of teenagers in Region of Central Macedonia. The research found that there are three main factors that play role in Greek students' eating habits when they go for a school trip. Gastronomic tourism marketing, school and parents and each of these factors use different ways to affect students' eating habits on their school trip. Also, other researches found the same factors. Especially, in this research was found the rate of each factor that affects students' eating habits on their school trip, however the other researches didn't find the rate. Future research can find the rate of students' consumption of local food.*

**Keywords:** *Gastronomic tourism marketing, Parents, School, Students, Eating habits*

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays tourism is very important for the local and the national economy. Both cultural tourism and gastronomic tourism help the countries to develop. (Briedenhann and Wickens, 2004). Gastronomic tourism is an important part of trips when the tourists visit new destinations. (Scott and Duncan, 2017). Tourists spend much money on food and many tourists organise their trip because they want to taste the local food. (Georgică Gheorghe, Petronela Tudorache and Puiu Nistoreanu, 2014). Also, the tourists can have new experiences about new tastes, they can discover new destinations through their kitchen that is very interesting nowadays because there is globalization. (Yeoman, 2012). There are many types of gastronomic tourism, like gastronomic festivals, restaurants, distilleries, factories and kitchens. In these places the tourists can see the

production and the preparation of local food and they can also taste it. (Hall & Mitchell, 2005). The gastronomic tourism is very important for the economy is that is the kind of tourism that is available all the year, at all weather conditions and all day. (Richards, 2002). The local food represents the local history and the culture. Destination marketing organizations promote advertising campaigns and organize events for food and drink to attract travelers. (Quan and Wang, 2004).

This research aims to examine whether gastronomic tourism marketing affects especially students' eating habits on their school trips, residing in Region of Central Macedonia. The gastronomic tourism marketing use advertisements and according to many researchers, the advertisements affects students' eating habits. Especially, students' desire for advertised food increases as students are more exposed to advertisements advertising these foods. In addition, students repeatedly exposed to certain products, acquire positive emotions towards them. (Auty and Lewis, 2004). Students also spend a lot of time on social media where there are many "influencers". When influencers also promote unhealthy foods on social media, students' intake immediately increases. (Coats et al., 2019). According to other researchers, family plays an important role in students' food choices. Parental body mass index and parental education play an important role in students' food choices. (Lazzeri et al., 2006). Another research found that both social level and economic one of the family influence students' nutrition (Huffman's et al., 2009). On the other hand, other researchers found that students become obese in families that have a low financial level and, because of their finances, parents cannot provide their children with healthy food (Jimenez-Cruz et al., 2010). Financially distressed parents have a hard time understanding that their child is overweight (Rogers, et al., 2015). Other research shows that parents' eating habits influence their children's eating habits. Children are significantly influenced by their parents in terms of their eating habits and weight development. Specifically, this influence depends on the parents' eating habits and practices. (Faith et al., 2004) and (Wardle and Carnell, 2007). Furthermore, the immediate risk of children becoming obese is greater when parents are obese. (Lindsay et al., 2006; Blair et al. 2007). Other researchers believe that school environment plays an important role in students' food choices. School has a great influence on students, as it is the environment in which they spend many hours of their day. Therefore, school positively affects students' health by educating them on nutrition and physical activity (Story et al., 2006).

To sum up there are three variables that play role in Greek students' eating habits when they go for a school trip. The variables are the gastronomic tourism marketing that use the frequency of advertisements, social media and influencers, the family that affect with social, financial, educational level, with parents' body mass index, diet and personality and another variable is the school.

This research aims to examine whether gastronomic tourism marketing affects students' eating habits on their school trips, residing in Region of Central Macedonia. The hypotheses of this research is that there are many factors that affect students' eating habits on their school trips, such as gastronomic tourism marketing, school and parents. The research questions are:

- What are the ways that gastronomic tourism marketing uses to affect students to consume local foods on their trip.
- What are others factors that affect students' eating habits besides gastronomic tourism marketing.

- What are the ways of Parents that influence the dietary choices of students.

## 2.Literature review

The gastronomic tourism marketing use advertisements and according to many researchers, the advertisements affects students' eating habits. Especially, students' desire for advertised food increases as students are more exposed to advertisements advertising these foods. In addition, students repeatedly exposed to certain products, acquire positive emotions towards them. (Auty and Lewis, 2004). Staying in front of the television increases students' demands on their parents for advertised food. (Marquies et al., 2005; Parvanta et al., 2010; Chamberlain, 2006). One study found that 40% of students who watched television asked their parents to buy the food they saw in advertisements on television. (Arnos, 2006). Other studies have shown that there is a connection between the degree of exposure of students to advertised food and the diet followed by students. (Wiecha et al., 2006; French et al., 2001; Gracey et al., 1996; Philips et al., 2004; Woodward et al., 1997; Boynton-Jarrett et al., 2003; Utter et al., 2003). Advertisements promote unhealthy eating habits, so students' health is affected by the frequency of unhealthy foods advertised. (Livingstone, 2004). Obese and overweight students require more food due to their increasing exposure to advertised foods and this exposure is linked to students' obesity (Halford et al., 2007).

According to other researchers, internet marketing is a new way of marketing used by marketers to influence people (Tsekouropoulos, 2019). Another type of marketing is "influencer marketing" which is a very important way to influence decisions via Internet and social media (Tsekouropoulos and Theocharis, 2019). Especially global food advertisements on television and overall exposure of students to social media advertisements are linked to students' demands for food. (Chamberlain et al., 2006). Students also spend a lot of time on social media where there are many "influencers". When influencers also promote unhealthy foods on social media, students' intake immediately increases. (Coats et al., 2019)

According to other researchers, family plays an important role in students' food choices. Parental body mass index and parental education play an important role in students' food choices. (Lazzeri et al., 2006). Another research found that both social level and economic one of the family influence students' nutrition (Huffman's et al., 2009). On the other hand, other researchers found that students become obese in families that have a low financial level and, because of their finances, parents cannot provide their children with healthy food (Jimenez-Cruz et al., 2010). Financially distressed parents have a hard time understanding that their child is overweight (Rogers, et al., 2015).

Other research shows that parents' eating habits influence their children's eating habits. Children are significantly influenced by their parents in terms of their eating habits and weight development. Specifically, this influence depends on the parents' eating habits and practices. (Faith et al., 2004) and (Wardle and Carnell, 2007). Furthermore, the immediate risk of children becoming obese is greater when parents are obese. (Lindsay et al., 2006; Blair et al. 2007). Children are more likely to become obese adults when they have one parent or both of them obese. (Eisenberg et al., 2008). The risk of students' obesity risk is associated with parental obesity and if parental obesity is properly treated, students' obesity will be reduced. (Mcloone and Morrison, 2012).



Students' preferences are mainly influenced by eating habits of other family members. (Nekitsing, Hetherington and Blundell-Birtill, 2018). Students do not choose foods they eat alone, but family sets the standards and limits on their eating habits. (Timmermans et al., 2012). Students' eating behaviour is influenced by parents, because children observe and imitate their behaviours. (Puder and Munsch, 2010). Parents are models for their children, so parents play an important role in children's lives. (Warkentin et al., 2018). Children tend to increase their cravings for sweets and fast food when parents prohibit these foods. Therefore, children are prone to overeating despite parents' efforts to limit children's nutrition. (Faith et al., 2004). When parents encourage, support and teach children to try different foods, they familiarize children with new foods and children are not afraid to try new flavours. (Nekitsing, 2017)

Other researchers believe that school environment plays an important role in students' food choices. School has a great influence on students, as it is the environment in which they spend many hours of their day. Therefore, school positively affects students' health by educating them on nutrition and physical activity (Story et al., 2006). Students learn to acquire correct eating habits from preschool age, which is why educators are responsible for their food programs and motivate them to consume foods with the necessary nutrients they need. (Kouniarelli, 2017). School-based obesity intervention programs are very important because students spend many hours in school. Schools also influence students' health-related behaviours. (Welker and Lott, 2016). School is also able to instill healthy eating habits and a positive attitude towards exercise in students, while also providing a supportive environment. (Paschalidis 2013). Students, parents and community to whom the school belongs can be informed about nutritional problems, through the school. (Nelson and Breda, 2013).

The priority of school units is a balanced diet and healthy eating habits and this is because school environment plays an important role in development of students. Students' healthy lifestyles and normal development help improve their learning and good performance in school. (Bryson and Siegel, 2011). In addition, teachers can carry out activities that promote better eating habits and so teachers lay the foundation for good eating habits. Parents can participate in these activities and in general in pedagogical practices of a daily program. In this way, a relationship of trust is created between educators and students, between parents and students and between educators and parents. This collaboration results in achieving the goals in a pleasant atmosphere. (Tobias et al., 2012). Educators then teach children healthy and correct habits, which in turn pass these habits on to their family (Kovacs et al., 2018).

To sum up there are three variables that play role in Greek students' eating habits when they go for a trip. The variables are the gastronomic tourism marketing that use the frequency of advertisements, social media, youtube and influencers, the family that affect with social, financial, educational level, with parents' body mass index, diet and personality and the school.

### **3. Research methodology**

In order to address research questions, research was conducted both on a theoretical and a practical side. For realization of theoretical part, information was extracted from articles by foreign authors. As far as the practical level is concerned, the findings and conclusions emerged from conduct of primary qualitative research through closed-ended questionnaires that were sent electronically and by random sampling to parents of teenagers in the Region of Central

Macedonia. The research sample selected was 200 families with teenagers aged 15 to 17 years. The sample of parents had different ages and the parents had different social, financial and educational level. Then there is quantitative analysis where tables and charts that emerged from research and from answers that had given to the questionnaires through SPSS program are analyzed.

#### 4. Findings and analysis

From the analysis of the results of the questionnaire, the following conclusions emerge, per research question:

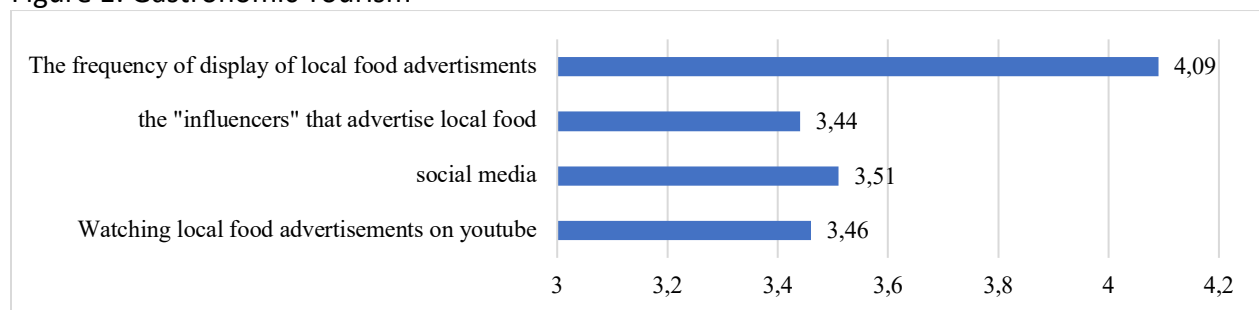
The first research question is: What are the ways that gastronomic tourism marketing uses to affect students to consume local foods on their school trip.

According to the answers given to the first research question it is concluded that the frequency of gastronomic food advertisements is the first that affects students to consume the local foods (AR = 4.09), then social media (AR = 3.51), then the youtube (AR = 3.46). On the contrary, the "Influencers" are less influential. (AR = 3.44). (Table 1 and Chart 1).

Table1: Gastronomic Tourism

		Disagree completely →				Agree completely	Average rate
		1	2	3	4		
1	Watching gastronomic food advertisements at YouTube	0.8	19.2	24.6	43.1	12.3	3.46
2	Social media	2.3	15.4	26.2	40.8	15.4	3.51
3	The "influencers" that advertise the local foods	2.3	16.2	28.5	40.8	12.3	3.44
4	The frequency of display of local food advertisements	0.8	5.4	5.4	60.8	27.7	4.09

Figure 1: Gastronomic Tourism



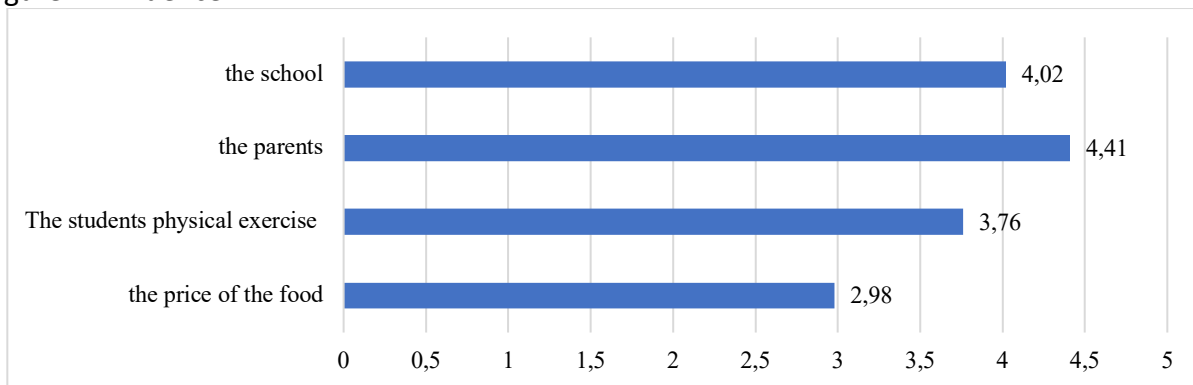
The second research question is: What are others factors that affect students' eating habits besides gastronomic tourism marketing.

According to the answers given to the second research question it is concluded that parents influence students' eating habits in addition to advertising (AR = 4.41) followed by school (AR = 4.02). (Table 2 and Chart 2)

Table2: Influence

		Disagree completely	→				Agree completely	Average rate
			1	2	3	4		
1	Price of the food	4.6	32.3	30	26.2	6.9	2.98	
2	Social media	2.3	9.2	17.7	50.8	20	3.76	
3	The parents	1.5	1.5	1.5	44.6	50.8	4.41	
4	The school	1.5	2.3	15.4	53.8	26.9	4.02	

Figure 2: Influence



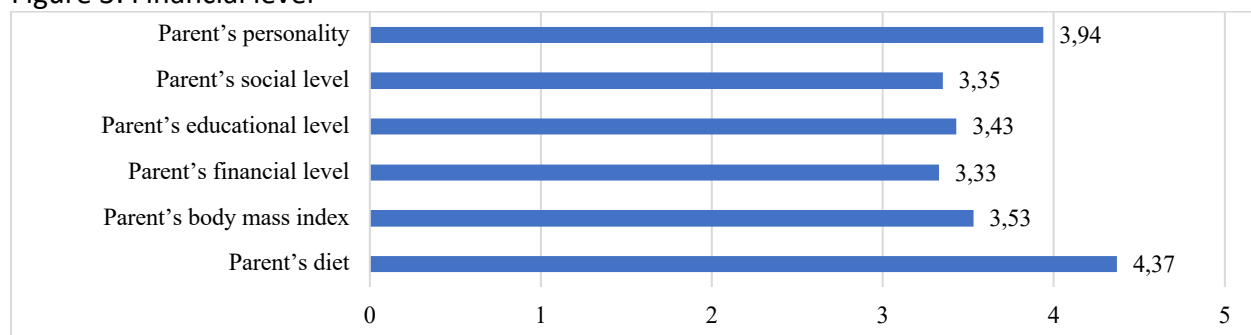
The third research question is: What are the ways of Parents that influence the dietary choices of students.

According to the answers given to the third research question it is concluded that parents influence students' dietary choices first with their diet (AR= 4.37), then with their personality (AR = 3.94), then with their body mass index (AR = 3.53), then with their educational level (AR= 3.43), then with their social level (AR = 3.35) and last with their the financial level (AR = 3.33). (Table 3 and Chart 3)

Table 3: Financial level

		→				Agree completely	Average rate
		Disagree completely	1	2	3		
<b>1</b>	<b>Parent's diet</b>	1.5	3.8	3.8	36.9	53.8	4.37
<b>2</b>	<b>Parent's body mass index</b>	2.3	10.8	34.6	35.4	16.9	3.53
<b>3</b>	<b>Parent's financial level</b>	3.1	21.5	25.4	38.5	11.5	3.33
<b>4</b>	<b>Parent's educational level</b>	6.2	13.8	28.5	33.1	18.5	3.43
<b>5</b>	<b>Parent's social level</b>	4.6	18.5	28.5	33.8	14.6	3.35
<b>6</b>	<b>Parent's personality</b>	3.8	5.4	13.1	47.7	30	3.94

Figure 3: Financial level



So, there are three main reasons that play role in Greek students' eating habits when they go for a trip. One reason is the gastronomic tourism marketing that affects the Greek students' eating habits. Gastronomic tourism marketing use at first the frequency of gastronomic food advertisements, then social media, after the youtube and last the "Influencers". Another reason is the school and another reason is the family that affect with parents' diet, then with their personality, after with their body mass index, then with their educational level, after with their social level and last with their the financial level.

## 5. Discussion

This research found that the gastronomic food marketing affect students' eating habits on their school trip but it isn't the unique factor, school and parents affects students' eating habits, too. Also, other researches found that gastronomic food marketing, school and parents affect students' eating habits on their school trip. Especially, in this research was found the rate of each factor that affects students' eating habits on their school trip. Moreover, this research is the

unique that took place in Greece and especially in Central of Macedonia. The others researches found only that there are different factors that affects students' nutrition habits, but they didn't find what is the rate of each factor that influence students' eating habits on their school trip. Also, the other researches took place in other countries.

The results of the research showed that the ways of gastronomic students marketing use to affect students to consume the local foods on their trip first by the frequency of advertising, then by the advertising on social media and on YouTube and last by influencers. Other research has also shown that exposure to advertising had a positive effect on students' preference for advertised food (Auty and Lewis, 2004; Parvanta et al., 2010; Chamberlain, 2006). Furthermore, time in front of television increases children's demands on parents for advertised food (Marquies et al., 2005). Other studies have shown that there is a connection between students' exposure to food advertising and their diet. (Wiecha et al., 2006; French et al., 2001; Gracey et al., 1996; Philips et al., 2004; Woodward et al., 1997), (Boynton-Jarrett et al., 2003; Utter et al., 2003). Advertisements promote unhealthy eating habits, so students' health is affected by the frequency of unhealthy foods advertised. (Livingstone, 2004). Obese and overweight student require more food due to their increasing exposure to advertised food and this exposure is linked to students' obesity (Halford et al., 2007).

According to other researchers, overall food advertisements on television and students' overall exposure to social media advertisements are correlated with students' demands for this food. (Chamberlain et al., 2006). But according to another research, students spend a lot of time on social media where influencers are present, and when they promote unhealthy foods on social media, students' intake of unhealthy foods immediately increases (Coats et al., 2019).

According to this research, parents influence their children's eating habits more with their eating patterns, personality and body mass index and less influence their children with their family level such as education level before, level social and financial level. All of these factors were also noted by other researchers but at a different level. For example, research has found that the body mass index and education of both parents are important in children's dietary choices (Lazzeri et al., 2006).

Another example is a research in which social and economic level of family has been found to influence children's nutrition (Huffman et al., 2009). It has been found that children become obese in low financial households and, due to their finances, parents cannot provide their children with healthy food (Jimenez-Cruz et al., 2010). Parents with low finances find it difficult to understand that their child is overweight. (Rogers et al., 2015).

Other research shows that parents' eating habits influence their children's eating habits. Children are significantly influenced by their parents in terms of their eating habits and weight development. Specifically, this influence depends on eating habits and eating practices of parents. (Faith et al., 2004) and (Wardle and Carnell, 2007). The immediate risk of children becoming obese is present when they come from obese parents. (Lindsay et al., 2006) and (Blair et al., 2007) children are more likely to become obese adults when they have one or both parents obese. (Eisenberg et al., 2008). Furthermore, the risk of students' obesity is associated with parental obesity and if parental obesity is properly treated, students' obesity will be reduced. (Mcloone and Morrison, 2012).

Other researchers show that students' preferences are primarily influenced by eating habits of other family members (Nekitsing, Hetherington and Blundell-Birtill, 2018) and students don't

choose the foods they eat themselves, but the family sets the standards and limits of their children's eating habits. (Timmermans et al., 2012). Children's eating behaviour is influenced by parents, because children observe and imitate the behaviour of their parents. (Puder and Munsch, 2010) Parents are models for their children and parents play an important role in their children's lives. (Warkentin et al, 2018).

According to this research, school is another factor influencing students eating habits. Other studies have also come to this conclusion. School has a great influence on students as it is the environment where students spend many hours of their day. Thus, school positively affects students' health by educating them on nutrition and physical activity (Story et al., 2006). Additionally, educators teach students their correct healthy habits (Kovacs, et al. 2018). Students learn to acquire correct eating habits since preschool (Kouniarelli, 2017). Another research found that school-based obesity intervention programs are considered very important because students spend many hours in school. Schools influence students' health-related behaviours. (Welker and Lott, 2016). School is able to instill healthy eating habits and a positive attitude towards exercise in students by providing a supportive environment. (Paschalidis, 2013). Students, parents and the community to which the school belongs can be informed about nutritional problems through the school. (Nelson and Breda, 2013). Another research found that the priority of school units is a balanced diet and healthy eating habits and this is because the school environment plays an important role in the development of students. Students' healthy lifestyles and normal development help improve their learning and good performance in school. (Bryson and Siegel, 2011). Teachers can carry out activities that promote better eating habits and so teachers lay foundation for good eating habits. Parents can participate in these activities and in general in the pedagogical practices of school's daily program. (Tobias et al., 2012). Furthermore, the research has found that educators teach students healthy and correct habits and that students in turn pass these habits on to their family (Kovacs et al., 2018).

## **6. Conclusions**

In conclusion as we understand, each researcher found a different factor that affects students' nutrition habits. Other researchers found that gastronomic tourism marketing affects students to consume the local food on their school trip, other researchers found that the school affects students, other researchers found that parents affect students to consume local food on their school trip. As far as the parents, other researchers found that parents affect with their diet, others found that parents affect with their personality, others found that parents affect with their body mass index, others found that parents affect with their educational level, others found that parents affect with their social level and others found that parents affect with their the financial level. This research was found that gastronomic food marketing affect students' eating habits on their trip but it isn't the unique factor. Especially in this research was found the rate of each factor that affects students' eating habits on their trip. There are three main reasons that play role in Greek students' eating habits when they go for a trip. One reason is the gastronomic tourism marketing that affects the Greek students' eating habits using at first the frequency of gastronomic food advertisements is the first that affects students to consume the local foods then social media, after the youtube and last using the "Influencers". Another reason is the school and another reason is the family. The family affect with parents' diet, then with their personality,

after with their body mass index, then with their educational level, after with their social level and last with their the financial level. However, this study doesn't show the rate of students' consumption of local food. So this is a reason for what this detail can be discovered by mean another research.

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# Cruise Tourism: An Overview of Motivations

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## Abstract

*The Cruise Tourism industry has changed and matured over the years. What was viewed as a once-in-a-lifetime trip and only attainable by older generations, is now accessible to all and has created frequent tourists. Considering the relevance of Cruise Tourism and since motivation is the central drive of consumer behavior, the present study attempts to understand the motivations behind cruise traveling and why people choose cruises for their vacations. Based on an extensive literature review, this work begins with an analysis of the different concepts of Cruise Tourism, following an evolution of the industry, and ends with a reflection on motivations to cruise in order to edify cruise lines to a deeper understanding of motivations in this industry. The findings suggest that the tourism industry has changed throughout the years thus have individuals and their requirements. It was also concluded that as per Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the lower-level ones have more significance than the higher-level ones.*

*This study is relevant because it provides cruise lines with knowledge in motivations within this industry and helps them better cater to their clients. Being a conceptual article is a limitation, therefore performing a broader study can bring better results to this topic.*

**Keywords:** *Cruises, Tourism, Motivations, Cruising Intention*

## 1. Introduction

Cruise Tourism is quite possibly the most worthwhile, well-known, and quickest developing sector of the whole tourism industry (Chua et al., 2015). It produces impressive social and monetary effects on destinations and adds to the making of a lot of jobs in those equivalent destinations (Sun et al., 2014, cited in Han & Hyun, 2017). It is additionally realized that this area has had a global growth that does not exclusively depend on geographic standing or monetary force yet additionally on the capacity to join various experiences in a brief timeframe, anywhere in the world (Wood, 2004, cited in Jones, 2011).

Annual passenger data from the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) indicates that the number of global ocean cruise passengers has continuously been increasing, from 17.8 million in 2009 to 30 million passengers, in 2019. This shows that the industry is going to keep developing

although it may hit a maturity point. These numbers had an impact of \$154.5 billion on the global economy, in the same year (CLIA, 2021). Motivation is one the most researched topic in an assortment of fields and the travel industry is no exception. Although from the existing literature, it is visible that empirical evidence regarding Cruise Tourism is rich, motivations regarding it are less researched (Jiao, Hou, & Lau, 2021).

Motivations are essential to the travel industry since they are the basis for certain tourists' behaviors (Crompton & McKay, 1997). That being said, these motivations are unpredictable, dynamic, highly individualistic, and reliant on a scope of interconnected demographic and psychographic factors (Weeden, et al, 2016). Motivations are also linked with satisfaction because tourists' satisfaction is heavily related to their needs and purposes for travel. Not everyone will get the same satisfaction out of the same package, therefore it is important to understand the motivation that corresponds to a different level of satisfaction (Qu & Ping, 1999). As far as the literature is concerned, there has been an expansion in the number of papers that regard cruising motivations and cruising intention. Although, since motivation is essential to marketers and cruise companies (Qu & Ping, 1999), it is a subject that needs steady refreshing so that cruise marketers can comprehend their clients' motivations for choosing cruise vacation and cater to them in the best way (Elliot & Choi, 2011).

Consequently, the level of attention to motivations' studies is not similar to the level of growth of the industry (Han et al., 2019; Vega-Muñoz et al., 2019, cited in Severt & Tasci, 2020). This means that studies like this one are more than welcome in order to reduce the gap between these two subjects and to keep the researches up to date. Within this context, the present study attempts to understand the motivations that lay behind cruise traveling, specifically why people choose cruises for their vacations. It gathers important information regarding motivations, and presents it in a very organized and easy-to-understand matter, adding to the knowledge on this research topic. In order to do that, the paper's structural overview consists of three main parts. It begins with an analysis of the different concepts of Cruise Tourism, following an evolution of the industry, and ends with a reflection on motivations to cruise in order to edify cruise lines to a deeper understanding of motivations in this industry.

## **2. Literature Review**

The literature analysis of this study is presented into the concept of Cruise Tourism, the evolution of cruising, and motivations for cruise taking.

### *2.1 Concept of Cruise Tourism*

To understand the motivations behind cruising, some definitions must be considered. The following authors, through time, contributed with their ideas of what Cruise Tourism is.

Starting with Cunha (1982), a cruise is *"a navigation made in various routes, within a limited area, for policing purposes and also a touristic travel to several points"* but Ward (2001) has a more psychological approach, since for him

*"A cruise is a vacation. It is an antidote to (and escape from) the stress and strain of life ashore. It offers you a chance to relax and unwind in comfortable surroundings, with attentive service, good food, and a ship that changes the scenery for you" (p.28).*

Later on, Gibson (2006) sees a cruise with a more complete view. He states that it becomes part of a package that includes a trip, an itinerary, the ambiance, services provided (meals and entertainment), accommodation, and every other service that is available onboard.

On the other hand, Papathanassis and Beckmann (2011) believe that

*“Cruise tourism is a socio-economic system generated by the interaction between human, organizational and geographical entities, aimed at producing maritime-transportation enabled leisure experiences”* (p.166).

Lastly, and more recently, Hung (2019) says

*“Cruise, which bears the characteristics of ‘tourism’ and ‘hospitality’, is a leisure experience wherein cruisers travel on a cruise ship to different destinations”* (p.207).

## 2.2 Evolution of Cruising

The cruising industry, globally, has been one of the fastest-growing tourism sectors since the 1980s (Guo et al., 2014), yet cruising has not generally had the picture that it has today. What used to be a leisure activity for the “happy few”, has flourished and is now thriving and is a more regular part of the international tourist market (Chen et al., 2016). Therefore, it is imperative to understand the development of this type of tourism to likewise know why individuals pick it. And Brito (2006) states precisely that. She enlightens us by dissecting that, in the beginning, cruising, did not appear as though it looks today. Individuals would not cruise for pleasure yet for a superior life instead, therefore journeys were tedious with no recreation options onboard.

Cruises later turned out to be more comfortable, however, class segregation was still a thing, therefore, first-class passengers had all the extravagances.

As per Dickison and Vladimir (1996), it is difficult to place the first cruise and even its destination. Although one might state that the first cruise could be put around the 19th century, in 1867 to be exact. The author states that it was the first organized, mainly American, passenger cruise, board Quaker City, a steamboat with the capacity for 150 fortunate passengers that traveled for a six-month span.

Ships at this time would compete for the Blue Ribband, a prize given to the fastest ships, demonstrating that accommodations were not the main focus. Subsequently, Brito (2006), specifies that, after the Second World War, with the appearance of commercial airlines and transatlantic flights, ships began losing their standing as means of transportation for passengers since planes could do the same journey in far lesser time. This opened the eyes of cruise lines which began to invest in onboard entertainment and new shorter itineraries (such as the Caribbean and the Greek Islands) to draw in more people.

This brought cruises back in as a touristic option, in the ‘70s. They were no longer considered only means of transportation but also vacation spots as well. This was consolidated when Carnival Cruises presented the “fun ship” concept, in 1972 (Kwortnik, 2008, cited in Elliot & Choi, 2011). Since then, cruises have evolved and OMT (2008) refers to them as being a “maritime resort” that combines accommodation and transportation. They also incorporate a wide range of facilities specific to a resort such as a beauty center, disco, library, shops, golf courses, art galleries, business centers, cinema, casino, spa, etc., the big difference being mobility. Han and Hyun (2017) state that *“This industry today seems to be gradually reaching the maturity stage of the life cycle”* (p.2). To hold progressively demanding travelers and make do in a competitive market, cruise lines recently have been endeavoring to bring to the table better plans of

itineraries and durations, while keeping a superior degree of accommodations, qualities, and services that rival other organizations (Chua et al, 2015). Based on Davidoff and Davidoff (1994) cited in Dowling, (2006), the explanations behind the sector's growth and the consequent increment of passengers are the opportunity to visit places in a brief timeframe without having to change the transport, the fact that ships are self-sustainable, them having a captain and staff whose main job is to ensure their passengers' well-being, accessibility of excellent food and the fact that primarily all passengers start and end their vacations on the same day.

On the other hand, according to Jennings (1997) cited in Lusby et al (2012), the number of passengers had been expanding because of an improved yacht design and comfort, affordability, telecommunication technologies, and an adjustment in insight about work and leisure. Today, when it comes to regional distribution, the global cruise market is mainly located in North America, Europe, Asia, South America, and Australia, even though the cruise industry is most developed in the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, France, and Spain (Jiao, Hou, & Lau, 2021). According to Papathanassis (2017), it is clear that the current demographics of cruising somewhat conflict with the stereotype of silver-agers, repeating the same cruise, seeking routine, and valuing a formalized experience. Nowadays, millennials are discovering cruise holidays as a complementary form of holiday.

### *2.3 Motivations for Cruise Taking*

Motivation is what drives a person to perform a specific behavior. Likewise, travel motivation is the internal driving force prompting people to travel (Mayo & Jarvis, 1981; Vidon & Rickly, 2018; Egger et al., 2020, cited by Jiao, Hou, & Lau, 2021). Several motivation studies and concepts have been proposed to explain tourist behavior, through time, laying a solid theoretical foundation for the study of this area. For instance, Maslow (1943) created his famous hierarchy of needs, which describes tourism motivation as the result of "social needs", "needs of being respected" and "self-actualization needs".

Plog (1974) followed and by allocating tourists into an allocentric-psychocentric spectrum, concluded that personality was one of the essential sources of travel motivation. Later, Dann (1977) further clarified the specific role of push-pull motives, arguing that push factors cause travel desires, while pull factors play an important role in a tourist's choice of destination. Next, Crompton (1979) refined the theory and put forward seven push factors (including "escape", "relaxation", "self-exploration", "prestige", "regression", "social interaction", and "enhancing kinship relationship") and two major pull factors ("novelty" and "education").

Subsequently, Dann (1981) divided travelers' motivation into two dimensions, creating the push-pull model, one of the most widely cited approaches to travel motivation. This theory presupposes tourists' intangible and intrinsic personal preferences as push factors and tangible and external attributes of destinations as pull factors. For instance, in line with the push and pull model, Lu (2001) studied Taiwanese cruise tourists, identifying that push factors were: lifelong learning, escape and relaxation, adventure, belonging and status-seeking, and that pull factors were: national environment and safety, entertainment and sports recreation, nature and wilderness, learning opportunities, modernity, and facilities.

Also, Lam and Hsu (2006) cited in Han and Hyun (2018), based themselves on the push-pull model and concluded just that. tourists are pulled by diverse external forces regarding the destination and pushed by their internal motives to travel. Guo et al (2014) also acknowledged the intrinsic

and extrinsic motivation factors. The intrinsic motivation factors in their examination included relaxation, socialization, family bonding, and social recognition, whereas the extrinsic motivation factors included entertainment and ashore tours. The itinerary of the cruise was additionally referenced similar to a significant factor in one's choice. In the same line, Whyte (2017) utilized the push-pull concept to conclude that the individual item rated as having the most significance on the decision of a cruise vacation was the motivation to discover new places and things. The extrinsic onboard item that was most mentioned was the onboard environment followed by onboard recreation and onboard social interaction.

Pearce and Caltabiano (1983), cited in Hung and Petrick (2011) combined Maslow's hierarchy of needs, finding out that, in their sample, needs were the base of travel motivation. However, one of the first motivations identified with cruising was mentioned by Dickison and Vladimir (1996). It alluded to the need of drinking alcohol due to the prohibition, installed by the American government, making cruise ships a paradise where that law did not apply. Later, Qu and Ping (1999), discovered that the major motivation factors are "Escape from normal life", "social gathering" and "beautiful environment and scenery".

To grasp cruising motivations as a whole, Hung and Petrick (2011) developed a motivation scale adjusted to this sector. They concluded that the motivations previously suggested by Dann (1981) did not apply so they accepted that the motivations would be different when contrasted to those of the tourism industry. Accordingly, they identified four major categories of cruise travel motivations which are: "escape/relaxation", "self-esteem and social recognition", "learning/discovery and thrill" and "bonding".

This study, specifically, was significant and notable, being utilized several times in other studies, such as Jung and Han (2016) study that acknowledged these factors as significant parts of passengers' motivations and in the long haul, as influences and boosters to reinforce their emotional experiences and hence, loyalty to the cruise line.

On another perspective, studies have found that cruise tourists' travel motivations vary according to the region. For example, De La Vina and Ford (2001) attempted to determine the key factors that influenced American tourists' motivations for taking a cruise and discovered that past cruise experiences, the cost, the duration of the cruise, and the ability to visit new destinations, were significant.

Also, Yoon and Uysal (2005), found that the major motivations for tourists on the Caribbean-Florida-Mississippi cruise route included "convenience," "adventure," "escape/relaxation," "social communication," and "climate." In the Mediterranean cruise market, Andriotis and Agiomirgianakis (2010), cited in Jiao, Hou, and Lau (2021) found that "surprise" and "escape" were the main motivating factors for cruise tourists. Recent researches in China, by Jiao, Hou, and Lau (2021), found out that the strongest motivations for Chinese passengers were "family", "relaxation" and "natural/cultural exploration", across all demographics.

In addition, other studies mention that Cruise Tourism motivation differs by demographic. The study of Elliot and Choi (2011) analyses the motivations behind each generation of cruise tourists. Each generation had different motivations ranging from isolation, establishing connections with new people, breaking from the everyday daily schedule up to creating lasting memories, and enriching their perspective in life.

Another significant subject is segmentation and how different group motivations are portrayed.

Starting, Petrick et al (2007), during their study, found that exist two groups of passengers: the individuals who need to experience a perplexing dynamic cycle and the individuals who are brand loyal.

Petrick and Durko (2015) developed segments of cruisers based on their motives, to determine contrasts in the assessment of cruises. They discovered five segments, being: the “Relaxers”, the “Unmotivated”, the “Motivated”, the “Social Statusers” and the “Cultureds”. As the name sound, the relaxers were most likely to take a cruise to unwind and get away; the unmotivateds take cruises to appease the motivations of another person, perhaps their significant other; the motivateds are well on their way to be curiosity searchers; the social statusers seek the status that they would not get in their ordinary life, by cruising and the cultureds are the ones with the most refined taste and are motivated to experience the culture.

Later, Lusby and Anderson (2008) began contemplating specific topics within motivation and wanted to show how the sense of community would propel tourists into cruising. They expressed that, once passengers need to be dynamic and experience new cultures together, they frequently would break attaches with the lives that they had to find a place with similarly invested individuals inside the cruise ship.

This aspect of community was then developed by Lusby et al (2012) alongside life satisfaction as motivations for cruising. The authors revealed that the correlation between the cruising lifestyle and life satisfaction was a strong factor – to this, contributed the sense of community, yacht club membership, and living aboard.

In a most recent study, Severt and Tasci (2020) also add to this topic when saying that tourists leave their ordinary life and enter the “*cruisescape*”. This happens when they bring an alternative behavior out of them than the one that they would normally exhibit. So, they might seek activities that require greater involvement or the opposite, they could simply choose to focus on their fundamental necessities and therefore, unwind. Their study additionally says that the most mainstream factor for deciding to cruise would be a good value for money, trailed by quality time with family, rest and relaxation, and lastly, climate.

Teye and Leclerc (2003) conducted research on cruise tourists of different races and found that the basic motivation of white Caucasians and ethnic minorities on cruise travel was similar. For example, both Caucasian Americans and American ethnic minorities were more concerned with the charm of the “cultural experience” brought about by a cruise’s multiple destinations.

Yet additionally, Weeden et al (2016) zoomed in on the LGBT community since cruise vacations have been expanding among these tourists. Thus, they studied the contrasts between gay men and lesbians’ travel motivations and inferred that in spite of the fact that cruises are seen as predominantly heterosexual spaces, the community has a sense of security and considers cruises to be a spot to express themselves and be comfortable with their sexuality.

*“Gay men prioritize good nightlife, opportunities to socialize with other LGBT people, high-quality accommodation, and gay culture and venues”; “Lesbians want to get off the beaten track, and enjoying wildlife and nature are of prime importance, with high-quality accommodation being far less significant” (Weeden et al., 2016, p.12).*



### **3. Research Methodology**

This study results from academic work done within the university environment and therefore during the elapse of a semester, specifically between September of 2020 and January of 2021. The aim is to synthesize the knowledge, give readers a comprehensive overview of the topic in study, and identify areas for future research. Hence, utilizing existing literature to provide a comprehensive and coherent overview of everything relevant to the topic.

It consists of a pre-study that will contribute to a Master's Dissertation. This study aims to show the state of the art when it comes to Cruise Tourism, in order to understand cruise motivations. So, this study is based on conceptual frameworks related to tourism, cruise tourism, travel motivations, and cruise intentions. It was done by gathering information from the most relevant studies in the mentioned fields, within Scopus databases. The main keywords used for this search were: "cruise tourism", "cruises", "cruising motivations", "cruise evolution", "cruise definition", "cruise industry", among others.

Previous research studies and other data were collected, throughout over 40 years, from 1979 till 2021, showing how broad the current study is in an environment that although is noteworthy, has very little literature associated.

### **4. Finding and Analysis**

The findings suggest that the tourism industry has changed throughout the years thus have individuals and their requirements, allowing the development of different types of tourism like Cruise Tourism.

During the making process of this study, the found literature pointed in several directions regarding motivations, and this study intended to analyse and comprise them. As shown before, four main paths came up, implying that motivations vary within the region of residence, demographic characteristics, and different segments, including race.

Therefore, individuals cruise for reasons related to their background and current personalities and tend to *"seek authentic opportunities when their usual environments lack such an experience"* (MacCannell, 1973, cited in Guo et al., 2014, p.116).

Accordingly, cruise lines should take into account their favoured segments (Petrick & Durko, 2015), to build up the best system for cruise marketing and development. Also, it should continually understand how cruises are perceived, why individuals like to cruise, and why others do not.

Certain concepts stood out during this study, these being unwinding, good value for food and beverages, escape the routine, opportunity to invest in quality time with the family, and sense of community.

### **5. Discussion**

Although the global cruise industry has increased continuously in recent decades, there are doubts about the homogeneity of cruise markets and motivations. The different results found regarding this topic and its various ways of approach, go in accordance with what was stated by Weeden, et al (2016), showing how they can be unpredictable, dynamic, highly individualistic,

and reliant on a scope of interconnected demographic and psychographic factors. As a complex and multidimensional concept, motivation differs from one person to another, from one market segment to another, from one destination to another, and from one decision making process to the next. Contemplating what all the authors have stated, a portion of the main motivations that stand apart are unwinding, good value for the food and beverage bundle, escape to the routine, and the opportunity to invest in quality time with the family. This shows that, as per Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the lower-level ones have more significance than the higher-level ones. Understanding the travel motivation of cruise tourists and the differences between different demographics' motivations can help cruise companies and industry organizations develop targeted marketing strategies to attract tourists and effectively improve customer satisfaction and loyalty.

## 6. Conclusions

After decades of fast growth within the cruise industry, came a fast and significant shift in the profile of cruise passengers. Cruising is a special method of travel that has unique characteristics inspiring tourists' travel motivations. Therefore, there is an enormous distinction in the motivation and consuming behavior of tourists when we take a look at their culture, values, and personality. However, understanding the advantages sought by each generation will assist with building up the best system for cruise marketing and development. Although the desire to simply want to go on a cruise can be a motivation that cruise lines can rely on to attract new clients, they need to provide passengers with accommodations, comfort, and other facilities for them to become loyal tourists. This study helps in that way, cruise companies can make better use of the information to successfully promote their cruises and gain competitiveness in the market. Considering this context, this topic is very challenging since motivations are constantly being updated and are never going to be generalized because, as seen before, different people want different things. Generally, and as a conclusion, it is expected that this study has added more viably knowledge to the cruise lines, in order for them to better cater to their clients. Being a conceptual article in an early stage and that cannot preset statistics or profound conclusions, it might lack a more in-depth analysis of the topic, which might be considered a limitation. When it comes to suggestions for future research, performing other studies with multi-strategies that comprise both qualitative and quantitative techniques will almost certainly yield a more profound comprehension of a given theme. For example, performing a questionnaire for passengers could be important to understand what each generation is sought after or create more specific segments. Also, being up to date and constantly reformulating this kind of study is mandatory for an industry that is constantly evolving and adapting to the circumstances.

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# Employer Branding in the Hospitality and Tourism Industry in Greece: Attracting Talents

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## Abstract

*One of the biggest challenges employers in the hospitality and tourism industry in Greece face, is acquiring talented employees who are considered to be the driving force of any company. Even after the covid-19 pandemic, the demand on the market for talented employees will remain high and at the same time the pool of talents will be limited. Employer branding plays a key role in attracting high performing employees and gives employers an advantage to the so-called “world for talent” (Easa and Bazzi, 2020). However, there is no clear picture of what talented employees look for, in a potential employer and what their priorities are when seeking for a job. The present study aims to investigate which factors render a hospitality employer attractive in the minds of talented employees and whether socio-demographic characteristics have an influence on those factors.*

**Keywords:** *Employer branding, employer attractiveness, talent management, hospitality and tourism industry*

## 1. Introduction

The nature and core component of most jobs in hospitality and tourism is the delivery of service, primarily depended on the workforce of a company. As a result, employees are directly responsible for customer satisfaction and retention (Sheehan et al., 2018). Consequently, the need and competition for qualified employees who can contribute to customer satisfaction and retention constantly increases. This results in the “war for talents” (Lin et al., 2018).

The “war for talents” complicates the attraction of high performing employees (Al Badawy et al., 2017) especially considering the scarcity of sufficiently qualified and talented employees and at the same time the increasing demand for them in the marketplace. Even after the covid-19 pandemic, the demand on the market for talented employees will remain high as available skills may not necessarily fit organizations’ needs, especially because highly skilled talent is expected

to be retained even during downsizing. In addition, digital transformation in the hospitality industry and fourth industrial revolution will further widen the talent demand supply gap. Therefore, organisations are investing tactically to overcome good employees attraction challenges (Lyons and Marler, 2011), by adopting various strategies to maintain a healthy talent pool. One such strategy is employer branding (EB), which emerges as a critical tool for talent acquisition, development and retention (Barrow and Mosley, 2011), in an era where employees are those who select their company as distinct from the past years, when companies selected their workforce (Michaels et al, 2001). Companies can be benefited by employer branding in order to win the “war for talent”, since it belongs among the reputational factors that contribute to a company’s competitive advantage (Easa and Bazzi, 2020; Backhaus, 2016). However, there is no clear picture of what talented employees look for, in a potential employer and what their priorities are when seeking for a job. Moreover, the current literature is very limited (e.g. Alniacik and Alniacik, 2012) about any perceptual differences between individuals having different demographic characteristics.

Within this context, the aim of the present study is to examine employer branding in relation to talent attraction within the hospitality and tourism industry in Greece, by investigating the relative importance levels of factors that affect the employer attractiveness of an organization and at the same time whether socio-demographic characteristics have an influence on those factors. Thus, the following research questions were developed:

*RQ1. What are the views of talented employees in the hospitality and tourism industry in terms of the five dimensions of employer branding; development value, social value, economic value, application value and interest value*

*RQ2. What are the differences in perceptions of talented employees in the hospitality and tourism sector by gender, age, education, years of experience and job position?*

## **2.Literature Review**

In the modern economy, also characterized as a knowledge economy (Schlechter et al.,2014), companies compete to gain talented employees almost as much as they compete for customers, since human capital constitutes an essential factor that gives competitive advantage to a company (Berthon et al., 2005). The fact that talented employees are rare and difficult to find makes recruiting, retaining and managing them effectively a challenging task, which resulted in the need for employer branding (Elegbe, 2018).

The term of employer brand was first described by Ambler and Barrow (1996, p.187) as “the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company”. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004, p.502) defined employer brand as “a concept of the firm that differentiates it from its competitors”. Organizations develop employer brands in order to establish their distinctive organizational values, practices and identity and thus, be differentiated in the marketplace. According to Lin et al. (2018) the process of projecting a company image to potential employees creates a corresponding image of the work environment and influences the firm’s ability to attract appropriate, well-qualified applicants. Employer branding can make a company, “an employer of choice” and be considered as “a promise” of the employer to current and potential employees, that it can meet the expectations that it has set (Easa and Bazzi, 2020).

The concept of employer attractiveness, also called organisational attractiveness, is strongly associated with employer branding and is considered as an antecedent of the employer brand equity concept (Berthon et al., 2005). Jain and Bhatt (2015, p.636) define employer brand equity as “*the extent to which a brand contributes in attracting and retaining employees*”. The employer brand equity of a company is enhanced when it is considered as an attractive employer by potential employees.

Berthon et al (2005) developed five categories related to what may make an employer attractive. These categories, which are used in employer brand development, are: (i) Interest value: a challenging and creative work environment, (ii) Social value: good relations among employees and promotion of team work, (iii) Economic value: satisfactory compensation and opportunities for promotion, (iv) Development value: a company that is prestigious and makes an employee feel confident, whilst enriching his career, (v) Application value: an organization that encourages the application and transmission of knowledge.

It is widely known that the hospitality sector suffers from high turnover rates and struggles with acknowledging, attracting and retaining talented employees. Since hospitality is a customer-oriented industry with substantial diversity within the workforce, it is of great importance for organizations to acquire talents that will engage with the organization and show commitment (Casco, 2014). Thus, talent management plays an essential role in the industry (Sheehan et al., 2018). In the context of hospitality and tourism, “*talent management is taken to be the strategic management of the talent as it enters, is deployed and moves within an organization*” (Baum, 2008, p.720). Based on strategic business goals, talent management attempts to put the right people in the right positions at the right time.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### *3.1 Research Design*

In this research, a quantitative approach was followed and a survey method was used for data collection. More specifically a structured questionnaire was developed and addressed to a number of talented employees occupied in the hospitality industry in Greece.

#### **Population and Sample**

The population of the research were talented employees in the hospitality and tourism industry. In this study, talents have been identified as high performing individuals, in accordance with the literature review following the *exclusive approach* of talent management. *The exclusive approach is based on the notion of segmentation of the workforce, and understands talent as an elite subset of the organization's population i.e. those individuals who can make a difference to organizational performance, either through their immediate contribution or in the longer-term by demonstrating the highest levels of potential* (Tansley et al., 2007, p. 8). According to Ericsson et al. (2007), talent should be demonstrated by measurable, consistently superior performance”. Similarly De Haro (2010) states that if no evidence for exceptional achievements is available, we are not talking about talent but about giftedness.

In this context, the Individual Task Performance scale (Janssen and Van Yperen, 2004) was used (see “measurement” for further details) to identify “talents”. For the present study, talents were considered as those individuals who scored more than 4,5 in a 5 Likert scale of Individual Task

Performance. It is well-known that self-evaluation scales may have bias (Brockner et al., 2006) and therefore, the study used as base 4,5, which is a quite strict score.

In terms of sampling, a purposive sampling has been used since the research focuses on employees in the hospitality industry in Greece. This method is generally used when certain individuals or events provide important information that could not be found by any other sampling method (Maxwell, 1997). Moreover, the method of snowball sampling was followed, through which the respondents were invited to share the questionnaire with their social network, presupposing that they satisfy the requirements of the research (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). 708 individuals participated in the study of whom 333 were identified as “talents”. This specific sample was chosen in order to determine and evaluate the most important factors that affect the employer attractiveness of talents and also to examine whether there are differences in talented hospitality employees’ perceptions based on gender, age, educational level, years of experience and job position.

### *3.2 Measurement*

As it has been mentioned above, in this study a survey method was used. A structured questionnaire was developed with three sections: (a) Employer Attractiveness Factors, (b) Individual Task Performance scale, (c) demographic details.

The first section refers to the factors that render an employer attractive through a 5 likert scale (totally disagree – totally agree), with the intention of determining which of these play the most important role among talented employees. These factors were adapted by Berthon et al (2005), who developed five categories related to what may make an employer attractive. An additional item in this section, examined whether the financial crisis caused by the covid Pandemic in the hospitality industry, leading in less job opportunities may have an impact on talented employees’ priorities of employer attractiveness factors or not.

The second section invites the respondents to evaluate themselves in terms of their performance, using a 5 likert scale. This refers to the Individual Task Performance scale which was adapted by Janssen and Van Yperen (2004). The identification of “talents” was based on this scale. The third and last section captures the demographic details of the respondents. All questions were translated into Greek and then back again to English to ensure content validity.

### *3.3 Data Collection*

The data collection for the present study included the distribution of a questionnaire, in online form via Google Forms. The questionnaire was shared via e-mail to MSc in Hospitality and Tourism Management students who were also employed in the hospitality industry in Greece. Additionally, it was also uploaded on social media groups with approximately 120.000 members, strictly related to hospitality and tourism employees in Greece.

### *3.4 Demographics*

The final section of the questionnaire refers to the demographic characteristics of the respondents, i.e. their gender, age, educational level, job position and years of working experience. The demographic characteristics are presented in table 1.

The demographics section has been used to identify individual differences that can influence the participants’ perceptions of employer branding based on five dimensions of employer



attractiveness; development value, social value, economic value, application value and interest value.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the sample

Demographic Questions		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	99	29,7 %
	Female	232	69,7%
	Other	0	0,0 %
	I do not wish to answer	2	0,6 %
	<b>Total</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>100 %</b>
Age	18-25	62	18,6 %
	26-30	70	21,1 %
	31-35	45	13,5 %
	36-40	59	17,7 %
	41-45	51	15,3 %
	46-50	32	9,6 %
	51-55	11	3,3 %
	56-60	2	0,6 %
	60 +	1	0,3 %
	<b>Total</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>100 %</b>
Educational Level	Junior High School	7	2, 1%
	High School	33	9,9 %
	Institute of vocational training	110	33 %
	Bachelor's degree	117	35,1 %
	Master's/ PhD degree	66	19,9 %
	<b>Total</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>100 %</b>
Job Position	Employee	154	46,2 %
	Executive/ Manager 1-5 years of	84	25,2 %
	Executive/ Manager 6 or more years of	63	18,9 %
	Senior/ Top Executive	32	9,7 %

	<b>Total</b>	333	100 %
Years of working experience	1-3	78	23,4 %
	4-10	130	39 %
	11-20	75	22,6 %
	20 +	50	15 %
	<b>Total</b>	333	100 %
Number of employees in company	1-9	47	14,1 %
	10-50	98	29,4 %
	51-250	102	30,6%
	251 +	86	25,9 %
	<b>Total</b>	333	100 %

### 3.5 Reliability and validity

The instrument (questionnaire) that was used in the present study was tested for both its content and construct validity. To control for the construct validity, each of the 30 factors was evaluated for its reliability and unidimensionality. The validity of the 25-items Employer Attractiveness scale and the 5-item Individual Task performance scale was measured by Confirmatory Factor Analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure was used in order to test the sampling adequacy of the data. According to Fabrigar and Wegener (2011), the KMO measure examines the structure validity of the research factors. The results showed that all KMO values are higher than 0,60 which is a preferred number and consequently we are able to confirm the appropriateness of factor analysis in terms of this data set.

The Total Variance Explained (TVE) was also calculated. It indicates the percentage of the total information that is included in all variables and is represented by the factor (Henson and Roberts,2006). The results showed that the TVE is higher than 60 % for most factors which is accepted. The values that are marginally below 60% are still accepted. In order to demonstrate convergent validity, item's loadings need to exceed the minimum value of 0,60. In the present study 7 items were excluded from a total of 30 items. Finally, the internal consistency of all factors was tested with the use of Cronbach's alpha which should indicate values higher than 0,7 in order to be considered as reliable. According to Table 2, all factors that were examined are reliable.

Table 2: Factor Analysis

<b>Employer</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>KMO</b>	<b>TVE</b>	<b>Factor</b>	<b>Cronbach'</b>
Development Value	5	1	0,764	61,422	0,65-	0,754
Social Value	5	1	0,737	58,850	0,70-	0,813
Application Value	5	1	0,818	63,706	0,67-	0,806

Interest Value	5	1	0,846	65,845	0,74-	0,868
Economic Value	5	1	0,761	62,171	0,46-	0,734
Individual Task	5	2	0,556	59,082	0,61-	0,765

#### 4. Findings and Analysis

In this research a descriptive analysis has been conducted in order to examine the views of talented employees in the hospitality and tourism sector in terms of the five dimensions of employer branding. Additionally, the One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to examine the existence of statistically significant differences in perceptions of talented employees in the hospitality and tourism sector by gender, age, education, years of experience and job position.

##### 4.1 Descriptive Analysis

According to the results in Table 3 all values have mean scores which are higher than 4,0 meaning that the majority of talented employees rated all the employer attractiveness factors as very important or as important at least.

The mean scores of the five employer attractiveness values indicate that the development value is considered highly important for talented employees with a score of 4,7. The social value is similarly considered highly important with a score of 4,6 and the economic value indicates a score of 4,5, being also high in importance according to respondents. The interest value follows with a significantly high mean score of 4,4 while the least important value is the application value with a score of 4,1. Despite the fact that the application value indicates the lowest mean score among the five values, it is still a relatively high score in terms of importance. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the only question that indicates a significantly low mean score (2,87) is the one regarding the effect of the current economic crisis on the evaluation of the employer attractiveness factors. This low mean score shows that the priorities of talented employees as regards the factors that are important to them when searching for an employer, do not seem to be strongly affected by the existing financial recession in the industry due the covid pandemic.

Table 3: Mean scores- Employer Attractiveness factors

Employer Attractiveness Factors	Mean	Std. Deviation
Development Value	4,7	0,58762
Social Value	4,6	0,715586
Application Value	4,1	0,973622
Interest Value	4,4	0,833996
Economic Value	4,5	0,719564

Employer Attractiveness factors are less important due to financial crisis and limited options currently available	2,8	1,40503
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The frequencies, as shown in Table 4, indicate that the most important factor according to 149 participants (44,7%) is a basic salary that is higher than the average, which belongs to the category of the economic value. The second most important factor is the fun working environment which belongs to the category of the social value, selected by 138 participants (41,4%). The third most important factor is the recognition and appreciation from management which belongs to the development value category, selected by 117 participants (35,1%).

Table 4: Most Preferred Employer Attractiveness factors

Most Preferred Employer Attractiveness Factors	Frequency	Percentage
An above average basic salary	149	44,7 %
A fun working environment	138	41,4 %
Recognition / appreciation from management	117	35,1 %

#### 4.2 ANOVA analysis

One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used, in order to establish the existence of statistically significant differences on the means of employer attractiveness' factors based on socio-demographic characteristics. More specifically, One-Way ANOVA examined any significant differences for each of the five dimensions of employer attractiveness (development value, social value, application value, interest value, economic value) among the gender, age, education, job position and experience.

Table 5 shows the relationship between talented employees' perceptions of dimensions of employer attractiveness and their gender. The results show that there are not statistically significant differences between male and female perceptions since P value > 0,05 in all dimensions of employer attractiveness, as it can be seen in table 5. Therefore, we conclude that talented employees' perceptions of the five dimensions of employer attractiveness are the same for both male and female.

Table 5: Statistically significant differences in the means of employer attractiveness based on gender

Dependent Variables	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Development Value	Women	232	4,56	0,457591	0,805418	0,447777

	Men	99	4,51	0,611017		
	I do not wish to answer	2	4,2	0,848528		
Social Value	Women	232	4,61	0,497054	1,756988	0,174174
	Men	99	4,49	0,632012		
	I do not wish to answer	2	4,3	0,989949		
Application Value	Women	232	4,15	0,697613	2,337732	0,098143
	Men	99	3,97	0,804092		
	I do not wish to answer	2	4,4	0,848528		
Interest Value	Women	232	4,39	0,619974	0,468672	0,626248
	Men	99	4,35	0,796208		
	I do not wish to answer	2	4	0,848528		
Economic Value	Women	232	4,56	0,457591	0,805418	0,447777
	Men	99	4,51	0,611017		
	I do not wish to answer	2	4,2	0,848528		

Table 6 presents the differences of talented employees' perceptions of the dimensions of employer attractiveness among different age groups. Despite the fact that in application and interest value there are differences in the means among age groups, they are not considered statistically significant since the P value in all dimensions is higher than 0,05. Hence, the talented employees' perceptions of the dimensions of employer attractiveness are considered the same for all age groups.

Table 6: Statistically significant differences in the means of employer attractiveness based on age

Dependent Variables	Age	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
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Development Value	18-25	62	4,70	0,348753	1,2409	0,274396
	26-30	70	4,64	0,462999		
	31-35	45	4,74	0,380961		
	36-40	59	4,76	0,341961		
	41-45	51	4,78	0,514206		
	46-50	32	4,55	0,479247		
	51-55	11	4,75	0,284125		
	56-60	2	4,9	0,141421		
	60+	1	5	0		
Social Value	18-25	62	4,49	0,551264	0,537295	0,828176
	26-30	70	4,55	0,549978		
	31-35	45	4,59	0,413314		
	36-40	59	4,59	0,463009		
	41-45	51	4,64	0,550508		
	46-50	32	4,58	0,500927		
	51-55	11	4,6	0,358786		
	56-60	2	5	0,282843		
	60+	1	5	0		
Application Value	18-25	62	4	0,348753	0,899852	0,516742
	26-30	70	4	0,462999		
	31-35	45	4,11	0,380961		
	36-40	59	4,10	0,341961		
	41-45	51	4,26	0,514206		
	46-50	32	4,07	0,479247		
	51-55	11	4,31	0,284125		

	56-60	2	4,5	0,141421		
	60+	1	4,8	0		
Interest Value	18-25	62	4,22	0,683971	2,266996	0,22706
	26-30	70	4,21	0,75063		
	31-35	45	4,44	0,568713		
	36-40	59	4,42	0,598498		
	41-45	51	4,94	0,682763		
	46-50	32	4,5	0,744875		
	51-55	11	4,78	0,32808		
	56-60	2	5	0		
	60+	1	5	0		
	Economic Value	18-25	62	4,49		
26-30		70	4,41	0,549978		
31-35		45	4,61	0,413314		
36-40		59	4,59	0,463009		
41-45		51	4,59	0,550508		
46-50		32	4,54	0,500927		
51-55		11	4,75	0,358786		
56-60		2	4,8	0,282843		
60+		1	4,8	0		

Table 7 shows whether there is a relationship between the educational background of talented employees and their perceptions of employer attractiveness dimensions. The results of the ANOVA test indicate statistically significant differences in three of the values of employer attractiveness, that is to say application, interest and economic value. In these dimensions, P value is lower than 0,05 as it can be seen in the table 7. More specifically, employees with a lower educational background tend to pay more attention to application, interest and economic values than the employees that hold bachelor's and master's degrees. However, there is no

relationship between education and employees' perceptions of development and social dimensions, since  $p > 0,05$ . Therefore, talented employees' perceptions of employer attractiveness are partially influenced by employees' educational background.

Table 7: Statistically significant differences in the means of employer attractiveness based on education

<b>Dependent Variables</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Development Value	Junior high school graduate	7	4,94	0,09759	1,526053	0,194238
	High school graduate	33	4,76	0,330748		
	Institute of vocational training	110	4,68	0,488619		
	Bachelor's degree	117	4,74	0,373085		
	Master's/ PhD degree	66	4,63	0,420378		
Social Value	Junior high school graduate	7	4,91	0,226779	1,06295	0,374839
	High school graduate	33	4,63	0,427555		
	Institute of vocational training	110	4,58	0,611418		
	Bachelor's degree	117	4,56	0,519028		
	Master's/ PhD degree	66	4,50	0,538079		
Application Value	Junior high school graduate	7	4,71	0,323669	2,627532	0,034539
	High school graduate	33	4,29	0,55698		
	Institute of vocational training	110	4,09	0,770334		
	Bachelor's degree	117	4,1	0,692633		
	Master's/ PhD degree	66	3,94	0,809155		



Interest Value	Junior high school graduate	7	4,97	0,075593	3,0779	0,016461
	High school graduate	33	4,50	0,634668		
	Institute of vocational training	110	4,38	0,710263		
	Bachelor's degree	117	4,41	0,597864		
	Master's/ PhD degree	66	4,19	0,756412		
Economic Value	Junior high school graduate	7	4,94	0,09759	2,716136	0,029886
	High school graduate	33	4,59	0,545297		
	Institute of vocational training	110	4,54	0,534017		
	Bachelor's degree	117	4,58	0,4472		
	Master's/ PhD degree	66	4,40	0,547433		

Table 8 presents the relationship among the talented employees' perceptions of the dimensions of employer attractiveness and their job position. The ANOVA test indicates that talented employees of any position have the same perception of dimensions of employer attractiveness. Based on the results shown on the table 8, P value > 0,05 for all the dimensions of employer attractiveness. Consequently, it is safe to say that there are not statistically significant differences among the variables.

Table 8: Statistically significant differences in the means of employer attractiveness based on job position

Dependent Variables	Job Position	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Development value	Employee (without administrative responsibilities)	154	4,7	0,440586	0,054453	0,983245
	Executive / manager (1-5 years of experience)	84	4,72	0,387913		

	Executive / manager (6 or more years of experience)	63	4,71	0,391486		
	Senior / Top Executive	32	4,69	0,45997		
Social Value	Employee (without administrative responsibilities)	154	4,55	0,568816	0,821216	0,482894
	Executive / manager (1-5 years of experience)	84	4,54	0,578303		
	Executive / manager (6 or more years of experience)	63	4,67	0,428049		
	Senior / Top Executive	32	4,55	0,535212		
Application Value	Employee (without administrative responsibilities)	154	4,08	0,762664	1,425878	0,235065
	Executive / manager (1-5 years of experience)	84	3,99	0,777668		
	Executive / manager (6 or more years of experience)	63	4,23	0,601296		
	Senior / Top Executive	32	4,18	0,697923		
Interest Value	Employee (without administrative responsibilities)	154	4,31	0,699393	1,378023	0,249358
	Executive / manager (1-5 years of experience)	84	4,37	0,556229		

	Executive / manager (6 or more years of experience)	63	4,49	0,690926		
	Senior / Top Executive	32	4,49	0,54522		
Economic Value	Employee (without administrative responsibilities)	154	4,54	0,430266	0,097644	0,961293
	Executive / manager (1-5 years of experience)	84	4,56	0,497263		
	Executive / manager (6 or more years of experience)	63	4,54	0,5634		
	Senior / Top Executive	32	4,5	0,699393		

Finally, table 9 shows the differences between the years of experience and the talented employees' perceptions of the dimensions of employer attractiveness. Ostensibly, there seems to be a difference in the means; however, based on the ANOVA test, there is no statistically significant difference between the years of experience and talented employees' perceptions of the dimensions of employer attractiveness. As it is presented on the table 9, P value is higher than 0,05 in all dimensions, therefore we conclude that experience has no influence on the perceptions of talented employees towards the employer attractiveness.

Table 9: Statistically significant differences in the means of employer attractiveness based on years of experience

Dependent Variables	Experience	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Development value	1-3 years	78	4,7	0,385104	0,777903	0,506988
	4-10 years	130	4,73	0,364053		
	11-20 years	75	4,72	0,407886		
	20 or more years	50	4,63	0,589721		
Social Value	1-3 years	78	4,57	0,553071	0,473564	0,700904

	4-10 years	130	4,54	0,530038		
	11-20 years	75	4,63	0,450073		
	20 or more years	50	4,55	0,685488		
Application Value	1-3 years	78	4,16	0,732941	2,27946	0,079302
	4-10 years	130	3,97	0,737643		
	11-20 years	75	4,13	0,703269		
	20 or more years	50	4,26	0,745096		
Interest Value	1-3 years	78	4,32	0,713674	1,328623	0,264949
	4-10 years	130	4,32	0,674857		
	11-20 years	75	4,43	0,599435		
	20 or more years	50	4,52	0,724036		
Economic Value	1-3 years	78	4,52	0,560362	0,139299	0,936444
	4-10 years	130	4,53	0,496814		
	11-20 years	75	4,55	0,434428		
	20 or more years	50	4,57	0,571443		

## 5. Discussion

This study examined the perceived importance levels of different dimensions of employer attractiveness for talented employees in the hospitality industry. Further comparisons were made regarding the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The results indicated that the most significant values among talented employees are development value (M= 4,7), social

value (M= 4,6) and economic value (M= 4,5). Previous studies such as Cable and Graham's (2000) indicated as well that talented employees lend weight to development and economic factors when making a job choice. In addition, according to Alniacik and Alniacik (2012), social value is predominant in the process of choosing an employer.

On the other hand, based on the results, talented employees seem to be less interested in application and interest value when looking for a job. A study conducted by Wright (2008) verifies that the latter factors seem to be insignificant to high performers. Based on the results of the present study on the perceived importance of development value, high performers seem to focus on their career development and long for appreciation of their work from management. The results indicated that talented employees are ambitious people aiming to continuous growth and high performing. Therefore, in order for hospitality and tourism organizations to be appealing and stand out, they need to convince potential talented employees that they cherish their work and care about their constant development.

The perceived importance of economic value highlights the importance of attractive compensation packages with both direct and indirect financial benefits. Talented employees pay a lot of attention to the economic value and according to the results, a basic salary that is higher than the average is the most important factor to them. The social value, which assesses the attraction of employees towards organizations with a fun and cooperative working environment, has been rated as the third most significant factor by high performing employees. A friendly and fun working environment is something they look for when making a job choice. Talented employees in the hospitality and tourism industry are people with strong soft skills and therefore good communication is considered pivotal in the job finding process.

The statistical analysis based on socio-demographic characteristics indicated statistically significant differences only between educational background and application, interest and economic value. However, the statistical significant differences were very small and therefore there is no need for the HR strategies to be differentiated based on the educational background of talented employees. In this context, the absence of statistically significant differences among the employer attractiveness perceptions and the gender, age, job position and years of experience of the respondents, implies that the employer branding strategy of hospitality organizations, should not be differentiated based on the socio-demographic characteristics.

## **6. Conclusions**

The present research can assist human resources practitioners and professionals of the hospitality and tourism industry in Greece in identifying the factors that affect the employer attractiveness of organizations and the perceptions of high performing employees on these factors. Since this research is the first to examine the employer attractiveness in terms of the talented employees of the Greek hospitality and tourism sector, its aim is to become a useful tool for human resources practitioners and contribute in the attraction strategies of talents. That is especially significant in the hospitality and tourism sector of Greece which suffers from high turnover rates, seasonality and lacks talented and skilled employees.

The present study is subject to a number of limitations. Firstly, since the sample size is relatively small and a large percentage of data was collected through social media groups for hospitality and tourism employees, it may not be safe to generalize the results. Another limitation is the

method used to identify the talents among all respondents. The identification of talent was based on the exclusive approach, which considers talent as an elite of the workforce with high performance and high potential. For the purposes of the study and due to the fact that it is very complicated to measure employee “potential”, talented employees were considered only as high performers. Moreover, talent identification was relied on individuals’ self-reports, which raises concerns about possible common method bias. Consequently, the sample size of talents might not be representative of the actual talents that work in the hospitality and tourism sector in Greece.

Future research on the topic could overcome the talent identification limitation by examining existing pools of talents as proposed by organizations they already work in. Along these lines the risk of bias would be significantly decreased and the results would be more valid. Additionally, future research could be conducted based on a larger sample size, which would increase reliability and make the results more generalizable and representative.

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# Emerging trends in the literature of co-production in the economic, managerial, and social sectors: a bibliometric approach

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## Abstract

*This study conducts an extant literature review on co-production in the economy, management, and society via two databases: Web of Science and Scopus using bibliometric analysis. Three main bibliometric techniques citation, co-citation and co-word analysis are applied to analyze 317 journals from Web of Science and 639 journals from Scopus related to co-production. This study proposes a direction of research in co-production that has been conducted over the past decade from 1998 to 2020. Four significant research areas are proposed as research gap in the literature of co-production: The customer behavior when participating in co-production; the motivation to participate in co-production; Relationship between stakeholders in co-production, management, and public services. Keyword analysis aims to classify keywords into respective topics from the co-citation analysis results. Comparison of keyword repetition and new occurrence over two periods from 1998 to 2015 and from 2016 to 2020 is the basis to explore current research trends and suggestions for potential research directions in the future. This study helps marketers in gaining comprehensive understanding of the concept of co-production that can adopt as strategy for their business.*

**Keywords:** *Co-production, Bibliometric Analysis, Co-citation Analysis, Co-word Analysis, Service Industry*

## 1. Introduction

Co-production was first conceptualized by an academic group initiated by Elinor Ostrom at the Indiana University in the 1970s to describe some of service users' deficiencies in service provision. This concept was further developed by Edgar Cahn, a civil rights law professor who created the time bank, a system based on the participation of volunteers who are also service users (Needham et al., 2009). His research showed how successful *collaborative interventions* involving people with long-term psychosocial needs can contribute to improving community bonding which was the foundation to define the co-production concept. Since then, studies on co-production have gained more attention from researchers with similar studies such as Parks et al.



(1981), Brudney & England (1983), Whitaker (1980). However, studies on how customers engage in co-production are limited and fragmented, focusing mostly on the public service field.

Co-production is considered a potential solution for improving the quality of public service delivery, increasing economic benefits, using resources more efficiently, and including the possibility of increasing people's satisfaction level (Voorberg et al., 2014). Existing research on co-production has focused mainly on analyzing the roles of stakeholders involved in co-production (Osborne, Radnor, & Nasi, 2013; Bovaird, Stoker, Jones, Loeffler, & Roncancio, 2016) such as the role of the government, the role of citizen participation in improving public service quality or motivation to participate in co-production, the benefits of co-production for citizens (Jakobsen, 2012; Joshi & Moore, 2006; Pestoff, 2009). There is a need for more research to emphasize the critical role of customer engagement in co-production process and in other fields such as service industry, not only in public service (Abeysekera, 2015).

Co-production has received great attention with increasing presence in research since 2016 with an average of over 40 publications annually. Along with this trend were review papers on the topic of co-production which were divided separately into different fields: co-production in public services (Voorberg et al., 2014), co-production in medical care (Palumbo, 2016), co-production in primary education sector (Honingh et al., 2018), co-production in climate change (Bremer & Meisch, 2017), overview of co-production in the public administration (Capolupo et al., 2020), and co-production in health policy and management (Fusco et al., 2020). Despite the abundance of literature on co-production and its growing importance as a strategic means for inclusive consumer engagement, a systematic and in-depth analysis is needed to synthesize a complete picture regarding this concept. In other words, there is a need for a comprehensive study as multifaceted bibliographic analysis to capture and examine the high quantity of prior research papers. To fill this gap, our paper proposes a systematical map of the co-production literature focusing on the economic, managerial, and social sectors by applying a bibliometric analysis of published papers from 1989-2020. The main research questions for this paper are:

- a) RQ1. How has the co-production literature evolved over time and which studies have received the most citations?
- b) RQ2. Identify the most cited authors, the most influential journals, publishers/countries in the field of co-production?
- c) RQ3. Identify the emerging themes in the field of co-production and research gaps that opens future research possibilities?

The findings of this review provide a portrait of the extant co-production literature as well as insights into promising avenues for future research possibility. A part from that, this study also provides a better understanding of the concept of coproduction to the managers and practitioners to adopt for strategy development.

## **2. Concept of Co-production**

### *2.1. Co-production*

The term “co-production” was explained as a way of minimizing business input and maximizing customer input relative to products produced under the firm's control (Parks et al., 1981). According to Etgar (2008), the customers’ participation in one or more production stages and their qualitative and quantitative activities at these stages account for the co-production. Co-

production has even become the central tenet of the proposed service-centric principle for marketing (Vargo & Lusch, 2004) and it is "*The next frontier in competitive effectiveness*" (Bendapudi & Leone, 2003: 14). Most recently, Arica & Kozak (2019) assumed that co-production is how businesses and customers provide input into production throughout the entire production process and maximize both the output of supply and demand with these inputs. In general, in the service business, the concept of co-production is quite unified.

In the field of public policy, there is still no consensus on the concept of co-production (Verschuere et al., 2012). In 1996, Ostrom, (1996: 1073) defined co-production as "*the processes through which the inputs used to provide a good or service are contributed by individuals who are not 'in' the same organization*". This definition was later reiterated in a variety of ways, considering only user participation (Osborne et al., 2016) or any person or entity outside of the organization (Moynihan & Thomas, 2013). Some experts agree that co-production includes activities in which states (i.e. government agencies serve in a professional capacity) and civic agents (i.e., members public service, voluntarily serving as a citizen or user) participating in the public service process (i.e. operation, marking, delivery and evaluation) (Brandsen & Honingh, 2015; Nabatchi, Sancino, & Sicilia, 2017).

The concept of co-production initially applied in industrial, service, and public sectors because it benefits both service providers and customers in term of economic efficiency gained from collaborating with customers in business context. When customers encounter services as co-producers, they help service provider cut down cost with their involvement such as self-help. In turn, customers also benefit the experience of independence, enjoyment and convenience (Abeysekera, 2015). Hence, in co-production, customers play critical role to ensure the output of co-production. As the result, marketing scholars recommended enterprises to interact with customers and provide platform and activities to encourage their involvement (Stephen L Vargo & Lusch, 2008).

Co-production divide in two main forms: collaborative and collective co-production. According to Humphreys (2008), a company works with customers in various stages of its value chain (e.g. design, manufacturing, after sale -service) to create a service and products in collaborative co-production, whereas collective co-production refers to interaction among customers to alter a product or services independently from that company. The extant literature has focused mainly on collaborative co-production which neglect the other form, especially in a business context. Stephen L. Vargo and Lusch (2004) confirmed that co-production concept relies mainly on service dominant logic as opposed to goods dominant logic. Subsequently, the co-production concept has received great attention in research in recent times but widely in public management (Cepiku & Giordano, 2014; Pestoff, 2014). In this direction, some authors have stressed the importance of interpersonal relationships between employees and consumers in improving co-production outcomes such as trust and satisfaction. (Guo & Ng, 2011). Other studies focused on the contextual factors influencing co-production such as the macro environment, strategic management, proximate environment (Cepiku & Giordano, 2014; Verschuere, Brandsen & Pestoff, 2012).

Although co-production is beneficial for both consumers and companies such as enhancing personal engagement, higher productivity and cost cutting. It also has been found that successful implementation as strategy to increase customer satisfaction but these extant literature on co-production has been fragmented in different fields (Voorberg et al., 2014; Palumbo, 2016;

Honingh, Bondarouk, & Brandsen, 2018; Bremer & Meisch, 2017; Capolupo, Piscopo, & Annarumma, 2020; Fusco, Marsilio, & Guglielmetti, 2020). Despite increased attention, co-production concept remains unclear with limited understanding which calls for more insight efforts to use co-production successfully (Parrado, Van Ryzin, Bovaird, & Löffler, 2013).

## 2.2. Data collection

Firstly, data collection was carried out on a large scale reviewing all documents related to co-production on both Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus databases (including books, articles, book chapters, notes). The search criteria included the phrase “co-production” in the topic (title/summary/ keywords) and publish date before October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020. The results showed high number of publications found on both sources as follows: WoS returned 1,658 results (all fields) and Scopus 2,937 (all fields). In the next step, data was refined to select only articles related to research fields such as economics, management, services, and society. As the result, only 317 articles from WoS and 639 articles from Scopus were accepted for further analysis (as presented in table 1).

This difference in the number of articles can be explained by the *different classifications* used in each database to avoid duplication according to Zainab & Raj (2013) and Bartol, Budimir, Dekleva-Smrekar, Pusnik, & Juznic (2013).

Table 1. Statistics of research data filter results from WoS and Scopus sources

Search area	Data source	
	WoS	Scopus
Titles	“Co-production” and, or “coproduction”	“Co-production” and, or “coproduction”
Period	1998 to 2020	1998 to 2020
Fields	Public administration Management Business Community service Social problems Politics Medical service policy Economy Health care science services. Occupational health public environment Hotels, sports, entertainment, and tourism	Business, management, and accounting. Economics, econometrics, and finance Arts and humanities
Languages	English	English
Publication types	Journal	Journal
Results	317	639

### 3. Research methodology

Bibliometric involves the application of statistical methods to identify qualitative and quantitative changes in a given scientific research topic, establishes a profile of publications on the topic, and detects bias direction in a field (Bakker, Groenewegen, & Hond, 2005). In addition, this type of analysis provides useful information for professionals to evaluate scientific performance (Oliva, Taulet, & Romero, 2006), thus, creates a methodological innovation compared to traditional reviews (Bakker et al., 2005). The main techniques of bibliometric analysis applied in this paper are: *citation analysis*; *co-citation analysis* and *co-occurrence of author keywords*.

The first technique applied in this study is *citation analysis* to capture the structure of the studied field: publications per year, renowned authors, influential journals, countries and research fields. The main outcome of this technique is to measure influences.

Co-citation is the next technique which is defined as the frequency with which two documents are cited together within the document and it assumes that documents cited are conceptually close (Small, 1973; Trujillo & Long, 2018). In other words, co-citation occurs when two references, A and B, are cited by the C study, suggesting a co-citation relationship between two documents A and B (as illustrated in Figure 1). The two documents are frequently cited together, if the higher their co-citation strength is, the more likely they are to be related (Ferreira, 2017). In the subgroup drawn from the citation analysis, the network nodes represent the cited documents, their size depends on the number of citations. The edges represent a co-citation relationship, and their weighting depends on the number of times the two documents have been commonly cited (Small, 1973; Trujillo & Long, 2018).

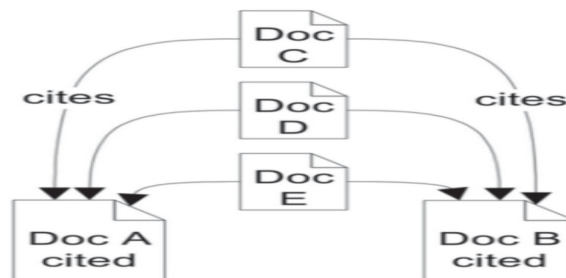


Figure 1. Visualizing co-citation. Source: Ferreira (2017)

Another technique applied is *keyword analysis* (co-word) which is based on the idea that co-occurrence of key terms (i.e. summary, title, or keyword) to describe the content of documents (Callon, Courtial, & Laville, 1991). This technique identifies and visualizes clusters that represent semantic or conceptual groups of different topics dealt within the studied field. Applying the method developed by Cobo et al. (2011) and Cobo, Martínez, Gutiérrez-salcedo, Fujita, & Herrera-viedma (2015), clusters are visualized in a “strategy map” or “network map”. Furthermore, the authors read the abstracts or the full text of the article as needed to add relevant information to the results of a quantitative bibliometric analysis.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Citation analysis

#### **Number of publications per year**

Figure 2 shows the number of publications with the subject of co-production released between 2002 and 2020. The statistical result showed a significant growing number of publications related to this topic after 2016. Since the past 5 years, an average of more than 40 publications have been published annually, which proves the growing interests of researchers in this field, especially in 2018 with 56 published research.

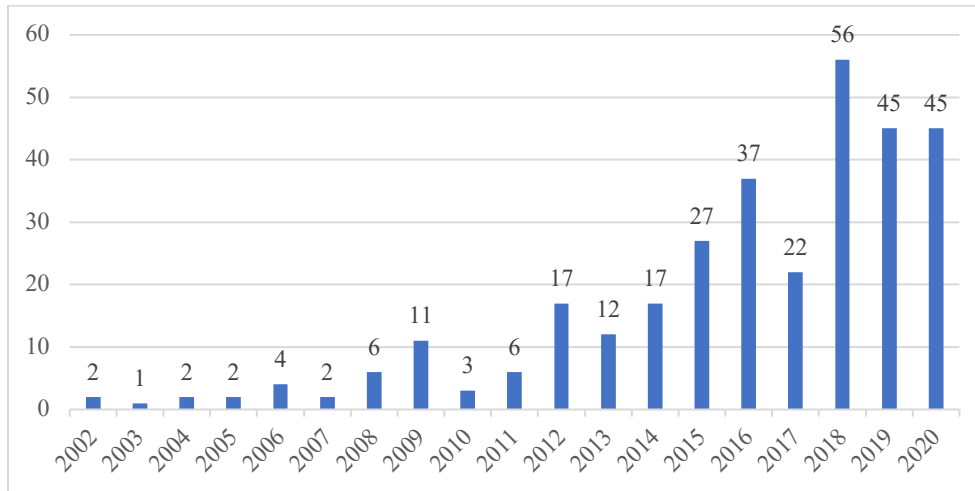


Figure 2. Number of publications per year

#### **Most influential journals**

According to Rey-martí, Ribeiro-soriano, & Palacios-marqués (2015), statistics of studies by journals is especially important when doing a documentary review, as well as to become familiar with each journal's focus on the topic of interest.

Table 2. Most influential journals

Rank	Journal	Numbers of publication
1	Public Management Review	32
2	Volutas	13
3	Public Money Management	9
4	International Review of Administrative Sciences	8
5	International Journal of Public Administration	7
6	International Journal of Public Sector Management	6
7	Health expectations	5
8	Public Administration	5
9	Policy and Society	4
10	Australian Journal of Public Administration	4

Statistics of reputable journals with publications on a topic will help researchers to focus on reputable journals without spending time searching. Table 2 shows the ranking of 10 most influential journals with many publications related to the topic of co-creation, ranked top-down. "Public Management Review" is published by Taylor & Francis with issue from 2001 to present, H index reaches 60, and also one of the journals ranked as Q1 according to SCImago. Another was the "Volutas" magazine, belongs to Springer New York Publishing House that attracts valuable and multidimensional publications of economists, lawyers, political scientists, psychologists, and socialists, and public policy analysts. In general, research on co-production is mainly studied in the field of public service management which resulted in many specialized journals for this field but neglected in other aspects. This provides a gap in research for future interests.

### ***Most influential countries***

Countries with lots of publications are the United Kingdom and the United States, especially the UK with an outstanding number of publications of 110. In addition, countries with the number of publications in the top 10 are mostly from developed countries in Europe, America, and Australia. Asian studies are not included in the rankings. This is understandable because most studies focus on public services, but these countries are developed countries, so they are very interested in improving the quality of public services. Therefore, there is a call for research diversification in other fields such as service industry or in new contexts for example in Asia.

Table 3. Most influential countries

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Numbers of publication</b>
1	United Kingdom	110
2	United States	38
3	Netherlands	38
4	Australia	31
5	Belgium	23
6	Switzerland	22
7	Italy	18
8	Finland	11
9	Brazil	11
10	Other countries	15
<b>Total</b>		<b>317</b>

### ***Statistical results by field of study***

Co-production is a research topic related to many different fields such as: business, management, society, psychology ... According to data from WoS, there are 157 publications of "Public administration", 82 publications of "Management", 47 publications of "Business". It shows co-production is also closely related to economy in general or the service management field (public and private services) in particular. However, up to now, most research focus only on public service management. Research towards a service product business is critically essential.

Table 4. Statistics of the number of publications by research field of co-production

Rank	Research field	Number of publications
1	Public administration	157
2	Management	82
3	Business	47
4	Community service	34
5	Social problems	33
6	Politics	28
7	Medical service policy	20
8	Economy	16
9	Health care science services.	14
10	Occupational health public environment.	13
11	Hotels, sports, entertainment, and tourism.	11

### ***Citation statistics results***

According to the statistical results from 317 articles on co-production from WoS data sources, the total number of cited times was 7,316 times, the average citation per item was 23.08 times and the H index is 38. Table 5 presents 10 most cited studies.

Table 5. Ten most cited research

Rank	Studies	Authors	The total number of cited times	The average citation per year
1	Psychological implications of customer participation in co-production	Bendapudi, N; Leone, RP (2003)	665	36.94
2	A descriptive model of the consumer co-production process	Etgar, Michael (2008)	449	34.54
3	A Systematic Review of Co-Creation and Co-Production: Embarking on the social innovation journey	Voorberg, W. H.; Bekkers, V. J. J. M.; Tummers, L. G. (2014)	415	69.17
4	Co-production and customer loyalty in financial services	Auh, Seigyoung; Bell, Simon J.; McLeod, Colin S.; Shih, Eric (2007)	406	29
5	Client co-production in knowledge-intensive business services	Bettencourt, LA; Ostrom, AL; Brown, SW; Roundtree, RI (2002)	368	19.37

Rank	Studies	Authors	The total number of cited times	The average citation per year
6	Researchers' roles in knowledge co-production: experience from sustainability research in Kenya, Switzerland, Bolivia and Nepal	Pohl, Christian; Rist, Stephan; Zimmermann, Anne; Fry, Patricia; Gurung, Ghana S.; Schneider, Flurina; Speranza, Chinwe Ifejika; Kiteme, Boniface; Boillat, Sebastian; Serrano, Elvira; Hadorn, Gertrude Hirsch; Wiesmann, Urs (2010)	242	22
7	Co-production, the third sector and the delivery of public services - An introduction	Brandsen, Taco; Pestoff, Victor (2006)	240	16
8	Co-production and the co-creation of value in public services a suitable case for treatment?	Osborne, Stephen P.; Radnor, Zoe; Strokosch, Kirsty (2016)	195	39
9	Co-production versus co-creation: A process-based continuum in the hotel service context	Chathoth, Prakash; Altinay, Levent; Harrington, Robert James; Okumus, Fevzi; Chan, Eric S. W. (2013)	194	24.25
10	Co-production of business assistance in business incubators - An exploratory study	Rice, MP (2002)	190	10

**Analyze the journal's SIR index.**

Ranking of the SCImago Magazine or the SIR is a measure of the scientific impact factor of academic journals, accounting for both the number of citations a journal receives and the importance or prestige of these cited journals. The SIR for a journal is a numerical value that indicates the average cited number in a year per paper that published within a period of three years. A higher SIR value represents the reputation of that journal (Guerrero-bote & Moyanegón, 2012).

Table 6 presents the ranking of the 10 most cited articles and the SIR index of Scopus indexed articles on co-production. In this table, all these 10 articles are ranked as Q1 - the best quality-among Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4 according to SCImago and the SIR ranged from 1.21 to 8.63, showing a significant impact on the international scientific community. For example, the "Journal of the



Academy of Marketing Science” has 2 most cited articles and the SIR ranking index of Q1 (5.31). Or the “Public Management Review” also has 2 most cited articles and the SIR index of Q1 (2.21).

### ***The most cited author statistics***

According to the statistical results (Table 7), the majority of most cited authors are in Europe, American organizations. Only three authors Etgar M. (Israel), Ranjan K.R. (India), and Auh S. (Korea) are from Asia. Besides, this study also applies the H index to measure the scientific production process of a researcher. H-index is based on a list of an author’s publications ranked in descending order by the Times Cited count. The value of H is equal to the number of papers in the list that has number of paper equal or more citations (Hirsch, 2005). The authors in the ranking have a high H index, which proves that the research situation of the authors is stable. For example: the author Ramírez R. has 3 papers on co-production with the total of 460 cited times for 3 articles. Another author Cova B also has an H index of 30, only 1 research paper on the topic of co-production, and the number of citations is 413 times for this article. Ranjan K.R. has an H index of 8 and 3 articles on the topic of co-production with 271 cited times. Although number of authors researching co-production is still limited, but the citation for these published articles is very high, showing the important and critical interests on co-production. However, it opens a call for further research articles as the research articles on co-production is still limited in quantity.

### ***4.2. Co-citation analysis***

This co-citation analysis identifies the most cited first authors. Thus, it provides information of the key influencers in the fields, which leads to map different research clusters/ themes.

To establish a co-citation network that includes the most influential publications in a studied field, McCain (1990) proposes to set up a cut point. In this direction, this study narrowed the initial data of 317 articles that each article has at least 20 citations for the purpose of inclusive examination. As the result, 61 articles on co-production being selected and formed four-topic groups (as illustrated in figure 3). A part from that, network mapping is performed through a co-citation analysis, including the five studies with the highest co-citation index as following:

1. Bovaird, T. (2007). Beyond Engagement and Participation: User and Community Coproduction of Public Services. *Public Administration Review*. 67(5): 846-860.
2. Ostrom, E. (1996) Crossing the great divide: Coproduction, synergy, and development. *World Development*. 24(6): 1073–1087.
3. Brudney, J.L. and England, R.E. (1983): Toward a definition of the coproduction concept. *Public Administration Review* 43(1): 59–65.
4. Parks, R.B., Baker, P.C., Kiser, L., Oakerson, R., Ostrom, E., Ostrom, V., Percy, S.L., Vandivort, M.B., Whitaker, G.P. and Wilson, R. (1981) Consumers as coproducers of public services: Some economic and institutional considerations. *Policy Studies Journal* 9(7): 1001–1011.
5. Verschuere, B., Brandsen, T., & Pestoff, V. (2012). Co-production: The State of the Art in Research and the Future Agenda. *Volutas*, 23(4): 1083.

Four-topic research groups extracted from the co-citation analysis are shown in Figure 3 and Table 8 with the following contents:

Table 8. Main study groups in citation analysis

Group	Typical studies
Theme 1. The customer behavior when participating in co-production	Auh, S. (2007) ; Bendapudi, N. (2003) ; Etgar, M. (2008) ; Vergo, S. L. (2004)
Theme 2. The motivation to participate in co-production	Jakobsen, M. (2013); Joshi, A. (2004); Ostrom, E. (1996); Pestoff, V. (2009); Eijk. V. C. (2014); Verschuere, B. (2012); Pestoff, V. (2012)
Theme 3. Relationship between stakeholders in co-production	Alford, J. (2014); Bovaird, T. (2012); Osborne, S.P. (2016); Bovaird, T. (2015); Osborne, S. P. (2013); Nabatchi, T. (2017); Parrando, S. (2013); Vooberg, W. H. (2015)
Theme 4. Management, and public services	Alford, J. (2002); Alford, J. (2009); Bovaird, T. (2007); Brandsen, T. (2006); Brundney, J. L. (1983); Needham, C. (2008); Osborne, S. P. (2013); Parks, R. B. (1981); Pestoff, V. (2012); Pestoff, V. (2006); Whitake, G. P. (1980)

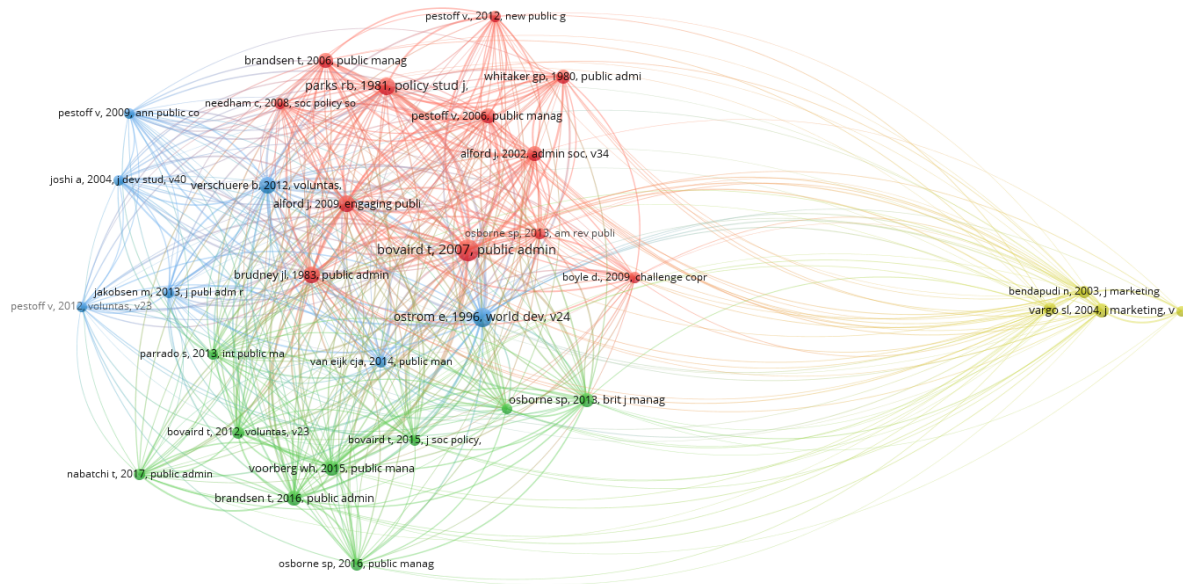


Figure 3. Co-citation network

The first research theme addressed issues of *customer behavior* when engaging in co-production. Bendapudi & Leone (2003) examined the effect of co-production on customer satisfaction and customer satisfaction for a company depending on whether the customer engaged on co-production. Etgar (2008) presented a model of consumer participation in co-production. Managers can use this to segment consumers toward co-production and suggest grounds for developing respective proposals for consumer benefits-focused co-production possibilities. Auh, Bell, Mcleod, & Shih (2007) examined the link between co-production and customer loyalty and identify the factors to increase co-production in the financial health services context.

The second research theme includes the research on *motivation* involved in co-production. Highlighted in this group was the research of Eijk & Steen (2014) that focus on understanding people's motivations for co-production, specifically considering citizens' motivation to participate in co-planning activities for health care services. Jakobsen (2012) argued that government initiatives can increase the ability of citizens to co-production for services. According to Ostrom (1996), co-production is a process through which input from individuals who are not part of the same organization converting into goods and services. Co-production provides a model for the association between public service agents and citizens who can contribute to public service delivery (Pestoff, 2009).

A third research theme focuses on research on the *relationship between stakeholders* in co-production. Brandsen & Honingh (2015) argued that systematic identification of different types of product co-creation is an important step to compare and accumulate this phenomenon easier. Nabatchi, Sancino, & Sicilia (2017) highlighted consideration of stakeholder involved in product co-creation, its occurrence process in the service cycle and its outcome. Other factors involving co-product correlations demonstrated in existing papers include demographic factors (age, sex, education, and employment status), community characteristics (urban, non-urban), and perceptions of efficiency (how well government works), government accessibility (providing information and seeking advice), and self-efficacy (the degree of difference citizens believe they can create) (Parrado, Ryzin, & Bovaird, 2013).

The fourth research theme consists of research topics focusing on *public administration and services*. This is also the research group with the most research concentration (11 typical studies). Brudney & England (1983) studies conceptual and policy-making perspectives when people are involved in creating products for public services. Osborne, Radnor, & Nasi (2013) develop the theory of public management in the era of "New Public Governance". Parks et al., (1981) explores the concept of product co-creation to clarify its definition and supplement the knowledge of co-production in local service delivery and processes in which co-production occurs. Or Whitaker, (1980) asserts that citizens can exercise significant policy influence through participation in the implementation of public programs. Pestoff (2012) explores some important conceptual issues relating to the co-production of public services and the role of the third sector.

#### 4.3. Key word analysis

Data from WoS consisting of 317 articles has 1,302 keywords in total. To narrow the number of keywords compared to the original data, this study applied filtering method only selecting keywords that appeared at least five times or more. As a result, 89 keywords were retained for this keyword analysis (Figure 4).

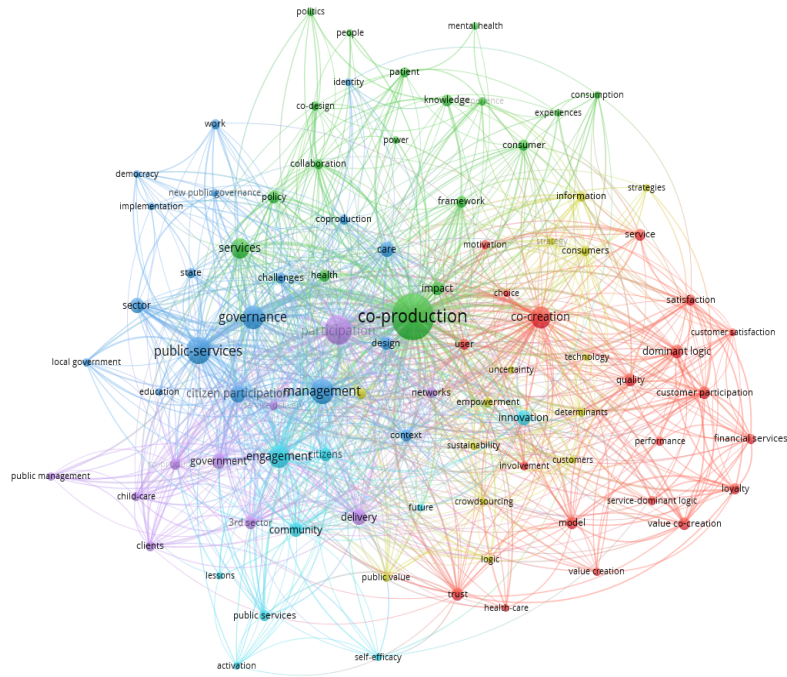


Figure 4. Keyword network from WoS data from 1998 to 2020

The results of keywords analysis revealed the most prominent keywords which are broken down into timelines based on the explosive growth of publications by year. Thus, two main timelines *1998 to 2015* and from *2016 to 2020* was identified for further analysis.

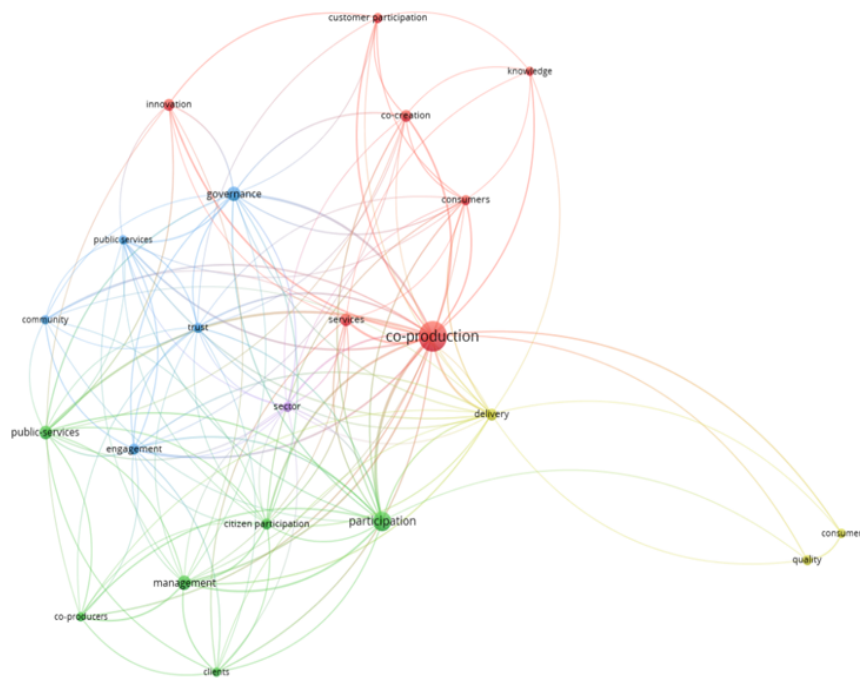


Figure 5. Keyword network from WoS data from 1998 to 2015

Table 6. Statistics of 10 studies with the most citations and journal ranking index (SIR)

Rank	Studies	Authors	Journal	Total numbers of cited times	SIR 2019
1	Psychological implications of customer participation in co-production	Bendapudi N., Leone R.P. (2003)	Journal of Marketing	778	Q1 (8,63)
2	A descriptive model of the consumer co-production process	Etgar M. (2008)	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	496	Q1 (5,31)
3	A Systematic Review of Co-Creation and Co-Production: Embarking on the social innovation journey	Voorberg W.H., Bekkers V.J.J.M., Tummers L.G. (2014)	Public Management Review	467	Q1 (2,21)
4	Value co-production: Intellectual origins and implications for practice and research	Ramírez R. (1999)	Strategic Management Journal	459	Q1 (8,43)
5	Putting consumers to work: 'Co-creation' and new marketing governmentality	Zwick D., Bonsu S.K., Darmody A. (2008)	Journal of Consumer Culture	437	Q1 (1,21)
6	Co-production and customer loyalty in financial services	Auh S., Bell S.J., McLeod C.S., Shih E. (2007)	Journal of Retailing	437	Q1 (3,15)
7	Crowd-funding: Transforming customers into investors through innovative service platforms	Ordanini A., Miceli L., Pizzetti M., Parasuraman A. (2011)	Journal of Service Management	436	Q1 (1,71)
8	Client co-production in knowledge-intensive business services	Bettencourt L.A., Ostrom A.L., Brown S.W., Roundtree R.I. (2002)	California Management Review	413	Q1 (2,77)
9	Working consumers: The next step in marketing theory?	Cova B., Dallı D. (2009)	Marketing Theory	334	Q1 (1,66)
10	Co-production, the third sector and the delivery of public services. An introduction	Brandsen T., Pestoff V. (2006)	Public Management Review	267	Q1 (2,21)

Table 7. Statistics of the 10 most cited authors on co-production topic

Rank	Authors	Organizations	H index	Numbers of articles	Total numbers of cited times
1	Bendapudi N.	Ohio State University, Fisher College of Business, United States	9	1	778
2	Ordanini A.	Department of Marketing, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy	22	2	563
3	Etgar M.	College of Management Academic Studies Israel	7	1	496

Rank	Authors	Organizations	H index	Numbers of articles	Total numbers of cited times
4	Voorberg W.H.	Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences, Netherlands	5	1	467
5	Ramírez R.	CSIC - Instituto de Ciencia de Materiales de Madrid (ICMM), Spain	30	3	460
6	Auh S.	Yonsei School of Business, Yonsei University, Korean	28	1	437
7	Zwick D.	York University, Canada	15	1	437
8	Cova B.	Euromed Management Marseille, Università Bocconi Milan, France	30	1	413
9	Melin G.	STINT, Skeppargatan 8, Stockholm, Sweden	11	1	334
10	Ranjan K.R.	IIM Tiruchirapalli, NIT Campus Post, India	8	3	271

During the period from 1998 to 2015, there were 112 articles on the topic of co-creating products with 525 keywords. In the period from 2016 to 2020, there are 205 articles with 946 keywords. The research conducted filtering on keywords by only selecting keywords that appeared five or more times.

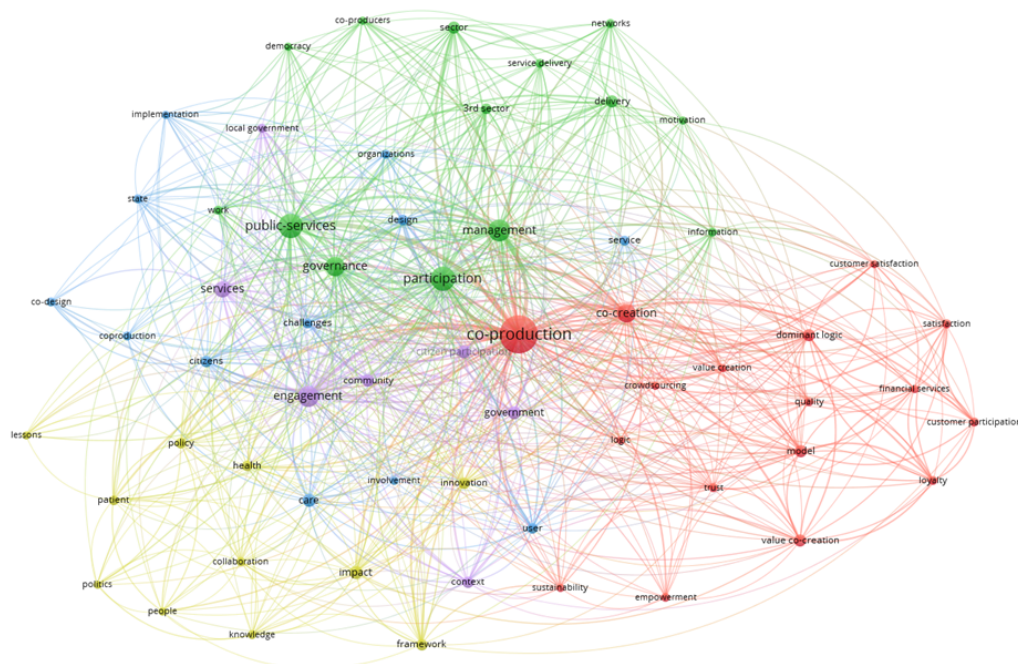


Figure 6. Keyword network from WoS data from 2016 to 2020

The results, respectively, of the remaining two periods of 22 and 61 keywords are used for official keyword analysis. The two-stage keyword network is generated by using the software VOSviewer

(Eck & Waltman, 2018). Figures 5 and 6 show two keyword networks in two periods. The frequency of the keywords is denoted by the size of the bubble and the intensity of its occurrence between two keywords is indicated by the thickness of the link between the two keywords. After that, the authors categorized this keyword into four-topic groups from the results of the co-citation analysis. The frequency of the keywords in the two periods is compared with each other and the appearance of new keywords is the basis for the author to argue for the current research trends and potential research directions in the future.

Table 9. Comparison table of keywords in the two periods 1998 - 2015 and 2016 – 2020

Topic groups	Keywords (frequency)	
	1998-2015	2016-2020
Theme 1. The customer behavior when participating in co-production	Co-creation (8), co-production (51), consumers (6), customer participation (6), innovation (5), knowledge (5)	Co-creation (28), co-production (111), crowdsourcing (5), customer participation (7), customer satisfaction (5), dominant logic (11), empowerment (6), financial service (5), logic (5), loyalty (7), model (11), quality (7), satisfaction (6), sustainability (5), trust (6), value co-creation (11), value creation (5)
Theme 2. The motivation to participate in co-production	Citizen participation (7), clients (5), co-producers (5), management (12), participation (21), services (9)	Citizen participation (14), community (11), context (10), engagement (33), government (14), local government (6), services (21), Collaboration (7), framework (10), health (9), impact (14), innovation (10), knowledge (6), lessons (5), patient (8), people (5), policy (9), politics (5)
Theme 3. Relationship between stakeholders in co-production	Consumer (5), delivery (8), quality (6)	Care (14), challenges (8), citizens (10), co-design (6), coproduction (6), design (9), implementation (5), involvement (5), organizations (7), service (8), state (7), user (9),
Theme 4. Management, and public services	Community (5), engagement (7), governance (12), public service (5), trust (6), Sector (6)	3rd sector (9), co-producers (5), delivery (12), democracy (5), governance (29), information (6), management (37), motivation (5), networks (6), participation (45), public services (45), sector (11), service delivery (6), work (7)

In the first research theme, many concepts are explained to clarify co-production. In the period of 2016 to 2020, many new keywords appeared such as: financial service (5), logic (5), loyalty (7), model (11), quality (7), satisfaction (6), Sustainability (5), trust (6), value co-creation (11), value creation (5) to illustrate research trends in this stage. Typical studies focused on topics such as customer satisfaction, loyalty when engaging in co-production, or research on co-value.

The second research theme shows on the motivation influencing participation in co-production. In the period 2016 to 2020, many new keywords emerged such as: Collaboration (7), framework (10), health (9), impact (14), innovation (10), knowledge (6), lessons (5), patient (8), people (5), policy (9), politics (5), focused on researching people's motivation to participate in co-production in public services such as health care, education.

The third research theme concerns the relationship between the parties in the co-production. There are many new keywords in the period from 2016 to 2020 such as: challenges (8), citizens (10), co-design (6), coproduction (6), design (9), implementation (5), involvement (5), and deals (7). The studies focus on analyzing groups involved in co-production, characteristics, and positive values that co-create production.

In the fourth research theme, management and public administration received the most research attention. In the period 2016 to 2020, new keywords appeared such as: 3rd sector (9), co-producers (5), delivery (12), democracy (5), governance (29), information (6), and management (37), and motivation (5), networks. Studies in this period focused heavily on improving the quality of public service delivery, public service delivery, and the participation of citizens in third sectors or analyzing the stages and processes of the participation to co-production.

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1. Discussion and implications

This paper is an attempt to study the field of co-production and propose a systematic map on this research field by applying a rigorous bibliometric analysis of 956 papers from two main database: WoS source with 317 articles, and the Scopus source with 639 articles. Up to date, there is only few review papers on co-production applied this bibliometric method as Kobylńska (2018); Fusco et al. (2020), mainly in public service in specific research context. Hence, this paper contributes to propose a broader view towards co-production literature.

Firstly, the review result showed the increasing number of publications over the years and the research trend in publication (e.g., by topics, by methodology, by countries, by authors) by applying citation analysis. This result also showed the dominance of publication on this studied topic belongs to "Public Management Review" (Taylor & Francis Publishing) or "Volutas" (Springer New York). Countries with high quantity of publications are the UK and the US, especially the UK with an outstanding number of publications of 84. Countries with the number of publications in the top 10 are mostly from developed countries from Europe and Australia, America so Asian studies are not included in the rankings.

Secondly, the emerging research themes in this field of co-production has been categorized by applying co-citation. Based on the result, four research groups with topics were formed as follows: (1) The first research group addressed issues of *customer behavior* when participating in co-production; (2) The second research group includes *motivation* to take part in co-production; (3) The third research group focuses on the *relationship among stakeholders* in co-production; (4) The fourth research group consists of studies with topics focusing on *public administration and services* which also received the most research concentration on the co-production topic (11 typical studies).

Thirdly, co-occurrence of author keywords analysis was applied to discover the research trends in co-production. All keywords are broken down into timelines based on the explosive growth of



research on the topic. Based on the statistical results by year of publication, the study identified two periods, which are from 1998 to 2015 and from 2016 to 2020. Keywords are classified into respective topics from co-citation analysis results. Comparing the repetition and new occurrence of the keyword over these two periods is the basis for the authors to explore current research trends and suggest potential research directions in the future.

With these analysis results, this paper contributed some significant academic and managerial implications: (1) providing some important insights in co-production such as list of impactful studies, journals, authors that shaped this research field; (2) propose four research groups as key research themes emerging of the extant literature with key findings; (3) propose a broader understanding of the co-production concept that helps managers develop effective strategy to ensure co-production outcome as managerial implications.

### *5.2. Limitations and future research opportunities*

The bibliometric method is still considered scarce, so the study cannot avoid the following limitations: Co-citation analysis is based entirely on citation, so the classification of study groups may be misleading. In addition, the naming of groups is also a subjective assessment of the author. The keywords used may not fully describe the article's content because an article typically only has four to six keywords, so some keywords may not be covered. Therefore, future research should combine co-citation analysis with qualitative methods to give more comprehensive and accurate results for the study groups.

The majority of bibliometric studies analyzed only single database to avoid duplication. In our study, two main databases of WoS and Scopus are analyzed in different classifications which can only eliminate duplication. However, this decision is critical in order to capture a diverse range of influential papers, not excluding valuable papers that might be very useful to the field of co-production.

Given that the focus of academia and industry have shifted from co-production to co-creation at present times, the number of studies on this field still continues to grow each year and is applied to a diverse set of disciplines. Thus, future research may carry out bibliometric review papers at a shorter interval, such as every five years, to capture the research trend of this field.

Our study contributes to the co-production literature by identifying four major research themes as well as research gaps within each theme. The majority of previous research has focused solely on public service, leaving a significant gap in the application of co-production in other sectors. Future studies may extend the scope of co-production research to include additional service industries such as tourism, education, and business management.

In term of future research possibilities, this thorough evaluation applying bibliometric approaches revealed some key research directions for future actions:

In the first research group, many concepts are explained to clarify co-production. Typical studies focused on topics such as customer satisfaction, loyalty when engaging in co-production, or research on co-value. However, there are not many studies discussing product co-production behavior. Thus, future studies may focus more on discussion on customer product co-creation behavior in the service business.

The second research theme shows on the motivation influencing participation in co-production. Most studies focused on researching people's motivation to participate in co-production in public services such as health care, education. There is a lack of research on customer motivations when

engaging in co-production in the service product business. Future studies may study further the motivation to co-production in other service business areas such as tourism, insurance, education.

The third research theme concerns the relationship between the parties in the co-production. These studies investigate the stakeholders involved in co-production, their traits, and the shared positive values. The studies, on the other hand, were solely concerned with public management, with little consideration given to their application in other fields.

In the fourth research group, management and public administration received the most research attention. Studies in this period highlighted the quality improvement of public service delivery, public service delivery, and the citizen engagement in third-sector activities, as well as examining the stages and processes of the citizen participation in co-production. Further studies should focus on comparing co-production results between voluntary and involuntary people, or the negative effects of co-production in public management.

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# The religious tourism as a competitive advantage of the prefecture of Pieria

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## Abstract

*The scope of the present paper is the research of whether the prefecture of Pieria comprises an attractive destination for religious tourism and pilgrimage. For this reason, the use of questionnaires takes place which aims to realizing if and to what extend this form of tourism comprises a comparative and competitive advantage for the prefecture of Pieria. The research method of this paper is the qualitative research and more specifically the use of questionnaires with 13 questions in total. The scope was to research whether the prefecture of Pieria is a religious- pilgrimage destination. The sample is comprised of 102 participants, being Greek residents originating from other Greek counties, the European Union and Third Countries. The requirement was for the participant to have visited the prefecture of Pieria. The independency test ( $\chi^2$ ) was used for checking the interconnections between the different factors, while at the same time an allocation of frequencies was conducted based on the study and presentation of frequency as much as relevant frequency. Due to the fact that, no other similar older researches have been conducted regarding religious tourism in Pieria, this research will be able to give some useful conclusions. These conclusions will lead us to more specialized knowledge on the tourism of the prefecture.*

**Keywords:** Religious – pilgrimage tourism, Competitive advantage, Pieria

## 1.Introduction

Tourism is defined as a complex phenomenon in which one is observed temporary movement of people from one place to another for the purpose of meeting their tourist or entertainment needs. The one dimension is related to the temporary movement of tourists and is called tourist demand, while the second has to do with the reception and service of tourists and is called a tourist offer. (Koltsidopoulos, 2000) According to World Tourism Organization tourism includes the activities of people traveling and staying in one place other than their place of residence and their stay lasts more than twenty-four hours. In recent years there has been a shift of tourism from mass to of special interest, i.e., new forms of tourism. Such a category is also religious

tourism. Regional development presents positive elements thanks to its contribution religious tourism, as according to Polyzo (2010) there are several. Those areas in Greece that typically show less developed areas. Although these areas belong to the regions, do not present the characteristics of urban centers, resulting in many sometimes considered as underdeveloped.

The religious phenomenon made its presence with the appearance of man on earth. All peoples have shown some form of religion, after all man is a religious being and needs to believe in supreme powers. According to Moira (2003), religion plays an important role in the spiritual and social life of everyone, because in this way it manages to influence and shape human culture. In recent years, religious tourism has been an important goal of Greek tourism policy. Tourists traveling both exclusively for religious reasons or in part, dedicate some time to additional tourist attractions and thus contribute to the economy of the places.

The prefecture of Pieria, which we are going to study, belongs to Central Macedonia and has an area of 1,516 km. According to the 2011 census, its population amounts to 126,698. Its economy is based mainly on the primary sector and tourism. It's an area rich in attractions of great historical and archaeological interest to the visitor.

In recent years, an effort has been made by the prefecture to combine its comparative advantages and to support several forms of alternative tourism. Pieria is also mainly known for its natural coastline. Remarkable, however, are its archaeological sites and traditional settlements such as Paleo Panteleimon, Palea Skotina, Paleo Poroi and Paleo Elatochori. Thus, an attempt was made to record five points, with which it differs and constitutes comparative advantages of the prefecture. 1) Sun and Sea: The prefecture of Pieria has natural coastlines of 70 km with a variety of services, infrastructure and destinations offered. 2) Culture and Religion: One of the most important archeological sites of Dion is located in the prefecture. The castle of Platamonas and the ancient Pydna are some remarkable monuments. 3) Authenticity: In the mountainous areas there are traditional settlements. 4) Natural environment: Pieria combines mountain and sea. There are coastal wetlands (The Delta of the river Aliakmonas, the Aliki Kitrous, wetland of N. Poroi) and mountainous nature (Olympus, Pieria Mountains) 5) Sports and adventure: The prefecture gives the opportunity to those who wish to be active in water sports, touring and mountaineering tourism.

One point where Pieria stands out is the religious element and, in this way, contributes to the development of an alternative form of tourism, this religious tourism. Pieria combines natural beauty with remarkable temples and monasteries, but also offers secular opportunities. The peculiarity of the prefecture lies in the fact of the short kilometer distance from prefectures with great religious interest such as Veria, Thessaloniki and Meteora. The short distance of the prefecture from Mount Athos can benefit someone who can visit it in a short time.

In particular, on the borders of the Holy Diocese of Kitros, Katerini and Platamonas, there are 103 parish or cemetery churches, and 51 chapels. The metropolis also includes 9 monasteries which are: 1) The historic Monastery of Agios Dionysius on Olympus gathers many people throughout the year. It has a remarkable treasury, where there is a plethora of relics. You can find out the Old Monastery, situated at a height of 900 m some 18 km from Litochoro. It is built in a natural hollow between two small streams which run into the Enipeas. The new Monastery which is located 3 km from Litochoro, it was built by young monks who founded a new brotherhood in 1987 2) The Holy Monastery of Saint Ephraim of Syros in Kontariotissa, which was founded in 1983 and is a nunnery. 3) The Holy Monastery of Panagia Makryrrachis was founded in the 10th

or 12th century as a male, Stavropegian Monastery and from 1993 it was transformed into a nunnery. 4) The Holy Monastery of Agios Athanasios Kolindros, dates from 1860, however the information about the church comes only from oral tradition. 5) The Holy Monastery of Saints Theopatores Joachim and Annie also belongs to Kolindros and 6) the part of the Holy Monastery of Profitos Elias in Livadi Kolindros. 7) The Holy Monastery of Holy Trinity Vrontous which is a building of the 14th century on a rock at a height of 420 m, 8) the Holy Monastery of Agios Georgios Ritinis, which is a building of the 14th century it is a post Byzantine monument with outstanding wall paintings. According to witnesses and folk history, it was the hiding place of the soldiers during the Macedonian Struggle 9) The Holy Monastery of Presentation of the Virgin, of Petra Olympus, dates from the 11th Century, where it was a base for the liberation struggle of 1821. The Monastery of the Presentation of the Virgin Mary is to be found within the grounds of the sanatorium at Petra.

Other worth visiting monuments is the church of Agios Nikolaos in Palea Vrontou. Dates from 1700 and constructed of wood. It was restored as a stone structure in 1879. It is a three aisled church, built in the Byzantine style with a tiled floor. It includes a wooden screen, hand carved. The icons date from 1931. The church of Agia Paraskevi, Ano Milia is a 17<sup>th</sup> century church in the style of a Basilica. The church of the Slumber of the Virgin Mary, located in Kontariotissa dates from 11<sup>th</sup> century. The Church has a dome and two chapels on the West aisle. Also, the church of Agios Athanasios, Ano Skotina dates at the same century.

In recent years, efforts have been made to promote religious tourism in the prefecture. Specifically, in collaboration with the Municipality together with the Holy Diocese, an office of Pilgrimage Tours was created, in order to enhance the differentiation of the tourist name of the prefecture and to create an opportunity for the opening of the incoming pilgrimage tourism. For the better promotion of the religious monuments, information leaflets were written and the creation of a bilingual documentary about the Pilgrimages of Pieria is completed.

## **2. Literature Review**

The reasons for the existence of religious tourism are a) the faith, b) the religious holidays c) the importance of the monuments. (Moiras, 2008). Religious tourism or spiritual tourism as mentioned by Haq, F., & Wong, H. Y (2010), is divided into two subcategories. First is the pilgrimage, that is, the journey for religious and spiritual purposes. Pilgrimage is a journey with spiritual or religious motives, observed since antiquity and in many of the world's religions (V. Turner, E. Turner, 2011). The second category mainly concerns the visit of religious monuments and sights (G. Rinschede, 1992). Religious monuments can attract a variety of interests, such as religion, art, architecture, history or even personal background. People can find sacred places interesting and moving, whether they are religious or not. Some monuments, such as the churches of Italy, offer excellent architecture and great works of art. Some places are important for the world's religions, Jerusalem for example is central to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Others may still be picturesque and important to a religion, such as the Camino de Santiago in Spain, others have been adopted by non-religious people as a personal challenge and even as a journey of self-discovery (V. Makrides, 2009).

It follows from the above that religious tourism is not seasonal tourism and is addressed to a wide range of ages, social and economic level. Religion and tourism are interrelated (Stausberg,

2012), as this is the cause of travel and the source of traditional culture and faith that attracts different visitors (Henderson, 2011). The term religious tourism is not considered acceptable in the religion of Islam. In this religion, every believer has the obligation to perform a pilgrimage once in his life without including entertainment (Moira, 2008).

As a type of tourism, religious tourism aims to profit and increase job opportunities. However, the most important thing is the contribution it offers to the development of the economy. A large portion of tourism researchers consider better research or objectivity for tourism-related percentages necessary. (Vukonic, 2002) Many times the official statistics on religious tourist destinations are based on numbers taken as key economic indicators (Vukonic, 2002). The World Organization for Religious Tourism (Worta, 2011) observes that religious tourism generates 15 billion annual turnovers worldwide and affects 300 million travelers worldwide each year. Travel agencies offer tourism products at a rate of 35%. In addition, the World Tourism Organization estimates that some 16.3 million tourists travel each year for religious reasons. It is worth noting that the number of religious tourists has increased by about 5% since 2007, a time of economic crisis. In Greece, there are almost 280 points of religious interest as recorded by the World Tourism Organization. 85% of the religious tourists in the country are Greeks and 300,000 are foreign tourists (mainly Serbs, Romanians, Russians and Cypriots).

Religious tourism can be considered as not a form of tourism with an exclusive purpose. When combined with other types of alternative tourism, it contributes to the local development of the areas (Polyzos, 2017). The religious tourist after completing his religious needs, reacts like a normal tourist who needs accommodation, meals and to satisfy all the needs that a tourist would have (Vukonic, 1996). So, although the purpose of his trip is specific, in this way he also contributes to the local economy, without being limited to the place he visited.

Religious tourism, like all forms of tourism, increases during the summer months, but does not show seasonality. Religious tourism can also be developed in less peak periods. (Polyzos, 2017) and thus is differentiated from mass tourism. Thus, the various functions that take place during the year due to holidays contribute to the extension of religious tourism throughout the year and therefore to the extension of the tourist season.

Despite the obvious and self-evident benefits from the development of religious tourism, such as the economic development of tourist destinations, some frictions due to it are becoming more and more apparent. It is observed that there is often a risk of altering the character of religious events and disturbing the sacred atmosphere of the places from their secularization (Nolan, 1992; Pfaffenberger, 1983; DeSousa, 1988 and 1993; Kirton, 1990; Fish and Fish, 1993, 1998; Gupta, 1999; Shackley, 1998), while basic principles of religious behavior are often violated by ignorance and unconsciousness. (Vukonic, 2002).

### **3. Research Methodology**

The scope of the research was to record the views of visitors to the prefecture of Pieria, regarding the comparative advantages of the area for tourism and the evaluation of pilgrimage tourism opportunities to visitors. A total of 102 people participated in this research, with most of them belonging to the female sex (54 people - 52.9%). In terms of age, the majority (44.1%) are 36-50 years old.



For the needs of the research, a questionnaire with a total of 13 closed-ended questions was used. Also, interviews were conducted for the investigation. The scope was to provide the possibility to interviewees to express their opinion. More specifically, the main forms of tourism are mentioned, followed by specialization in the existing forms of religious tourism in the area of the prefecture of Pieria. The possible development of this, its relation to the environment and is combined with the role of regional and tourist development of the region, as well as the benefits and prospects of this type of tourism are detailed.

Participants' responses were assessed using discrete variables. In addition, frequency distribution tables were used for the demographic characteristics (independent variables) of the sample and their description and analysis. The conclusions are based on the level of significance of 5% (Halikias et al., 2015). The results of the correlations were obtained using the independence test  $\chi^2$ .

#### 4. Findings and Analysis

At the religious-pilgrimage level, the prefecture of Pieria offers several activities of particular economic, social, educational, cultural and even tourist importance. As the most popular monument of Greek Orthodoxy (table 1), a remarkable pole of attraction for visitors to the area, the participants declared the Holy Monastery of Agios Dionysios of En Olympus (percentage 56.9%). They are followed by the Holy Church of Agios Panteleimon P. Panteleimon of Pieria (percentage 20.6%), the Holy Monastery of the Entrances of the Virgin Petra Olympus (percentage 11.8%) etc. As it can be seen, the most notorious religious destination is the Holy Monastery of Saint Dionysius en Olimpo, which was to be expected due to the fact that the local community recognizes the importance of the monastery as well as of the saint.

Table 1: Distribution of frequencies based on the most famous religious monument in Pieria

	Frequency	Percentage
Holy Monastery of Saint Dionysios	58	56,9%
Saint Panteleimon	21	20,6%
Holy Monastery of Presentation of the Virgin, Petra	12	11,8%
Saint Georgios, Korinos	4	3,9%
Other	3	2,9%
Monastery of Prophet Ilias, Livadi	2	2,0%
Holy Monastery of Saint Athanasios, Kolindros	1	1,0%
Holy Monastery of Theopatores – God Grandparents, Saint Joachim and Anna	1	1,0%

As can be seen from Table 2, religious tourism in the area is characterized by insufficient visibility of the monuments, which may have additional effects on the overall tourism development of the prefecture. Regarding the way of information about the Religious and Pilgrimage monuments of Pieria, most stated that they are informed by the social media (48%), 32 people from friends who live or visited the area (31.4%) and 13 participants from internet search engines (12.7%).

Table 2: Distribution of frequencies based on the way of information about the Religious and Pilgrimage monuments of Pieria

	Frequency	Percentage
Social media	49	48,0%
People who live or has visit the prefecture of Pieria	32	31,4%
Search engine (Google, Yahoo)	13	12,7%
Travel agencies	4	3,9%
Other	3	2,9%
Participation on tourist exhibition	1	1,0%

One of the limitations in the prefecture of Pieria is the lack of infrastructure on issues involved in tourism development as there is no organized information plan for visitors to the area. The following table (3) shows the sample data for the first search agency for information on with religious tourism. Of these, it appears that 47 people would seek information from the tourist kiosk in the city center, however the city does not have a corresponding infrastructure, 41 people from an ecclesiastical body and 13 participants would go to local agencies (municipality, region).

Table 3: Frequency distribution based on the first search agency for information on religious tourism

	Frequency	Percentage
Touristic Kiosk	47	46,1%
Archdiocese – Metropoly	24	23,5%
Church	17	16,7%
Municipality	8	7,8%
District	5	4,9%

Therefore, in order to determine an integrated tourism policy, it is necessary to investigate an effective and integrated form of tourism, which concerns the particular characteristics of the study area, which are complementary and mutually supportive. The offer of complementary forms of tourism is shown in table 4 giving us a first picture of the prospects for the development of tourism in the prefecture of Pieria in general. From the answers of the survey participants, it seems that the majority prefers general tourism (33.3%). In order of preference, archaeological (22.5%), sports (12.7%) and family tourism (11.8%) follow, while marine-fishing, cultural and other forms follow with less rate.

Table 4: Distribution of frequencies based on the offer of additional forms of tourism in the prefecture of Pieria

	Frequency	Percentage
Tourism	34	33,3%
Archaeological tourism	23	22,5%
Athletically tourism	13	12,7%
Family tourism	12	11,8%
Maritime tourism	8	7,8%
Cultural tourism	6	5,9%
Conference tourism	2	2,0%
Ecotourism	2	2,0%
Geotourism	1	1,0%
Educational tourism	1	1,0%

Statistically significant differences in relation to gender were found only in terms of the way of information ( $\chi^2 (101, N = 102) = 8.89 p = , 012$ ) with most women turning to friendly persons (26 people - percentage 48.1 %) in contrast to most men who choose online information (35 people - 74.5%).

Based on the questionnaires answered, the fact that religious tourism indeed takes place in the prefecture of Pieria is safely concluded. As it can be seen, 8 Monasteries in the area are known and have been visited from the questionnaires. Although, the insufficient exposure of the religious element of the area is deemed negative for the area as a whole. Based on the literature, the promotion of an area and one of its unique elements for competitively differentiating it from other areas, is deemed necessary. Moreover, while the necessity of the existence of a touristic Kiosk is proven, so that the tourist can receive information from, the prefecture of Pieria does not operate one. Thus, based on the answers 48% replied that they get informed by social media. Finally, setting as a foundation the fact that a comparative advantage of a prefecture could be the variety of entertainment forms besides the pilgrimage, it is concluded that the prefecture of Pieria is notorious for the number of choices it offers regarding entertainment, which can be attributed to the prefecture's locale.

From the interviews it came out that the collaboration between the Municipalities with the Holy Diocese of Pieria is trying to establish and promote the religious-pilgrimage tourism in the prefecture. However, one thing that they didn't emphasize is the fact that not all the visitors are Orthodox worshipers. Many of the tourists want to learn about the history and architecture of the religious monuments in general.

Due to the fact that, no other similar older researches have been conducted regarding religious tourism in Pieria, this research will be able to give some useful conclusions. These conclusions will lead us to more specialized knowledge on the tourism of the prefecture. More specifically, the prefecture of Pieria offers a lot of activities of significant economic, social, educational, cultural, even touristic importance. Although, the religious tourism in the area consists of insufficient promotion of the monuments which comes as a result of the lack of infrastructure.

## 5. Conclusions

Tourism is an important means by which regional development of a place can be helped. For the best use, however, it is judged necessary a design that will emphasize its limitations tourism activity and the possible effects that will be caused in environment but also in society. Tourism can contribute to development of a place's economy however it can also cause significant problems for the place. For this reason, alternatives are now preferred forms of tourism and one of them is religious tourism. Regional development expresses the degree of development that an area with specific features. The ways and means by which the area will be brought to a better standard of living.

This is how the prefecture of Pieria was studied. The prefecture chose as a feature of the area to utilize its religious monuments in order to stand out from the others areas with a comparative advantage of religious tourism. A form tourism which although it has existed for a long time made its appearance recently. Thus, the institutions of Pieria collaborated to highlight the monasteries, the Byzantine churches.

To promote the development of religious tourism in the prefecture a strategic planning, with the consent of local actors, this will respect religious elements.

As it came out the county of Pieria is an area which combines different types of tourism. A place mostly known for the opportunities which offers to visitors who can combine activities both on sea and mountain, offers a lot of activities of significant economic, social, educational, cultural, even touristic importance. The primary objective of this paper was to find out if and to what extend religious tourism is the competitive advantage of the prefecture of Pieria. The results show that religious-pilgrimage tourism is important for the prefecture, but this does not consist the comparative advantage. Tourists prefer to combine religious- pilgrimage tourism with other types of tourism and not to travel with scope only worship. Besides the prefecture of Pieria is notorious for the number of choices it offers regarding entertainment. It is deemed necessary for the local and religious institutions to strategically plan the promotion of religious tourism having as a drive force the promotion of the prefecture under the contemporary conditions of Covid-19. Potential research that could be conducted in the future would have to be addressed to solely religious tourists and thus, specific conclusions about religious and especially pilgrimage tourism and its development could be drawn, so religious tourism can finally become the competitive advantage of the prefecture.

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# Drought Tourism: Adopting Tourism for Water Scarcity

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## Abstract

*This paper aims to enlighten the relationship of tourism and drought by a preserving a review approach from the current literature. By doing so, the paper aims to aid both literature and practitioners to sustain tourism activities in a mutual relationship with environmental aspects. This study is designed as a review as an interpretive approach with authors freely research among current related literature to develop their own perspective. Study show that tourism activities and the climate disaster of drought are highly effective on each other. Therefore, many studies prove the impact of one to each other. Papers about the issue mainly concentrate on impacts of climate changes on tourism and also concentrate about the consequences. There is a need to focus more on solutions and a compact perspective to better handle the problem.*

**Keywords:** Climate change, drought, tourism, water supply

## 1. Introduction

Buckminster Fuller stated the idea that the earth is a ship travelling in universe and humanity is the passenger of it. It is important to understand that the impact of our living is not limited to just our close surrounding and homes but rather highly related to entire earth. Embracing that idea is the vital part of protecting the ecological system as a whole (Tont, 2001, pp. 182-183). It is highly essential to considering protection of natural environment while trying to develop tourism industry (Mercan, 2010, p. 3).

The phenomenon of sustainability adopted through tourism activities and planning by the Brundtland Report (Collados & Duane, 1999) which was prepared by Gro Harlem Brundtland in WCED (World Commission on Environment and Development) named as Our Common Future in 1987 (Akyüz, 2018: 4). A common definition of sustainability according to many authors is providing the needs of current generation while considering the needs of future generations (Garrold and Fyall, 1998). One significant focus of sustainability is to let natural or artificial resources to be replaceable (Hunter, 1997). There are 3 major factors affecting sustainability of tourism development; pressure and stress of economic development of tourism on developing

countries, planning and implication of planning obstacles, issues related to tourism itself (Helmy, 2003).

Since climate change is a multi-dimensional subject, different researchers from different expertise brought their own perspectives into the subject just like looking into the same problem with different lenses (Arabadzhyan, Figini, Garcia, Lam-Gonzalez, & Leon, 2020). Climate change causes wet regions to get wetter, and non-tropical dry regions to become even drier (Seager, Ting, Li, Naik, Cook, Nakamura and Liu, 2013). Water is a crucial and fundamental resource for humankind while also a basic and universal need and also considered as a human right (Cole, 2014).

However, it is a well-known fact that water resources are depleting for both natural and artificial reasons because of climate change and over-consuming. Since this is an alarming phenomenon impacting daily life and especially threatening the future, many researchers put an effort to explain the reason of this issue and try to come with a solution for it. Tourism activities are highly bound to tourism resources because of its own nature. This paper aims to enlighten the relationship between tourism and climate change and especially water scarcity also known as drought. Flourishing water supplies and attractions might improve the perceived image of any destination such as marines and lakes (Wang and Zhang, 2019; Zhuang, Yan, Wen and Yilin, 2019).

## **2. Literature Review**

The impact relation of tourism and drought apparently works in two ways and it is more suitable to merge literature into two sub-headings according to purpose of the paper although one can easily diffuse it into many topics because the literature actually has many dimension with many research disciplines.

### *2.1 The Impact of Tourism to Water*

Tourism has a direct impact on water resources when taking a look to its global impacts (Gössling, 2002) and consumes biological resources, air and land in addition to water (Mercan, 2010: 26). Environmental resources are vital for tourism development, but, using these resources for a long time brings the consequence of depleting them (Piga, 2003). One major negative impact of tourism on environment is surely water pollution (Kahramana and Türkay, 2006: 59). The demand of water in tourism activities concentrates in time and place (Essex, Kent and Newnham, 2004) which is one of the major problems among tourism about water resources. Cheap forms of tourism tend to consume less amount of water (Hadjikou, Miller, Chenoweth, Druckman and Zoumides, 2015) while luxury tourism market consume much more of it (Hof and Scmitt, 2011). Geng, Maimaituerxun and Zhang (2020) investigated the correlation between tourism activities and water use in their research. According to Gössling (2001), tourists use water for personal hygiene, laundry, ski activities, golf activities, spa & wellness reasons and in addition to these, swimming pools, garden maintenance and other attractions use significant amount of water. Golf tourism consume large amount of water without question. An 18-hole golf pitch needs 2.3 million liters of water daily (United Nations, 2006). Soboll and Schmude (2011) also tried to simulate the water use in ski destinations via their research.



Locations with plenty of water have always been an attraction to people. This is why one can mostly imagine a place with water (seaside, pools, lakes and rivers) when mentioning tourism (Akyüz, 2018: 13). In literature about water usage and tourism, most researches focus the consumption levels of hospitality facilities, but, unfortunately the consumption is not entirely limited to hospitality section. Akyüz (2018: 23) states that ski and golf resorts consume the most water among all tourism activities.

According to the research which investigates touristic water consumption among total use of water by liter per night; Australia (332), Spain (188), Germany (198), India (830), Indonesia (860), Malaysia (914) and Philippines (981) have different ratios of touristic consumption of water among total usage (Becken, 2014). These numbers show that the more a destination developed, the less ratio of water usage it has among total water usage. However, in either developed or developing countries, tourists consume more water than local residents do (Cruse, O'Keefe and Horwitz, 2010; Essex, Kent and Newnham, 2004). Another research indicates that tourism as a whole is responsible of %10 of total water usage which is equal to 21 million m<sup>3</sup> in Cyprus (Hadjikakou, Miller, Chenoweth, Druckman and Zoumdies, 2015). Fang, Yin and Wu (2018) also analyzed and composed a review that examines the relation between climate change and tourism activities in scientometric method while also stressing some indices about climate change which effects tourism experience. These indices are; tourism climate index by Mieczkowski (1985), the beach comfort index (Morgan, Gatell, Junyent, Micallef and Williams, 2000), climate index for tourism (De Freitas, Scott and McBoyle, 2008) and modified climate index for tourism (Yu, Schwartz and Walsh, 2009). Helmy (2003) states that indicators like indices are important to evaluate and regulate social, economic and environmental effects of tourism in tangible ways.

Another research about Mount Huanshan focuses on water foot-print (Zhang, Zhang, Zhou, Liu, zhang and Tian, 2017) and broaden the discussions about water use issues. Similar to that, Li (2018) serves some policy advices while stressing out water foot-print of tourism related activities in Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei regions. However, most of the relevant researches about this topic focuses on environmental effects or impacts on tourism instead of focusing and explaining the whole complex relations and connections among dimension of tourism and environment (Arabadzhyan, Figini, Garcia, Lam-Gonzalez, & Leon, 2020).

## *2.2 Drought as the Impending Disaster: Reasons, Consequences and Solutions*

Drought is a recurrent climate disaster which negatively affects human living and economies (Masih, Maskey, Mussa and Trambauer, 2014). The problematic existence of drought brings the consequences of extinction of some species, water shortage, desertification, damaging the beauty of natural parks and also changing and altering the travel decision of tourists (Scott, Jones and Konopek, 2007; Winter, 2008; Prideaux, Coghlan and McNamara, 2010). There is an important line to clarify about water shortage. According to Kasim, Gürsoy, Okumuş and Wong (2014) the amount of water means clean water for use and the quality of water means safe and reachable water supply for human beings.

Drought is not only a physical or a geographical issue but also has serious negative effects on society due to high dependence on water supplies (Shiklomanov and Rodda, 2003). Özfıdaner (2020: pp. 1-2) states that drought must be examined as a meteorological issue since it has different characteristics in each region such as different regimes of rainfall, temperature, soil

attributes etc. However, the author generalizes the definition of drought as the shortage of the amount of water in a region in a period of time. The bitter phenomenon of drought is the most effective impact in Mediterranean region which lowers the plant production while also limits the development of different types of plants (Yazar, Sezen and Gencel, 2002; Bastuğ and Büyüktaş, 2003; Snyder, 2009).

Global warming and the climate change that follows it is the main reason for drought and pressure on water supplies (Huntington, 2006) which have hard-to-measure unpredictable consequences and impacts (Wilhite and Svoboda, 2000). IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) states that the overall temperature in the globe will rise 1.3°C-3°C until the end of 21<sup>st</sup> century (IPCC, 2013). Also, lack of capital and technology prevents developing and under-developed countries to take necessary measures to tackle climate change and drought while letting them vulnerable to consequences (Bryan, Deressa, Gbetibuou and Ringler, 2009). Kasim, Gürsoy, Okumuş and Wong (2014) stress out the global threat about drought and moreover, the authors investigate the impact of hotels on this issue. Another research focuses on depleting water resources and decrease of rainfall in Mediterranean region (Philandras, Nastos, Kapsomenakis, Douvis, Tselioudis and Zerefos, 2011). Also, UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organisation) warns about possible impacts of global warming on especially winter and sports related destinations (Bonzanigo, Giupponi and Balbi, 2016).

Without necessary measure, global warming will cause 2.7 billion of people to struggle to reach clean water due to 2°C overall increase in temperature (Koutroulis, Papadimitriou, Grillakis, Tsanis, Warren and Betts, 2019). Turkey is also located in Mediterranean region which is expected to be affected harshly by climate change and global warming. This region is believed to be hit by a decreasing tourist flow because of climate related issues and drought (UNWTO, 2009) To better understand the consequences, it might be wiser to show some research findings in table as can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Literature About Consequences of Drought

<i>Stress Point</i>	<i>Source</i>
Increase in extreme climate events such as tornados, windstorms, cyclones etc.	Bythell, Hillis-Starr and Rogers, 2000
%80 of tourists are prone to change their desired destination and/or unwilling to pay as much as they did due to climate change and sea-level changes	Uyarra, Cote, Gill, Tinch, Viner and Watkinson, 2005
A predictive research points that 2-meter sea level increase will result soil loss by %24 in optimistic scenario in Morroco	Snoussi, Ouchani and Niazi, 2008
Drought caused the drop of the number of tourists coming from Germany, France and Scandinavian countries to Benidorm, Spain	Martinez-Ibarra, 2015
Climate change and improving heat levels negatively affects winter destinations especially benefiting from skiing activities	Scott, McBoyle, Schwartzentruber, 2004

Global warming negatively affects seaside tourism destinations especially due to increasing level of sea	Moreno and Amelung, 2009; Fitchett, Grant and Hoogendorn, 2016
More than 400 cities in China which is equal to %60 of total population struggle to reach clear water supply	Geng, Maimaituerxun and Zhang, 2020
Consequences of drought on cultural tourism	Lwoga and Asubisye (2018)
Possible solutions on lowering carbon emissions on tourism industry	Gössling, Hall, Peeters and Scott, 2010
Adaptation strategies of tourism toward climate change in Africa	Hoogendoorn and Fitchett, 2018

About solutions debate, there are few suggestions and actions with different approaches. Differing tourism activities and types in Mediterranean is being mentioned in recent years (Bramwell, 2004; Rico-Amoros, Olcina-Cantos and Sauri, 2009). Productive and efficient planning of tourism will provide protecting of environment and water resources instead of depleting them (Lizardi-Jimenez, Leal-Bautista, Ordaz and Reyna-Velarde, 2015). Whittington and Xun (2019) mention about water management and define it as being aware of dynamics and risks of water use. A successful water management requires infrastructure that is sensitive to water usage including scientific research centers, water processing and production facilities which will also aid the sustainability of tourism (Scheepens, Vogtlander and Brezet, 2016).

To sustain tourism activities competitively, destinations must remain within the limits of ecosystem. Water management must be handled as a shared risk and opportunity among businesses, locals and destination management (Cole, 2014). Some case evidences prove that economic benefits of tourism activities support the water management in the area (Cole and Brown, 2015). Another case study points water management and planning in tourism destination of Costa Brava since it gets difficult to supply enough water for tourists and locals in summer heat (Vila, Afsordegan, Agell, Sanchez, Costa, 2018).

There are several ways to improve the amount of water resources such as detecting underground water fountains and recycling used water in urban areas (Lazarova, Hills and Birks, 2003). Tourism related businesses might well prefer less water-needy plants for outdoor decoration and therefore they will lower the amount of water needed for beautification efforts (Tortella and Tirado, 2011). In addition to that, hospitality businesses might adopt 4IR model for water management which includes “innovative reducing, innovative reusing, innovative reaching and innovative recycling” (Kasim, Gürsoy, Okumuş and Wong, 2014).

### 3. Research Methodology

This paper is built as an extended review with literature-based discussion. Hence, the paper focuses on subjects and topics related to “climate change”, “global warming”, “water usage”, “drought” and their 2-way impacts on tourism. This paper has its own systematic approach of viewing the topic and handling the issue which is developed after scanning current literature.

Therefore, it is possible to classify this study as a “situation analysis” with authors first combine and then organize the current literature and the content of this paper.

#### **4. Discussion, Conclusion and Limitations**

As clearly seen, tourism and water usage are in relation in both ways just as environment, and water resources are depleting due to global warming and climate change because of natural reasons or human use. Decision makers in tourism in both destination or enterprise levels must seriously consider drought as a serious issue for two reasons: tourism activities are highly dependent on water and more importantly, saving and caring the first vital resource of humankind is a moral duty. Martin (2005) stresses that tourists consider climate conditions while deciding which destination to travel. There are plenty of researches supporting that idea while also adding that climate changes directly impact the popularity of a destinations while causing a sharp swift of tourist flow from one destination to another (Becken, 2005; Kyriakidis and Felton, 2008; Richins and Scarinci, 2009; Moreno, 2010; rosello and Waqas, 2015).

One important misunderstanding about the impact of tourism to water usage is the main reason of water usage in tourism. Hospitality sector is considered as the main water consumer, this might be considered as true even there is no strong evidence to compare with other tourism sub-sectors, but not necessarily the only reason for water consuming. Swimming pools, golf courts, artificial snow production consume significant amount of water as mentioned in earlier sections. Gössling and Peeters (2015) state that 2500 liters of water is need to produce 1 liter of biofuel and therefore it is not efficient to use this fuel in tourism industry. This is an important finding since tourism industry requires high amount of energy with its accommodation, recreation, entertainment and transportation sections. Akyüz (2018) stress an important issue reminding that tourism is responsible for %1 of total water use around the globe. Even though this seems like a small number, the author also reminds that tourism activities concentrate on space and time and this concentrated small number causes real headache in drought times.

When looking at the current literature as a whole, one can spot that most of the papers concentrate on how water resources are depleted. There are also fewer but still many papers focus on the consequences of over-using water resources and fewer papers about the solutions. It is difficult to perfectly systematize current literature since sustainability and tourism-environment relations are considerably new topics for researchers. Also, drought just began to take attention as an emerging phenomenon with its increasing negative impacts.

To sum up, tourism activities are destined to be dependent on natural resources and attraction just like human kind does until tourism becomes a fully virtual activity which is another topic of investigate and argue since a solely digital technology may or may not be considered as “tourism”. However, over-using of water in tourism industry is not necessarily a destiny and can be managed in a sustainable way by careful planning with multi-disciplinary coordination, research and efforts.

This paper offers an insight to current literature about tourism and drought while checking their relation in both ways and also, stresses the importance of caring for water resources for the sustainability of tourism and more importantly sustainability of human species and the globe. However, this paper lacks of empirical evidences to strengthen its ideas, rather it stands on current literature. There is still a distance to walk for researchers to establish the theoretical

framework for better understanding and better handling the critical relation between tourism and environment.

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# Destination and City Branding through local gastronomy: the cherry fruits in Edessa

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## Abstract

*The paper exams the formation of a city's branding by linking branding with agricultural products and especially cherries by examine the contribution of local products and specifically cherries to the creation of the image and identity of the city of Edessa, to the offered tourist product through the development of tourist routes, and to the gastronomic identity of the destination. Furthermore, the paper exams the relation between the agricultural production bodies and tourism and the prospects for creating an DMO for managing the tourism identity of the region. A quantitative survey of 89 visitors to Edessa and a qualitative survey of 20 representatives and local government officials conducted in April 2019. The survey demonstrated that there is an important correlation between cherry and the potential of tourism development. The results of this study brought out the possibility and the need to relate the cherry with the city's identity and the creation of a coordination body for the branding preparation and the destination's sustainable management. The general conclusion from the research is that local products can play an important role in creating and strengthening the identity of Edessa.*

**Keywords:** Destination Branding, Local Products, Gastronomy, Local Identity

## 1. Introduction

City branding is the identity of the city, it is brand and logo that is associated with a group of perceived characteristics by the target group and that cause some positive or negative reactions. But if a city treats City branding as a simple name, then it is wrong. The value of intangible assets of the city is what is expressed through City branding and is what provides an added value that in many cases is key to the selection of the target group (Aitken and Campelo, 2011). City branding is identified and expressed through the strong elements. The traditional district and its industrial past in a biodiversity environment dominated by the existence of water and the production of

unique quality agricultural products such as cherry, creates a unique puzzle of features culminating in waterfalls, a natural monument in the city. The three thousand continuous existence of the city gives its dimension and continuity in time.

The aim of this study is the presentation - creation of the city branding of the city of Edessa, linking it with the quality of the agricultural products and especially with the local produce of cherries in Edessa. It is an approach to highlight the special contribution of local products and their use as tools for identifying and branding a destination within the framework of sustainable tourism development where nature has a distinct presence.

In concepts like branding, place branding, branding of tourist destination and gastronomy identity the influence of local products on tourism are of great importance. The survey provides information about the features of the presence of cherries in Edessa, tourists attractions and issues facing the destination, while examine the potential of the local stakeholders for a strategic city's branding design and development based on local products.

This survey studies the present situation and potential development based on visitors' perceptions and the perceptions of public opinion and stakeholders of the municipality of Edessa. The combination of quantitative and a qualitative survey demonstrated that there is a really important relation between the quality of local products like cherry and the potential of tourism development. The results of this study brought out the possibility and the need to relate the cherry with the city's identity and the creation of a coordination body for the branding preparation.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Tourist Destination*

Foronda and Garcia (2009) define the tourist destination as a natural and social place with specific characteristics and properties that offers an approach to environmental, regional, social and cultural values, providing a complete experience to the visitor. In reference to Buhalis (2000) tourism destinations are amalgams of touristic products and services. According to Jamal and Jamrozy (2006) different values and cultures, and the interrelated impacts on the local community resulting in a complex planning system within tourism destinations. The city's competitiveness framework for attracting visitors requires the development of strategies aimed at determining the competitive position of cities according to the resources available to them (Kotler and Gertner, 2002). In order a tourism destination to success, the importance of human resources and innovation in combination with cooperation and collaboration on a local and regional level are imperative (Ritchie and Crouch, 2005). The gastronomy in this case can be a motivation factor for a destination to attract tourists (Ad Karim and Chi, 2010; Hiller, Belhassen and Shani, 2013; Green and Dougherty, 2009). As a result, the importance of including the local community within the innovation process is of great importance (Prats, Guia, and Molina, 2008).

### *2.2 Place Branding*

The places can be characterized as products and services (Kotler, Asplund, Rein and Haider, 1999; Keller, 1998). Consistent with Rainisto (2003) place branding creates added attraction in a place, and building a brand identity is especially important. When places are labeled as products and services, the brand often becomes the real name of the place. As Keller (1998) stated, a branded

place makes people aware of the place and creates a desirable bond. According to Kavaratzis (2004), branding brings marketing theory and practice closer to the nature and characteristics of places by identifying and linking a number of attributes and meanings related with the destination in one marketing message that is the destination's brand. As Dinnie (2008) stated, in place-branding theory the concept of identity is crucial and the core values that support it offer a foundation around that all communications should be built. In reference with Morrison and Anderson (2002: p.17) branding a destination is defined as "the process used to develop a unique identity and personality that is different from all competitive destinations". According to Christou (2013) trust in destination brand competence is frequently perceived as domain-specific having as a result that DMOs should try to launch their activity in a few important areas, and manage their brands within these. As Rainisto (2003) mentioned, like brands, cities meet functional, symbolic and emotional needs.

Blain, Levy and Ritchie (2005) claimed that Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) facilitate the formation of destination brand loyalty by achieving reliability among the identity of the destination, its induced image, and the actual visitors' experience. Furthermore, Chatzigeorgiou and Christou (2018) states that DMOs ought to offer as many opportunities for visitors to interact with the destination brand as possible. Branding a tourist destination based on existing assets, according to Zouganeli, Trihas, and Antonaki (2012) resulting in meeting easier the tourists' expectations, that in turn enhances total positive experience, repeated visits, and word-of-mouth. In such a way, the DMOs' have to create consistent brand relations between stakeholders and local continuity as a whole through their attitudes and initiatives. According to Henkel, Henkel, Agrusa, Agrusa and Tanner (2006), to develop a sustainable tourism model for a region, while developing a marketing plan, residents must perceive the destination in the same way it is being promoted.

### *2.3 Tourism and Gastronomy*

According to Butler (1992), alternative tourism has a number of positive economic impacts to local communities. Chuang (2009) and Everett and Aitchison (2008) studies focused on the connection between culture and gastronomy and the studies of Green and Dougherty (2009) and Hall, Mitchell and Sharples (2003) examines gastronomy tourism as a niche market segment and its effectiveness as a tool in destination marketing.

The links between tourism, local products and gastronomy are of great importance (Everett and Aitchison, 2008; Lopez and Martin, 2006; Montanari and Staniscia, 2009; Torres, 2002). Food covers the biological needs of tourists but gastronomy comes to contribute to tourists' quality of experience, which marks the full travel experience (Kyriakaki, Zagkotsi, and Trihas, 2017). Since few years ago food wasn't as much important as a tourist attraction while today, food tourism has been identified as a top activity and plays a significant role to the tourism industry. Gastronomy tourism benefit not only tourism sector and tourism destination but tourists too (Lopez and Martin, 2006; Green and Dougherty, 2009; Everett and Aitchison, 2008; Sims, 2009; Tikkanen, 2007). As a sequence, a number of tourist destinations have begun to focus on their local gastronomy as an important element and pull factor in the development of their destination (Kivela and Crofts, 2005, Fox, 2007, Reynolds, 1993). So, gastronomy can strengthen the cultural distinctiveness and identity of a region while allows tourists to come closer with the culture of

the destination and communicate its traditions, its historical and cultural heritage (Kyriakaki, Zagkotsi, and Trihas, 2013).

### 3. Research Methodology

The aim of the paper is to detect and capture the city branding of the city of Edessa by connecting it with its local products and specifically with the cherry and to investigate the special contribution of these local products for the creation of the identity and the branding of a place. The survey was conducted in April 2019, where a quantitative survey of 89 visitors to Edessa and a qualitative survey of twenty (20) representatives and local government officials took place. As part of the research, the following three Hypothetical Questions were set:

**1<sup>st</sup> Question (Q1): *Local products and specifically the cherry contribute to the creation of the image and identity of the city of Edessa***

For the 1<sup>st</sup> question, the hypotheses were formulated

**H1<sub>1</sub>:** Existence of correlation between the cherry and the identity of the city

**H1<sub>0</sub>:** There is no correlation between the cherry and the identity of the city

**2<sup>nd</sup> Question (Q2): *Whether cherry can enrich the offered tourist product through the development of tourist routes during the flowering and harvesting periods and whether it can support the gastronomic identity of the place or not.***

For the second question, the hypotheses were formulated

**H2<sub>1</sub>:** The cherry can enrich the offered tourist product through the development of tourist routes and support the gastronomic identity of the place.

**H2<sub>0</sub>:** The cherry cannot enrich the offered tourist product through the development of tourist routes and support the gastronomic identity of the place.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Question (Q3): *If there is a synergy between the production bodies to utilize the cherry for tourism purposes and if it is considered necessary to create an organization body for the management of the identity of Edessa as a destination.***

For the third question, the hypotheses were formulated

**H3<sub>1</sub>:** Creating a destination coordinating body can help form the destination's branding.

**H3<sub>0</sub>:** The creation of a destination coordinating body cannot contribute to the formation the destination's branding.

#### 3.1 Sample of the Quantitative Research

As population was defined the visitors of Edessa and specifically those visited the Tourist Information Kiosk. Questionnaires were distributed to 90 visitors of whom 89 responded. Target population: The visitors of Edessa who annually amount to approximately 350,000. Estimated level of error and confidence: A confidence level of 98% and a sampling error of 2% are established.

#### 3.2 Research limitations

The main limitation is the sample where it was not possible to include all those groups visiting the city as the survey was limited in time (April 2019) and spatially only to those visitors who sought information at the Tourist Information Kiosk.

## **4. Findings and Analysis**

### *4.1 Quantitative Research Results*

Regarding the demographic elements of the survey participants, 46.4% stated residents of Thessaloniki, 39.3% residents of Central Macedonia and 8.3% Athens and Attica while 55.1% were women and 44.9% were men, 48.3% from 18 to 35 years old, 38.2% from 36 to 55 years old and 13.5% over 55 years old, 62.9% have a university degree, 25.8% have a Master's degree and 11, 2% of Lyceum. An important finding is that the majority of respondents stated that they are passing tourists with only a few hours of visit and only a percentage of 33.8% stayed in the city for more than 24 hours.

#### *4.1.1 The image of Edessa as a Tourist Destination and its connection with the local products*

When asked if they consider Edessa a tourist city, 96.1% answered positive, a fact that highlights the appreciation of the city's visitors for the image of the city and the prospects of its tourist development. At the question about the type of tourism that represents the city of Edessa as a destination, 75.3% of the respondents believed that it is the individual and 'slow' tourism, while 24.7% of them estimated that it is the mass tourism. To the question on how they received information about the destination Edessa, most of the respondents (53.4%) chose personal recommendations and direct comments on choosing the destination they will visit and secondly (44.3%) made a research for information on the internet. As far as the way they want to meet and experience the destination Edessa a large percentage of the respondents (53.6%) wanted to meet and experience the local cultural and gastronomic heritage, a percentage of 27.4% wanted to have a superficial and short visit, while the 19% of them wanted to feel like a city dweller.

When asked if they have tried local products in Edessa and which one, the predominant answer was fruit and especially cherries. To the phrase that they believed reflects more the image of the city of Edessa a very large percentage of the respondents (67.4%) answered "the city of water and cherries", thus identifying the strong link that water has in this place with the cherry, while 16.9% of them answered "the city of 4 seasons", while the above comes to confirm that 67.4% of the respondents who answered that "the city of water and cherries" and the 16.9% of them answered "the city of 4 seasons" as the phrases that represent the city and express the image formed by the visitors from their visit. Furthermore, 96.6% of respondents agreed that a local product can participate in the identity of the city (only 3.4% answer negatively) confirming the possibilities of a local product in forming the identity of a place. Regarding the extent to which Edessa's reputation for local products can motivate them to visit/stay at the destination, 67.4% of them agreed and 25.8% disagreed. In addition, 69.7% of respondents believed that the satisfaction of a visitor is affected by the fact that the souvenirs are associated with local products of the city, while 27% of them didn't agree. The above finding reveals the need to create souvenirs that express and differentiate the place and determine its identity, to function dynamically as an advertisement of it and cause potential customers to visit the destination.

#### *4.1.2 Identity and Destination*

A very large percentage of respondents (65.2%) believed that the image of the city of Edessa is related to the quality of a local product, while a percentage of 34.8% of the respondents didn't agree. To the question about if the gastronomic identity of Edessa is successfully connected with the cherries, 52.8% of the respondents estimated that the gastronomic identity has been successfully connected, while 47.2% of them didn't agree (Graph 5). According to this finding arises the need to strengthen this connection by highlighting the gastronomic identity that will contribute the most to the tourist development of the city. To the question whether the cherries and the gastronomic identity of the city are considered sufficiently connected with the catering companies, the answers came to reinforce the findings of the previous question, with the vast majority (82%) of the respondents believed that the cherry has not been successfully connected with the catering businesses. There is therefore a need for the catering units to adopt a much more dynamic participation of local products and especially cherries in their menus that offer both to residents and visitors of the city.

The 77.5% of respondents believed that local festivals are a critical factor in creating a tourist route while a percentage of 21.3% disagreed. The answers led to the conclusion that the visitor wants to know the local culture and appreciates the importance it has for a destination. The cherry blossom is considered by 73% of the respondents as a critical factor for a tourist route, while 23.6% of the respondents disagreed, confirming the fact that the cherry blossom is a global pole of attraction and tourist development of a destination.

#### *4.1.3 Tourism, Identity and Gastronomical Heritage of a Destination*

The 64% of respondents believed that they deepen better in the local food heritage by combining various forms of tourism such as agrotourism, ecotourism, cultural tourism, gastronomic tourism and urban tourism, while 10.1% of them mentioned with gastronomic tourism and 7,9% of them with city tourism. When asked about the importance of the local products characterized as "Designation of Origin" or "Geographical Indication" for the definition of the image of a destination, the majority (87.6%) of the respondents considered that the "D.o.O" or "G.I" is a critical factor for the definition of the image of a destination and definitely contributes to the image of a tourist destination. The institutional registration of a city's local products characterized as "Designation of Origin" or "Geographical Indication" contributes to the formation of its nutritional identity according to almost all the respondents (97.7%). Regarding the way in which visitors wanted to deepen their knowledge about "D.o.O" or "G.I" products, the first word is the visits to showrooms, the second is the visits to tasting places and the third is the visits to farms.

#### *4.1.4 Events and Destination*

A significant percentage believed that events such as spring festivals and cherries blossom can be a reason to visit the city. Also, both the carnival and the spring festival as well as the cultural carnival and visit to cherries can be a purpose of a trip to Edessa (Index 1).

(Index 1) Reason for visiting the city

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Responds</b>
Spring festivals and cherries blossom events	52%
The carnival and the spring festival	29%
Cultural carnival and visit to cherries fields	19%

When asked about their knowledge about the various cherry related events, the majority of the respondents answered positive (Index 2).

(Index 2) Cherry related events

<b>Event</b>	<b>Positive answer</b>	<b>Negative answer</b>
Sport's event "The Cherry Roads"	58,4%	41,6%
Cultural event "Cherry Festival" in Agra region	60,7%	39,3%
Cultural event "Kerasiotika" in Kerasia region	58,4%	41,6%

Furthermore, there is an absolute agreement from 97.6% of the respondents who stated that the promotion of routes in cherry fields of Edessa during blossom and harvest periods will help to highlight the identity of the city and will enrich its tourist product.

*4.1.5 Destination – Images – Souvenirs*

Regarding the correlation of Edessa with a tourist tour, the answers simultaneously identified the activities on which the planning of the tourist development of the city should focus (Index 3).

(Index 3) Correlation of Edessa with a tourist tour

<b>Tourist tour</b>	<b>Correlation</b>
Water trails and outdoor activities	44,9%
Nature-loving activities and agrotourism	19,1%
Gastronomy and local traditional events	18%

Regarding the contribution of tourism when it is correlated with local food products, the answers provided important data, with the main connection being the increase in the demand for local products by visitors (Index 4).

(Index 4) Contribution of tourism when it is correlated with local food products

<b>Contribution</b>	<b>Correlation</b>
Increase of the demand for local products by visitors	36%



Promotion of local products in the visitors areas of origin	5%
In the connection of local agro-food production with tourism enterprises	19%
Encourage local small and medium scale production	10%

When asked where they bought souvenirs and souvenirs of the city, 25.8% of the respondents answered from the tourist shops of folk art, 24.7% from the local manufacturers of folk art items, 18% from women's cooperatives, 14.6% from social cooperatives and 11.2% from the city center shopping center, while their purchases were mainly local products.

#### *4.2 Qualitative Research Results*

The final number of participants in the qualitative research amounted to 20 where, although they represented to a large extent the institutions of the region, they were selected due to ease of access and communication. The participants came from the Local Government (elected and executives), from trade unions and local companies, 55% were aged from 36 to 55 years, 70% were men and 30% women, 35% 55 years and over and 10% 15 to 35 years old, 50% were Higher Education graduates, 40% were Postgraduate graduates and 10% of them High School graduates. A specially designed semi-structured questionnaire was used to conduct in-depth interviews.

All the answers given converge to the importance of tourism for the economic development of the region and the value of gastronomic tourism, due to the fact that the region has its own strong brand integrated in the “wine roads of Macedonia region” and producing “Designation of Origin” or “Geographical Indication” local products. Gastronomical tourism, as a subcategory of cultural tourism, must be promoted due to the excellent products of the region and especially the cherries.

An important finding of the interviews was that most of the respondents answered that the activities carried out by their organization are more local oriented, there is no formed tourist consciousness, while their views converge to the possibility of cooperation in forming the identity of the destination.

Despite the fact that the cherry, according to the respondents, is not sufficiently utilized in tourism except for some initiatives from some agricultural accusations of the area that try to promote it as a gastronomic symbol, it is very important to note that in forming its city branding Edessa can definitely be dominated by water, due to the waterfalls, but also by the cherry, due to the quality and abundance of its production.

The necessity of creating a cluster of companies for the utilization of the cherry was identified as they are the ones who in their way give impetus to the promotion of the product through its proper utilization and that synergy is needed from all the involved bodies. The creation of a business cluster based on the coexistence of the liquid element of the region and the local products and especially the cherry is estimated by the respondents that it will help the tourist development in a great scale.

Regarding the possible benefits of forming a city branding and the operation of an identity management body of a destination, reference was made to the increase number of visitors, increase of income, development of shops, creation of hotels, reduction of unemployment and effective overall effort due to undertaking a project by a specific body. The connection of the

tourist identity with the product creates very important opportunities and establishes a mentality of searching for opportunities at any time.

Furthermore, through the city branding process, the location and the image of Edessa will be determined so that the main characteristics of the city and the region and its competitive advantages will be announced. The above will be achieved through a management body which will emerge through a more active involvement of the local community and the public sector.

In terms of priorities for such a body to achieve maximum benefit for visitors and residents of the area, the answers had to do with “mutual trust”, “common vision”, “planning”, “mutual benefits”, “patience”, “solidarity” and “willingness to cooperate”. The above will be achieved with the participation of the local community, the training of staff in the respective positions and the unanimity of those involved in the strategical development of city branding.

## **5. Discussion**

The need for connection, presence and promotion of the cherry in the gastronomic identity of Edessa was recognized by the vast majority of respondents, both in quantitative and qualitative research, always in relation to the liquid element, other agricultural products and local cuisine. The general conclusion from the research is that local products, especially cherries, can play an important role in creating and strengthening the identity of Edessa, rejecting the Null Hypothesis (H1<sub>0</sub>) that there is no correlation of cherries with the identity of the city.

Additionally, important views were mentioned regarding the correlation of local products and tourism, as an important factor in highlighting the first and the extroverted image of the region to wider population groups and that the efforts to promote Edessa as a tourist destination should not, however focus only on the tourist profile of the area, but to be dynamically combined with the cultural and environmental background of the area, so as to give a character of a holistic strategic approach to the whole effort. The above conclusion of the research rejects the Null Hypothesis (H2<sub>0</sub>) that the cherry cannot enrich the offered tourist product through the development of tourist routes and support the gastronomic identity of the place.

The forming of this new identity requires stable and reliable cooperation between companies from both private and public sector, an issue in which there are still significant shortcomings. Encouraging a climate of cooperation, where the need has arisen in all quality research responses, and the implementation of economies of scale and synergies should be key priorities for the coming years and should be of equal concern to both local government, as well as the private sector. The above rejects the Null Hypothesis (H3<sub>0</sub>) that wants the creation of a destination coordinating body cannot contribute to the formation the destination’s branding.

## **6. Conclusions**

Due to the fact that the research conducted in April 2019, it would be of great importance to repeat the research when the implications of Covid 19 will end and how the visitors’ perceptions will be in the new reality. Moreover, due to the previous time limitations, it would be interesting to study a greater sample considering a extended time period (a four seasons period), in different needs and categories of visitors to have a broader view of their perceptions. Also, a research with

different research tools would be interesting in the local community's perceptions and views about local identity and branding. Finally, the formation of the branding identity in practice and its real implementations would be a great point of research in the area.

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# Heritage and wine tourism for Chinese tourists: the cases of study in Priorat and Ribeira Sacra (Spain)

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## Abstract

*In the 21st century and specially after the world pandemic COVID-19, the tourism sector is undergoing great changes as a result of travelers looking for unique and outdoor products to enjoy different experiences, involving new trends in tourism, especially in non-traditional destinations and changing the needs and attitudes of tourists. In this sense, the tourist is currently more and more motivated by sensations and the search for new experiences. In this context, in which the experience is a fundamental objective, some tourist modalities such as gastronomic tourism, wine tourism, culture tourism and heritage tourism emerge as practices aimed at satisfying the new demand. This context is present in the current tourist flows and it also constitutes a relevant motivation in the growing demand of wine tourism. The main objective of this study is to carry out research on the development of the supply of wine and heritage tourism in the renewed and heroic wine regions of Spain: Priorat and Ribeira Sacra (close to Barcelona, France, Portugal and Santiago de Compostela) and the demand for wine tourism for Chinese cultural tourists, in order to identify the adjustments that must be made in the planning and applications between the knowledge of western wine tourism and the renovation of wine tourism products in Spain and Europe.*

**Keywords:** Culture tourism, wine tourism, heritage tourism, sustainable tourism, Europe, Spain, COVID-19, Chinese outbound tourists.

## 1. Introduction

In the 21st century, and specially after the world pandemic COVID-19, the tourism sector is undergoing great changes as a result of travelers looking for unique and outdoor products to enjoy different experiences, involving new trends in tourism, especially in non-traditional destinations and massified men, and changing the needs and attitudes of tourists (Chen, G., Huang, S., 2020, Cracolici and Nijkamp, 2008 ). In this sense, the tourist is currently more and more motivated by sensations and the search for new experiences. In this context, in which the experience is a fundamental objective, some tourist modalities such as gastronomic tourism and wine tourism emerge as practices aimed at satisfying the new demand. This context is present in the current tourist flows and it also constitutes a relevant motivation in the growing demand of wine tourism.

The present study focuses on the comparative analysis of two case studies from the tourist activity of the inhabitants of the area who carry out their wine, food and heritage visits in two areas of exceptional viticulture due to their characteristics: the Priorat in Catalonia and the Ribeira Sacra in Galicia. The aim, therefore, is to see if the food and wine offer in the wine areas qualified as "heroic" by the physical characteristics of the environment, will be attractive for the new trend of independent and experiential tourism that is developing in China. Thus, from the perspective of these two case studies, they will influence the development and the application of the wine, gastronomy and heritage tourism between Spain and China.

In this way, the study proposes an analysis of the wine and heritage itineraries as well as the cultural tourism in the selected areas, in which a new way of planning the wine, the gastronomy and heritage tourism is observed. On the other hand, the recent evolution of the international wine tourism stands out for its interest in the cultural heritage and in visiting the European destinations. These flows show a growing trend towards independent and experiential tourism in China. In this way, the offer of the existing wine-heritage resources and the demand of the emitting Chinese tourism can contribute to the impulse of destinations with the Priorat and the Ribeira Sacra as wine-heritage tourist references. During the planned research, the profile of the tourists in the two areas will be compared, their motivations, experiences and the way of accessing information to carry out this type of journey, which has become a symbol of distinction and status for a minority of the population and is part of the new model of experiential heritage tourism in China.

The present research, therefore, aims to show the potential of wine and heritage tourism in Spain and the emerging demand for international tourism in China for its wine and heritage resources. The current context of change in tourism heritage as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic is valued as an opportunity also for the development of destinations that do not present the saturation that characterizes some cultural destinations located in urban environments in Catalonia. In addition, this doctoral research will contribute to provide guidance to different institutions and to the sector in order to improve the position of the wine tourism products and to implement better results derived from the knowledge of the Chinese tourism, with the aim of increasing the wine and heritage exchange between Spain and China.

The main objective of this study is to carry out research on the development of the supply of wine and heritage tourism in the wine regions of Priorat and Ribeira Sacra and the demand for wine tourism, in order to identify the adjustments that must be made in the planning and applications between the knowledge of foreign tourism and the development of wine tourism products in Spain.

The specific objectives of this research are:

- To study the background of studies and the theoretical framework of heritage tourism, wine tourism and the interaction between the two types of tourism in the world and in Spain:
- To analyze the profile, the experiences and the behavior of the Chinese tourists in the destinations of patrimonial tourism emphasized by the wine and the food in Catalonia and Galicia by means of the analysis of the bibliographical review and the application of semi-structured interviews;

- To analyze the concrete experiences of the Chinese tourists, to know their motivation for making a heritage destination and their behavior in the destination, and to arrive at the conclusion of recommending the heritage destinations related to wine for the Chinese tourists who demand it;
- To exploit the value of an wine-gastronomic destination to the areas determined to Spain, to apply the model as a vital tool for the creation of tourist products and to serve other similar areas with economic development, and to have the data of the specific needs and behaviour of the Chinese tourists as a reference;
- To propose the strategy of optimization of the management of the heritage of the destinations based on the obtained results, to apply it to all Spain and Europe for the Chinese tourists according to their needs and segmentation.

## **2.Literature Review**

Gastronomic tourism is increasingly valued as a possibility to enjoy sensory experiences involving taste, smell, touch, sight and hearing (Getz, 2000), while wine and food tourism, for its part, stimulates the senses and particularly taste (Bertella, 2011). Gastronomy and wine are an integral part of local life, together with the history, culture, economy and society of a given area, and have been shaped throughout history through the life style of the place (Mitchell and Hall, 2006). And that's why it reflects a way of life of the citizens that live in a certain geographical area, reinforcing the tradition of the rural areas and the modernity of the urban ones, because it is something very important in their own culture and tradition (Mitchell and Hall, 2006). However, this also implies a constant need to innovate in the tourism products that are created and in the tourism services that originate from them, in order to give a better value to them and to achieve, in this way, a better competitiveness in a certain geographical location for which they are used in other destinations (Richards, 2002).

According to UNESCO, intangible cultural heritage is defined as "the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and techniques - together with the instruments, objects, artefacts and inherent spaces - that communities recognize as part of their cultural heritage" (UNESCO, 2003). As the axis of wine tourism, wine, which involves the productive process and its social uses, as well as being a key element of the Mediterranean diet, which is a fundamental element of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity (Ramos, 2012). Not only wine, in the place where it is visited, the cellar, curiously in most cases is more or less interesting, is a concrete space with characteristics such as antiquity or the environment linked between life and time, the architecture presented as a real material, to be observed and capture the aesthetic manifestations. The attraction of the cellar is also complete through its activities such as the elaboration through the fermentation of the wine. The process associated with the production process and the tasting of the wine affects a series of values to the building of wine production. In addition to this, we have to add the presence of the actor, the author of the wine and the explanation prior to the tasting, which consists of the patrimonial factors. In most of the regions where the most famous cellars of the world appear, wine is an important sign of their regional identity. However, in the symbols and the multitude of manifestations, wine has been and is



present, and the cellars and some other architectural and archaeological elements are part of the heritage and materially reflect the identity of this population.

Spain is the third largest tourist destination in the world after France and the United States, both for its cultural heritage and its natural environment (Li Yin, 2019). Thanks to the efforts of ACEVIN, wine routes will be one of the most important creations for the promotion of wine tourism in the country. The first wine tourism route will be created in Cambados (Galicia), based mainly on the wines of the Rias Baixas Denomination of Origin (Ricolfe et al., 2010). The routes which make up the list of visits to cellars and museums of wine are the routes of Marc de Jerez Wine and Brandy and Penedès Wine Tourism. However, no research has been carried out into wine tourism destinations of a lesser scale such as Priorat or Ribeira Sacra. The planting of roots was introduced during the 12th century, linked to the Carthusian monks who, with the foundation of the Cartoixa d'Escaladei, went to the feet of the Serra de Montsant. The same monks began to cultivate the wine in the area, as well as the elaboration of wine. Nowadays, the production is mainly of black wines and the most popular varieties are the Carignan, followed by the black champagne. Due to the considerable reduction in surface area resulting from the organization of the D.O., it has been possible to produce other quality food products such as hazelnuts, almonds and olives in the more difficult or hilly areas (F. Xavier Medina et al., 2008). On its side, the Ribeira Sacra is close to an international religious destination, Santiago de Compostela, which stands out for its cultural heritage (monuments, ethnography, gastronomy and viticulture, etc.), as it shows the concentration of Romanesque monasteries and churches, and the cultural landscape that its wines give to the river's slopes, as well as a quality product with its own denomination of origin (Roberto Carballo et al, 2016).

Today's Spanish tourism, together with the World Tourism Organization is looking for experiences and intellectual gratification in Spain and for the rest of the world, at the same time, the Chinese cultural tourists is very interested in Spain for its cosmopolitan and digital image, and seeks to interact with the local community, and in the different seasons. Its population stands out for its growing interest and appreciation of the experiences and in-depth visits to tourist destinations, as well as its freedom in the process of travel.

### **3. Research Methodology**

The paper proposes to apply a combination of new and old methodologies that go from a bibliographic analysis with the consultation of the contributions in social areas related to wine tourism, heritage tourism and wine tourism in Spain and the world, to the field work with the modern Chinese viticulturists in the two areas of heroic viticulture of Priorat and Ribeira Sacra. Based on the mentioned objectives, the methodological proposals are based on the use of different techniques:

- 1) Analysis of secondary sources:** Bibliographic consultation: About specialized bibliography in the context of wine and food tourism, the routes of wine and food to Spain, the tourists who travel to Europe and Spain to seek to have the experience in food and wine in order to form a theoretical and conceptual basis on the subject. A comparative analysis of geographical and gastronomic documents from a critical perspective is also planned: An exhaustive study of instruments, norms, regulations and specialized scientific articles and finally, comparative studies of the areas of study (presentation of geography, heritage,

eno-gastronomic supply and demand and development strategies to understand the characteristics, the products offered, the development strategies and to make a comparison between them).

- 2) **Data analysis and exploitation:** analyze variables of quantity and quality is foreseen in order to evaluate the wine and heritage demand of the Chinese tourists and the elaboration of specific cartography: with the objective of visually capturing data, and making the geographic distribution and concentration of wine and heritage visits more comprehensible.
- 3) **Field work:** From direct observation: work of observation on the ground and compilation of a database of images on tourism issues. We planned to interview experts to obtain a more professional opinion on the subject studied and a more global vision of the case study. We also interviewed social actors to obtain their opinion and to study the processes that involve the different social actors in wine and marriage tourism.
- 4) **Benchmarking:** A comparative study with the best wine tourism and cultural tourism in the world and in Spain.

Examples externs: Chinese wine and heritage tourists visits on France, Portugal, China.

Examples interns: Chinese wine tourists visits on Rioja, Penedes (Spain).

#### 4. Findings and Analysis

Due to the current investigation is still on the starting stage, the following text will summarize some definitive findings about wine tourist profiles, the actual two study cases presentation, the opinion of the Chinese tourists towards Spain and the potential Chinese tourists who can be interested.

According to the Assembly of European Wine Regions (AREV, 2013, <http://www.arev.org/es/novedades/vintur-el-espacio-europeo-del-enoturismo>), the European Charter for Wine Tourism has defined this field with a very global and complete vision: "the development of tourism, leisure and free time activities dedicated to the discovery and cultural and oenological enjoyment of the vineyard, wine and its territory".

Wine tourism is considered in this research as a concept based on the territory combining tourism and culture under the inspiration of presenting to the public authenticity, sustainability and competitiveness for the European territory. The attitude towards culture and sustainability marks the European thinking: to move forward we have to look at the past and the future, with authenticity and culture the future will be created, the humanistic spirit has been expressed with a lot of attention. It is curious that it distances itself from the American ideology, which always priorities the marketing of the wine industry, as mentioned in the above "marketing of all kinds of wine-related products" (Hall C. &., 1998, [https://www.academia.edu/163165/Wine\\_tourism\\_in\\_New\\_Zealand](https://www.academia.edu/163165/Wine_tourism_in_New_Zealand)).

Wine tourism is a set of tourist services, leisure and free time activities dedicated to the discovery and cultural and oenological pleasure of the vine and wine, it is a recent area but it is currently fashionable, whose importance has been marked socially, economically and culturally.

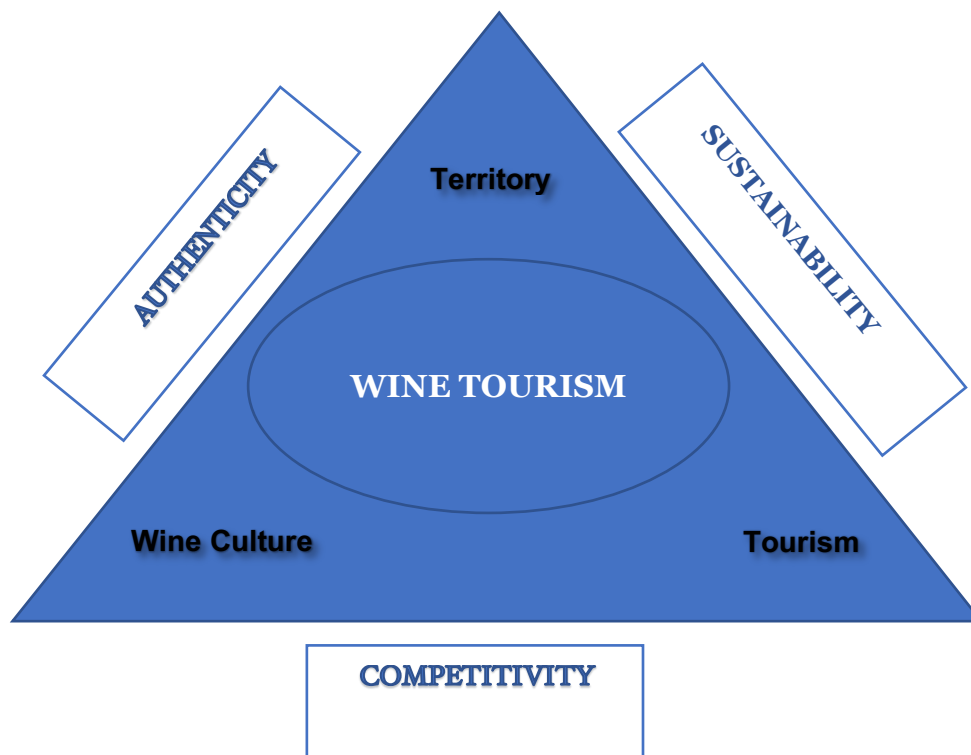


Figure 1. Wine tourism concept. Source: Own elaboration based on AREV

Tourists are always a fundamental part of tourism and, obviously, their role is no less important in wine tourism. Taking into account values, attitudes and lifestyles, different studies have been carried out on the segmentation of wine tourists. Among these studies, the one carried out by Charters and Ali-Knight (Charters, 2002) stands out, segmenting wine tourists into four groups:

- 1) Wine lovers. People who have a vast education in oenological matters, with the main motivation for their trip being to taste different types of wine, buy bottles and learn in situ.
- 2) Wine connoisseurs. People who, although they do not have a vast education in oenological matters, know the world of wine well. They usually have a university education and the main motivation for their trip is to put into practice what they have read in different specialized publications.
- 3) Wine enthusiasts. People who do not have a technical background in oenology but are interested in this world. Their main motivation is to visit some wineries, although not exclusively, but as a complement to other activities.
- 4) Wine initiates. People who for different reasons (advertising a route, having new experiences, etc.) go to a winery without having any knowledge in this field. Their motivation for the trip is different, but they agree to spend a few hours visiting a winery.

In the early years of the 21st century, Charters and Ali-Knight (Charters, 2002) already realized how to target wine tourists according to their level of enthusiasm for wine. In short, they could be classified into two main groups: the participants and the advanced, the participants

correspond to the "wine initiates" and "wine enthusiasts", who can be educated and marketed in a simple and figurative way about the knowledge plus the wine products, while the advanced can elaborate the wine tourism products in a more professional and personalized way. However, as this is not a very recent segmented research, here the category "wine lovers" has too general a description without taking into account the individuality and sophistication required in the typology of today's wine tourists.

Being the third largest tourist destination in the world after France and the USA, Spain is rich both for its cultural heritage and its natural environment (Li Yin, 2019). Thanks to ACEVIN's efforts, the wine routes were one of the most successful creations in terms of promoting wine tourism in the country. The first wine tourism route was created in Cambados (Galicia), based mainly on the wines of the Rías Baixas Designation of Origin (Ricolfe Clemente et al., 2010). The routes that top the list of visits to wineries and wine museums are the Wine and Brandy routes of the Marco de Jerez and the Cava of the Penedès. However, there is not enough research on less crowded and inland wine tourism destinations such as Priorat or Ribeira Sacra, whose grape plantation was introduced during the 12th century, linked to the Carthusian monks, who, with the foundation of the Scala Dei Charterhouse at the foot of the Montsant mountain range. The same monks initiated the cultivation of vines in the area, as well as the production of wine. Nowadays, the production of red wines is very extensive and the most widespread varieties are Cariñena, followed by Garnacha Negra. Due to the notable reduction of the cultivated area after the granting of the D. O. especially, other quality foodstuffs such as hazelnut, almond and olive trees have been cultivated in the most difficult or steepest terrain (Tresserras, 2008). For its part, the Ribeira Sacra is located close to an international religious destination, Santiago de Compostela, standing out for its cultural heritage (monumental, ethnographic, gastronomic and viticultural, etc.), as evidenced by the concentration of monasteries and Romanesque churches, and the cultural landscape of its vineyards overlooking the slopes of the river, as well as a quality product with its own designation of origin (Roberto Meiriño et al., 2016).

The number of Chinese tourists arriving in Spain during 2019 reached 896,610, representing an increase of 14% over the figure recorded in 2018, when visitors numbered 786,500. In 2015, there were 399,000. The average expenditure of the Chinese visitor stands at 2,563 euros, a sum that is well "above" that of the German tourist (1,052 euros) or the French (651 euros) (ABC, 2020). Within the territory of Spain, Madrid, Barcelona and Seville are the three most attractive cities for Chinese tourists. It was predicted that by 2020, more than one million Chinese would visit Spain (Huarenjie, 2015). As for wine tourism destinations, Rioja and Penedes are the most famous and searching places in the Spanish territory for actual Chinese tourists ([www.mafengwo.com](http://www.mafengwo.com), consulted on 2020).

The specific issues that Chinese tourists are concerned about when travelling to Spain are, in this order, language, personal and security barriers (property), the consequences of cultural differences and the quality of service (Zhu, 2017).

According to the *Mckinsey 2017 China Outbound Traveler Survey*, the tourist groups with the age between 25-34 years old, 35-44 years old are 66% of the whole travelling segmentation. While the groups such as "value-seeking sightseeing", "backpacker", "sophisticated traveler", who have shown strong interests towards the rural tourism, the selected way of traveling and with a high or middle income, can be considered as the ideal profile for wine and gastronomy tourism in

these two chosen destinies. As for gastronomy, the Spanish “Tapas” and “Paella” (seafood rice) are still the most consulted dishes (www.mafengwo.com, consulted on 2020).

## **5. Discussion**

Wine tourism is currently experiencing a period of growth in Catalonia and Galicia; however, studies on the analysis of its interaction with heritage are very scarce, except for the study related to Chinese tourists who are looking for a deep experience and slow-paced travel with heritage themes. Based especially on the reflections of different specialists in the sector and focusing on aspects such as the current role of viticulture in the field of heritage tourism, the analysis of the Spanish tourism sector and current Chinese demand, case studies such as Priorat and Ribeira Sacra will help us to address aspects that can affect Spanish tourism in a broader way, as well as to put forward certain proposals and possible solutions that emerge from the sector itself.

## **6. Conclusions**

Spain is the country with the most vineyards in the world, and the fourth on its production. The strong concentration of investment in the so-called "Sun and Beach" tourism is being studied to be changed and transformed. New forms of tourism, such as rural tourism, gastronomic tourism or wine tourism, may be much more suitable for the sustainable development of rural areas in Spain, particularly could be served as a new model of tourism for international tourists, after the pandemic COVID-19.

Chinese tourists in Spain seek experiences and intellectual gratification (gastronomy, culture, art, spirituality, nature, shopping), are very attracted to Spain (for them it is an exotic destination), are cosmopolitan and digital, seek to interact with the local community and present a different seasonal pattern to the traditional one centered on the summer months. Slow-paced travel and the younger generation travelling is already a trend, as is independent tourism accompanied by friends or family and in their own vehicle.

Catalonia and Galicia are two autonomous communities in Spain where the language, the particular landscape, the architecture, the culture, the heritage and therefore the "heroic viticulture" are splendid but is not so well known, at least not so well known to Chinese tourists. To put them as case studies is very interesting to renew the classical Spanish tourism model, a significant challenge for the transformations of the sector in the post-pandemic stage.

At the same time, to date there has been a scarcity of research on Chinese tourism demand in terms of wine tourism in Spain, and less so in terms of its links with heritage tourism due to its fondness for slow cultures and experiences. Therefore, this type of research is very valuable as a trend for possible strategies for the reactivation of tourism after COVID-19.

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# The Weaknesses of YouTube as a tool to promote tourism during the Covid-19

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## **Abstract**

*This study aims to determine the weaknesses of YouTube as a promotional medium during the Covid-19 pandemic. This study examines the effect of ability and intention to access YouTube on visitation interest through content quality. The research hypothesis, namely the ability and intent to access YouTube has a positive and significant effect on interest in visiting Yogyakarta, either directly or indirectly through content quality. This research uses descriptive quantitative methods. Collecting data through an online survey, which 225 respondents filled out. Data were measured using a Likert scale and analyzed using path analysis techniques. Intention to access YouTube has a dominant influence on visiting interest compared to accessing it. Tourist intention to access YouTube has a significant positive direct effect on visitation interest (48.60%), while indirectly through the quality of its content (65.15%). Direct influence is more dominant than indirect influence. As one of the most effective social media for promotion during the Covid-19 pandemic, YouTube has not been fully utilized by the Yogyakarta Special Region Tourism Office. YouTube's performance is still low in terms of content quality and video posting consistency.*

**Keywords:** YouTube, Path Analysis, Promotion, Interest in Visit

## **1. Introduction**

Social media becomes a medium in the tourism industry to keep the regular tourists and attract new ones (Pan and Fesenmaier, 2006). The tourism industry combines visual and verbal communication media to meet the needs of tourists through the creation of new products and attracting them (Edwards and Curado, 2003). The content presented on social media provides basic information about destinations and can stimulate a person's desire to visit the destination (Hyounggon et al., 2003) and the decision-making process (Orth et al., 2007). Social media provides information for tourists as a reference in planning trips and information on various experiences from travel activities (Fotiadis, 2009). Social media has three approaches, they are sociological or anthropological, economic, and marketing approaches (Hofacker and Belanche, 2016; Yadav et al., 2013; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2013).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, there were mobility restrictions, so that social media became one of the solutions to promotional problems at a low cost but wide reach (Hays et al., 2013). Social media is used to convey the tourism provider goals to tourists (Ružić and Biloš, 2010) and develop



relationships between them through networked social production (Tussyadiah and Zach, 2013). However, it must implement a proactive approach and a commitment to make a sustainable change (Gretzel et al., 2006). The advantage of using social media is that it allows direct contact with tourists in a broad, timely, relatively low-cost manner, creates long-term relationships with customers, strengthens customer contributions, and communicates freely. However, YouTube also has a negative impact, it comes from the messages and comments shared by users that will affect the interest of tourists in visiting the destination (Frias et al., 2008).

YouTube is a social media that provides strong support for the tourism industry in building visual communication (Dionyssopoulou, et al., 2014). It is in great demand by Indonesians, based on research data from Hootsuite, and We Are Social (2021), it is noted that internet users aged 16-24 spend most of their time watching online videos. YouTube can attract users reaching 93.8% of the total population of Indonesia (170 million users). The number of its users who reach more than 90% makes YouTube a strategic platform for media promotion and marketing.

The Special Region of Yogyakarta uses various social media as a means of promoting and marketing tourism, under the account name "visitingjogja". The social media that are actively used are Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. Comparing the three of them, YouTube has the lowest performance, seen from the lowest number of subscribers. In May 2021, the number of Instagram followers was 12.1 K, Facebook followers were 3,854, while YouTube only had 526 subscribers. The very small number of YouTube viewers is inversely proportional to the data submitted by Hootsuite, and We Are Social (2021). It is influenced by several factors which become the objectives of the study. This study intends to analyze the weaknesses of YouTube as a tool in promoting tourism.

The channel of visitingjogja has been used since 2019, while Facebook and Instagram have only started to be used in 2016. It is recorded that the number of content on Instagram is more than YouTube, in May 2021 the number of content posts on Instagram was 1,523 photos and videos, while on YouTube only 377 videos. This is one of the factors in the low interest in accessing YouTube "visitingjogja". This study aims to determine the weaknesses of YouTube as a media for tourism promotion and marketing by the Special Region of Yogyakarta. It is conducted by examining the influence of the ability and the intention in accessing YouTube on interest in visits through the quality of its content. The hypothesis proposed that the ability and intention of accessing YouTube has a positive and significant effect on interest in tourist visits in Yogyakarta, either directly or indirectly through the quality of its content.

## **2.Literature Review**

YouTube became known in February 2005, which was founded by Chad Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karim, using the domain YouTube.com (Alias et al., 2013). Based on data released by YouTube in 2013, it was recorded that in eight years YouTube was able to become the most popular online video site in the world. It was recorded that every month users watched videos for 4 billion hours and uploaded videos with a duration of 72 hours every minute (Alias. 2013). In November 2006 YouTube was purchased by Google and operates as a subsidiary of it (Lavaveshkul, 2012). The YouTube platform becomes a database of various videos for various needs, including as a learning resource for educators (Mullen and Wedwick, 2008). The increasing number of YouTube users encourages YouTube to experience a change from a non-commercial

video publication site to a commercial and professional site accompanied by advertisements (Morreale, 2014).

YouTube is a platform that provides features for uploading, sharing, viewing, and commenting on videos that are broadcast (Lavaveshkul, 2012). The YouTube application is mostly enjoyed by young ones because it is easier to understand the authenticity of existing content (Holand, 2016). This application allows anyone to compete to get as many viewers and followers as possible at a relatively affordable cost. YouTube has the luxury that other media don't have, such as television shows that can be canceled at any time if they have a low rating. Content uploaded on YouTube can be updated to increase viewership or followers. Several things that must be considered in managing YouTube, including; develop branding and point of view, recognize target market, study comments, use catchy titles, tags, and icons, present short videos and post regularly, avoid plagiarism, and improve quality to increase followers.

Nowadays, there is a shift in tourist behavior, where tourists are active partners in marketing (Fyall and Garrod, 2005) so that a destination must be able to build sustainable two-way communication through the provision of information and the creation of tourist experiences (King, 2002). Tourists determine and control tourist activities based on the experiences of other tourists who have the same concept of thinking. Tourists do not want to stay silent or passive, but do something in the place they are visiting (Franklin and Chang, 2001). There are two ways tourists use YouTube, active and passive. Active users do several activities in accessing YouTube, including liking or disliking, commenting, and uploading videos. Meanwhile, passive users only watch videos and read comments as part of their search for information in their spare time, which is based on the results of research that female users are greater than men (Khan, 2017).

The use of videos with the right components can increase the effectiveness and perceptions of tourists on tourist destinations (Dionyssopoulou et al., 2014). One of the elements that can form the image of a destination is the electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) which is formed from the interaction process between social media users. Online media users trust eWOM as a convincing recommendation from other users (Rosario et al., 2016; Gerhards, 2017). EWOM can be built by sending free products to YouTubers as a means of commercialization (Wu, 2016; Gerhards, 2017). Tourist destination providers can invite YouTubers to use tourist services to make content that can attract the market. The influencers are believed to be able to increase credibility and reach a wide online market. However, YouTubers has weaknesses, because it raises perceptions of conditions that are not real or based on engineering (Dredge, 2016).

The success of using YouTube in the long term is determined by several aspects, including; consistency of video posting that is refreshing and has intrinsic value. YouTube content that is always updated provides an opportunity for tourists to experience firsthand and help make decisions in selecting destinations to visit (Reinhard, 2009). The high number of viewers is an indicator of the quality of the video content presented. Making quality videos can be done using a strategy summarized in several stages of production, 1). Pre-production, determining the concept and theme as well as selecting a model to add attractiveness in the video, 2). Production stage where the video is taken and 3). Post-production, selecting, editing images, and packaging video content (Noor et al., 2018). The videos presented on the YouTube channel have differences compared to traditional streaming videos, including access duration, access patterns, active periods, ratings, and comments (Cheng et al., 2007). The existence of YouTube can create an online network which is a distribution scheme through sending videos to end-users efficiently.

In managing YouTube content, there are two types of traveler characteristics, verbalizers and visualizers. Verbalizers or verbal consumers are easier to understand brochures that rely on verbal material, while visualizers or visual consumers understand more about brochures that contain more pictures (Chiou et al., 2007). Social media content is managed with a user-friendly concept, using the same terminology as users, easy to understand, archiving, credibility, paying attention to content details including colors, images, fronts, and so on, and personalized information.

The downside of using YouTube is that it generates skepticism from travelers about the authenticity of the posted videos. This is a strong reason some tourist destinations do not use YouTube as a promotional and marketing medium. A trick that can be used to build travelers' trust in the authenticity of videos on YouTube is to use real people according to the topic of the video being raised. Destination providers that can implement the concept of autonomous and organic in a balanced manner can create loyal and broad YouTube users and followers. YouTube can become the eyes and ears of potential tourists through the content provided (Reino and Hay, 2016). However, negative effects can arise if there are posts that are not satisfied because they can damage the image of the destination.

The COVID-19 pandemic has a wide impact on various sectors, including the social and economic fields. Most people experience economic problems due to the loss of their jobs (Supriatna, 2020). This condition causes a decrease in people's purchasing ability which has an impact on the loss of various businesses due to losing customers. One of the efforts to retain customers is to continue to carry out promotional and marketing activities so that customers do not forget their products. Online promotion and marketing activities through social media are very strategic alternative solutions. The use of relatively inexpensive social media with a wide reach can reduce operational costs in marketing activities.

YouTube provides opportunities as well as challenges for destination providers to improve promotional and marketing performance through presenting short videos. Promotion and marketing challenges using YouTube, including; adaptation to reactive markets (Belanche and Casaló, 2015), management of creation and customer engagement (Mustak et al., 2013), managing multi-sided markets (Parker and van Alstyne, 2005; Cusumano, 2015), adapting to changes in market behavior is good positive and negative (Shankar et al., 2016; Kim and Fesenmaier, 2015), interactions with complex markets (King et al., 2014; Pauwels et al., 2016), gamified interactions (Hamari, 2013), and changes in skills marketing (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

### **3. Research Methodology**

It is a descriptive quantitative approach, by analyzing the data and describing the results of the analysis of YouTube as a medium for promotion and marketing in the Special Region of Yogyakarta tourism. The data were collected using a survey technique using an online questionnaire that was distributed to respondents who were selected by purposive random sampling. The respondents were 225 tourists who had visited tourist destinations and used YouTube. Before the questionnaire was distributed to respondents, the instrument was tested using SPSS to determine its validity and reliability. The results of the instrument test showed validity and reliability. The validity is seen from the calculated R-value is greater than the r table and the reliability is seen from the Cronbach alpha value  $\geq$  of 0.6. It is recorded that the smallest

value of the r count is 0.154, which is greater than the value of the r table for 225 respondents, (0.125) so that the questionnaire is declared valid. Meanwhile, the Cronbach alpha value was recorded as X1: 0.856; X2: 0.645, Y: 0.947, Z: 0, 915 which is greater than 60, so the questionnaire is also declared reliable. Data measurement techniques using a Likert scale include Strongly Agree (score 1), Agree (score 2), Neutral (score 3), Disagree (score 4), and Strongly Disagree (score 5). Data were analyzed using path analysis techniques using SPSS. The path analysis technique is used to test the direct and indirect effects by comparing  $\beta_{X_1Z}$ ,  $\beta_{X_2Z}$  values with  $\beta_{X_1Y} \cdot \beta_{YZ}$ ;  $\beta_{X_2Y} \cdot \beta_{YZ}$  values. If value  $\beta_{X_1Z} > \beta_{X_1Y} \cdot \beta_{YZ}$ , dominant is direct and if value  $\beta_{X_1Z} < \beta_{X_1Y} \cdot \beta_{YZ}$ , dominance is indirect.

#### 4. Findings and Analysis

The special area of Yogyakarta has various tourist destinations visited by both domestic and foreign tourists, including natural, cultural, historical, educational, artificial, spa, culinary, shopping, and so forth. Yogyakarta tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic slumped due to a very significant decrease in the number of tourists. Various ways have been done by various parties to revive Yogyakarta tourism, one of which is promoted through social media, namely Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. Of the three social media, YouTube has the lowest performance, so research is carried out to find out any weaknesses or shortcomings that exist. The research data was collected through a survey of 225 respondents which are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Profile of Respondents

Profile	Frequency	%	Profile	Frequency	%
<b>Sex</b>			<b>Education</b>		
Man	102	45.3%	Junior HS	1	4%
Woman	123	54.7%	Senior HS	28	12.4%
<b>Age</b>			Diploma	45	24%
< 20 y/o	-	-	Bachelor Degree	47	20.9%
21-30 y/o	56	24.9%	Master Degree	94	41.8%
31-40 y/o	53	23.6%	Other	1	4%
41-50 y/o	41	18.2%	<b>Job</b>		
> 50 y/o	75	33.3%	Civil Servant	24	10.7%
<b>Marriage Status</b>			Private Employee	58	25.8%
Married	131	58.2%	Entrepreneurs	1	8%
Not Married	94	41.8%	Student	65	28.9%
<b>Wage</b>			Other	60	25.7%
< 2,5 million	93	41.3%			
2,5-5 million	70	31.1%			
> 5 million	62	27.6%			

Source: Researchers (2021)

It is noted that the number of female respondents has a higher percentage than men, the difference is 9.4%, and this is in line with the results of research conducted by Khan, that female

YouTube user are more than men (Khan, 2017). The number of respondents who are married and unmarried is quite evenly distributed, it is 50% on average, while the highest percentage of educational background, postgraduate is 41.8%, with the most work status as students, 28.9%, and the income range is at most less than 2.5 million which is as much as 41.3%.

The variables used in the study consisted of four variables, two independent variables (the ability of tourists to access YouTube and the intention of tourists to access YouTube), one dependent variable (Interest of Tourist Visits), and one intervening variable (Quality of YouTube Content), which are presented in Table 2. The variable of tourists' ability to access YouTube (X1) is measured by four indicators, having adequate devices (X1.1), ability to operate the device (X1.2), availability of sufficient data packages (X1.3), and having sufficient time (X1.4). The objective variable of accessing YouTube (X2) is measured by three indicators, seeking information (X2.1), sharing information (X2.2), and filling spare time (X2.3). Variable Quality of YouTube content (Y) is measured using five indicators, attractive appearance (Y1), information that is always up to date (Y2), YouTube is easily accessible (Y3), completeness of the information presented (Y4), and YouTube as an effective means of communication. (Y5), while the variable interest in tourist visits is measured using four indicators, YouTube content motivates tourist visits (Z1), YouTube content influences destination choices (Z2), influences tourist activity (Z3), and YouTube content encourages users to invite others to travel (Z4).

Table 2. Variable Data

Var/ Likert	1		2		3		4		5	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
X1.1	1	4	3	1.3	16	7.1	64	28.4	141	62.7
X1.2	-	-	3	1.3	16	7.1	80	35.6	126	56
X1.3	1	4	1	4	23	10.2	76	33.8	124	55.1
X1.4	-	-	2	5	39	17.3	92	40.9	89	39.6
X2.1	1	2	5	2.2	36	16	97	43.1	85	47.8
X2.2	6	2.7	9	4	61	27.1	82	46.4	67	29.8
X2.3	-	-	3	1.3	13	5.8	78	34.7	131	58.2
Y1	2	9	7	3.1	48	21.3	93	41.3	75	33.3
Y2	5	2.2	10	4.4	52	23.1	93	41.3	65	28.9
Y3	3	1.3	3	1.3	37	16.4	100	44.4	82	36.4
Y4	6	2.7	4	1.8	66	29.3	87	38.7	62	27.6
Y5	5	2.2	7	3.1	67	29.8	86	38.2	60	26.7
Z1	2	9	1	4	29	12.9	91	40.4	102	45.3
Z2	2	9	2	9	28	12.4	83	36.9	110	48.9
Z3	3	1.3	1	4	32	14.2	92	40.9	97	43.1
Z4	3	1.3	4	1.8	44	19.6	97	43.1	77	34.2

Source: Researchers (2021)

The path analysis technique is carried out using two stages, structure 1 and structure 2.

### 1. Structure Analysis 1

The regression analysis in structure 1 is a regression analysis of the influence of the variable the ability of tourists to access YouTube and the intention of accessing YouTube as an independent variable on its quality as the dependent variable. As for the structural equation 1,  $Y = \beta_{X_1Y}X_1 + \beta_{X_2Y}X_2 + \varepsilon_1$  the results of regression structure 1 are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	6.712	1.867		3.595	.000
Accessibility (X1)	-.038	.117	-.023	-.327	.744
Intention to Access (X2)	1.098	.149	.514	7.349	.000

Source: Researchers (2021)

According to the results of data processing using SPSS, a regression equation is obtained, as follows;  $Y = -0.023X_1 + 0.514X_2 + E$

Structural analysis 1 produces a simple linear regression model which can be seen in Figure 1.

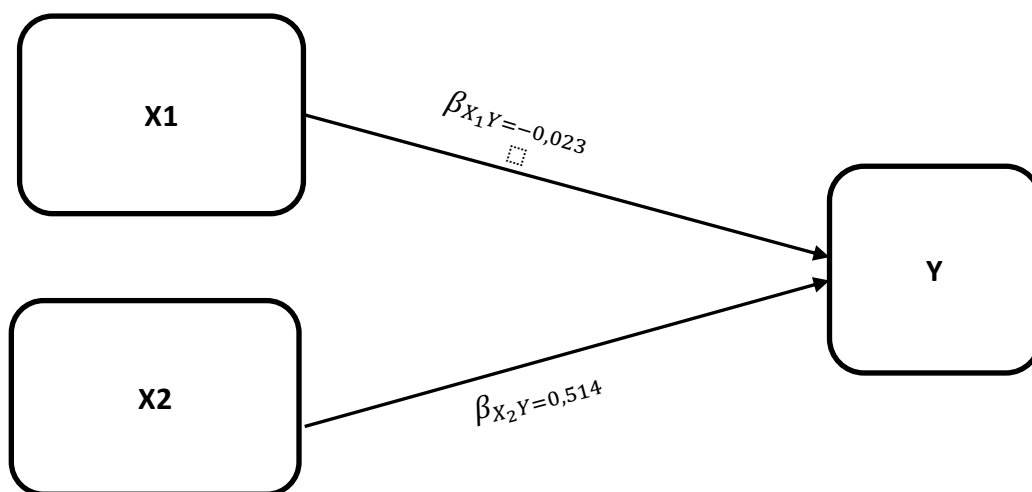


Figure 1. Structural Regression Model 1 (Simple Linear Regression). Source: Researchers (2021)

### 2. Structural Analysis 2

The regression analysis in structure 2 is a regression analysis of the influence of variables on the ability of tourists to access YouTube, the intention of accessing YouTube, and YouTube quality as independent variables on the decision to interest in visiting tourist destinations as the dependent

variable. The second structural equation,  $Z = \beta_{X_1Z}X_1 + \beta_{X_2Z}X_2 + \beta_{YZ}Y + \varepsilon_1$ , the results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	2.360	1.075		2.197	.029
Accessibility (X1)	.052	.065	.044	.796	.427
Intention to Access (X2)	.732	.093	.486	7.863	.000
YouTube Quality (Y)	.227	.038	.322	6.041	.000

Source: Researcher (2021)

According to the results of data processing using SPSS, it is obtained the regression equation  $Z = 0.044X_1 + 0.486X_2 + 0.22Y + E$ .

Structural analysis 2 is used to analyze the influence of variables on the ability of tourists and tourist destinations to access YouTube directly or indirectly on interest in visits through YouTube quality. According to the results of structural analyses 1 and 2, a path diagram model can be drawn as shown in Figure 2.

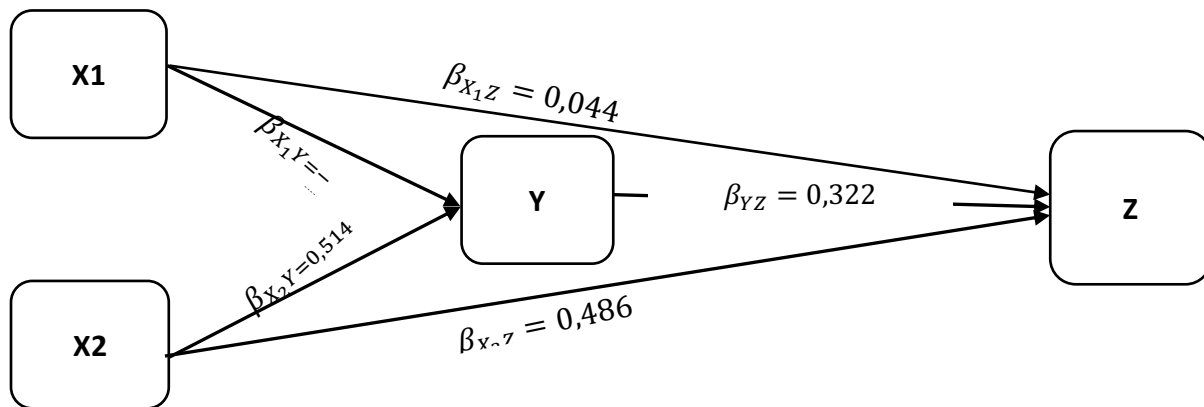


Figure 2: Structural Regression Model 1 (Path Analysis). Source: Researcher (2021)

Testing the direct or indirect effect is carried out by comparing the value  $\beta_{X_1Z}, \beta_{X_2Z}$ , to  $\beta_{X_1Y} \cdot \beta_{YZ}; \beta_{X_2Y} \cdot \beta_{YZ}$ . If,  $\beta_{X_1Z} > \beta_{X_1Y} \cdot \beta_{YZ}$ , then dominant is direct, and if,  $\beta_{X_1Z} < \beta_{X_1Y} \cdot \beta_{YZ}$  then dominance is indirect. The results of the test are as follows;

1). The test of the influence of the tourist ability variable in accessing YouTube (X1), either directly or indirectly, on the tourist visit interest variable (Z) through the quality of YouTube content (Y), the following results were obtained;  $\beta_{X_1Z} > \beta_{X_1Y} \cdot \beta_{YZ}$

$$= 0.044 > -0.0074; \text{ direct dominant.}$$

2). The test of the influence of tourist destination variables accessing YouTube (X2), either directly or indirectly, on the variable interest in tourist visits (Z) through the quality of YouTube content (Y), the following results are obtained;  $\beta_{X_2Z} > \beta_{X_2Y} \cdot \beta_{YZ}$   
 $= 0.486 > 0.1655$ ; direct dominant.

The results of the path analysis, which is a test of the influence of X1 and X2 on Z, either directly or indirectly through Y, are briefly presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Path Analysis

Variabel	Path Coeficient	Impact		
		Direct	Indirect through Y	Total
X1	0.322	0.044	-0.0074	0.0366
X2	0.322	0.486	0.1655	0.6515
Y	0.322	-		

Source: Researchers (2021)

It can be concluded that the hypothesis which states that there is a significant and positive influence between the ability and intention of accessing YouTube on interest in tourist visits through the quality of its content is not fully proven. The data notes that there are direct and indirect effects, but the direct effect is more dominant than the indirect one. In addition, there is also an indirect and negative influence on the ability to access YouTube variables on interest in tourist visits through content quality, although it is not significant with a coefficient value of -0.0074.

## 5. Discussion

### *1. The Influence of the Ability of Tourists to Access YouTube on Interest in Tourist Visits through the Quality of YouTube Content*

Deriving from the data on the ability of tourists to access YouTube, it is noted that the assessment of device availability, ability to operate devices, and the availability of data packages to access YouTube has a fairly even score, which is in the range of 55- 60%. These three elements greatly affect the user's ability to access YouTube to interact with fellow users and with providers of the tourist destination. In this case, the participation of various parties in supporting these needs is needed, including providing public facilities in the form of devices that tourists can use to access social media. In addition, the availability of free Wi-Fi in tourist destinations is no less important, especially in pandemic conditions with very high economic difficulties. The ability to operate the device is also an inhibiting factor in accessing YouTube, therefore this application is more accessible to young people who understand technology (Holand, 2017). This is following the data in Table 1, which is recorded based on the age of the highest number of respondents over 50 years, and most of them are passive users who are just looking for information to fill their spare time (Table 2).



The variable of ability to access YouTube has a direct positive effect on interest in tourist visits with a coefficient value of 0.004, while indirectly has a negative effect on interest in tourist visits with a coefficient value of -0.0074. This means that the higher the ability of tourists to access the YouTube channel “visitingjogja.com”, the higher the interest in tourist visits to the Special Region of Yogyakarta. However, the indirect effect through the quality of YouTube content has not yet been established, this is due to the low performance of videos posted on the “visitingjogja.com” channel, both in terms of quality and quantity.

The tourism industry experienced a downturn during the pandemic, due to there were no tourist visits and no income, while promotional activities had to be carried out so that the product was not forgotten by customers. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the role of social media became very important as a promotional and marketing tool for tourist destinations at a cost relatively cheap and able to reach a wide market. YouTube as the social media with the most users in Indonesia (Hootsuite and We Are Social, 2021) has not been used optimally by the Yogyakarta Special Region Tourism Office. In this case, support from various parties is needed to improve YouTube's performance to increase active users who are interested in visiting tourist destinations in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. During a pandemic, the YouTube platform can be optimized to shape the image of the destination and increase the trust of tourists (Dionyssopoulou et al., 2014). YouTube is used as a promotional media that contains information on the readiness of tourist destinations, including the level of security and cleanliness as a guarantee of the comfort of tourists in tourist activities during the pandemic.

## *2.The Influence of the Intention of Tourists Accessing YouTube on the Interest of Tourist Visits through the Quality of YouTube Content.*

The Intention of tourists in accessing YouTube is measured by three indicators, the need to find information, the need to share information, and the filling of spare time. One of the three indicators, it was noted that the indicator of filling leisure time had the highest score, 58.2%. This shows that the majority of YouTube user activity is still passive. Activities carried out in accessing YouTube are only part of their free time activities by viewing various information contained on YouTube, without active involvement, such as commenting and sharing information (Khan, 2017). The active participation of users by sharing information through video posting is still relatively low, 29.8%. One of the reasons for the low level of participation in the less simple YouTube platform, including the required process and time to upload videos on YouTube and less effective in interacting. Several efforts can be made to improve the quality of YouTube content and increase user interest, it is using influencers (Dredge, 2016) and consistency of video posts (Reinhard, 2009). The YouTube organizer of the Yogyakarta Special Region Tourism Office can use community role models as actors in the video posted on its channel visitingjogja.com. Besides that, consistent video posts with content that are always up to date are no less important. From the data, it is recorded that the number of YouTube posts on the visitingjogja.com channel in 3 years is only 377 videos. This number is very small compared to posts on Instagram.

The intention of accessing YouTube has a significant positive effect on interest in visiting tourist destinations in the Special Region of Yogyakarta through the quality of its content, either directly or indirectly. The direct influence has a coefficient value of 0.486, while the indirect effect is 0.1655 so that the direct effect of the intentions of accessing YouTube on visiting interest is more dominant than the indirect effect through the quality of its content. The quality of YouTube

content and consistency of its posts on the visiting.com channel are still relatively low, this can be seen from the very small number of subscribers, which was recorded as 526 people in May 2021. This number is very far compared to followers on Facebook and Instagram. The making of videos that are presented on YouTube has a difference compared to other streaming videos (Cheng et al., 2007), so a strategy is needed in making quality videos through three stages, pre-production, production stages, and post-production (Noor et al., 2018).

## 6. Conclusions

The variables of the ability to access YouTube and the intention of accessing YouTube have a direct or indirect influence on interest in tourist visits through the quality of its content, but the direct influence is more dominant. The effect of the intention of accessing YouTube on interest in visits through the quality of its content directly or indirectly is more dominant than the ability to access it. YouTube, which is managed by the Yogyakarta Special Region Tourism Office, has several weaknesses, including the quality and consistency of the video. The YouTube platform has not been optimally utilized by the Yogyakarta Special Region Tourism Office as a promotional medium during the Covid-19 pandemic. Promotion media is more focused on Facebook and Instagram because they are considered to have more effective and efficient.

The videos presented on the YouTube channel are different from other streaming videos. The quality of the content and the duration of time are very important aspects of filling YouTube content. Some things that need to be considered by YouTube managers on the visitingjogja.com channel are related to video quality, including interesting and novel themes, time duration, and influencer usage. Themes that have novelty will always be interesting and sought after by social media users, especially the involvement of famous figures will be able to increase active user engagement. Meanwhile, the consistency of posting YouTube content still needs to be improved. Planning and scheduling of video posts must be structured to ensure consistency of video posts on its channel.

This study has limitations because it only involves four variables, including the ability to access YouTube, the intention of accessing YouTube, the quality of YouTube content, and interest in visits. Further research can be carried out by involving other variables by developing indicators used to measure these variables. The other variables that can be used include YouTube management variables and the ease of accessing YouTube.

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# The development of a sports city as a tourist attraction

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## Abstract

*The aim of this chapter is to investigate the possibility of a city to be transformed into a sports city and the prospect of developing a sports city in collaboration with municipalities. A structured interview was designed and specific questions have been identified regarding the formulation of the policy of mass sports and leisure, with the aim of developing tourism and specifically a sport city. Personal interviews were conducted with the collection of qualitative data from the interviewees, who define sports and leisure in four cities of Attica, the capital of Greece. The sample consisted of seven interviewees who hold the positions of Presidents of Sports Organizations and Heads / Directors of Sports Departments. The results showed that funds by the General Secretariat of Sport (GSS), the Corporate Pact for the Development Framework and private investment, the Authentic Athens Marathon, mountain and city road "Imittos", the natural features and attractions of cities and the organized participation of sport tourists in historical sites, museums, parks, forests in Imittos and Egaleo, shops, and the stable cooperation between the GSS and municipalities, can contribute to the development of a sports city as a tourist attraction.*

**Keywords:** *Sport Tourism, Sport City, Sport Events, Destination Image*

## 1. Introduction

Sports activities are useful for promoting physical activity as a means of boosting the local economy and the lives of residents (Bretherton, Piggini & Bodet, 2016; Ramchandani, Davies, Coleman, Shibli & Bingham, 2015; Wicker, Hallmann, & Breuer, 2013). In particular, they can additionally multiple economic, social and environmental benefits, such as enhancement of the tourist "dead periods", economic benefits for the local community, contribution to local tourism development, promotion and development of the brand name of the destination (Kaplanidou & Gibson, 2012; Kaplanidou, Karadakis, Gibson, Thapa, Walker, Geldenhuys & Coetzee, 2013). Motivations that lead to the practice of sports make them activities or tourism products that

promote a healthy lifestyle (Getz & Page, 2016; Pomohaci & Sopa, 2018), the development without exclusions (Koronios & Kriemadis, 2018) and the development of sustainable cities (Sherry, 2017). The interaction of sport with the impact on local economies can be a relationship of reciprocal benefits, by continuing to organize and promote the provision of products and services, to promote the image and promotion of tourism, to re-certify human and material resources and to improve the quality of life of communities (Perna, Custódio & Oliveira, 2019). "The interest in sports tourism is the result of social changes in values, which are increasingly focused on experience" (Moško, Ploszaj & Firek, 2018: 4). Therefore, the quality management and identity of these experiences should be known to the destination managers. Thus, if local communities do not implement such practices, sport will not be accepted by them as a tourism product and sports practice could not be considered a product for everyone. So, the management of sports by public decision-makers acquires special importance, being a critical factor of governance by local government (Perna, Custódio & Oliveira, 2019). According to the same researchers, sport unites the communities that visit and host, with all the literature recognizing the relationship between sport and tourism, with a prominent role in the tourism industry, as, for example, by Perić (2018: 18): "the popularity of sport events can be attributed to the fact that they generate significant benefits, depending on their size for host communities on the state, county, city or municipality level. The most obvious impact that sport events have is on the economy and tourism". Sports events seem to reduce seasonality, job creation and taxation. The importance and impact of sports on the education and health of a society has been observed over time. Focusing on the role of sport events, Koronios and Kriemadis (2018) support the attraction of participants with different levels of performance, from beginners to professionals, active and passive participants, and therefore its impact in diverse audience. Local government organizations in parallel with the actions of mass sports in recent years began to be involved in the organization of local sport events (Balaska, 2007, 2013). Today, sport events involve one or more sports, while the dynamics they develop are huge and multifaceted. Their ability to attract visitors - tourists, their positive economic impact, but also their wide coverage by the media form them into very important advantages in the development of strategies in tourist destination promotion programs (Balaska, 2013). In addition, they contribute to the improvement of the personal well-being and the quality of life of the participants, as well promoting an active lifestyle (Balaska & Kouthouris, 2014). The sport events organized by the municipalities are local events, which mainly take place in targeting local communities and their public. These events benefit the local communities as they give them prestige, strengthen the sense of unity, encourage participation in sports and promote the formation of attitudes for sports. In recent years the combination of a trip with amateur participation in a sport event has become very popular, with active event sport tourists, traveling around the world to participate in sport events, such as London Marathon, the Authentic Athens Marathon, but also smaller events (Gibson, Kaplanidou & Kang, 2012; Ridinger, Funk, Jordan & Kaplanidou, 2012). The aim of the present study is to investigate the possibility of a city to be transformed into a sports city and the prospect of developing a sports city in collaboration with municipalities. The hypotheses of the present study are if the below factors can contribute to the development of a sports city as a tourist attraction: 1) Government funds, European grant programs and private investment, 2) the large-scale events, 3) the natural features and attractions of cities and the

organized participation of sport tourists in historical sites, museums, parks, forests and shops and 4) the stable cooperation between the administrative and sport organizations.

## **2.Literature Review**

Sport cities are an important player in achieving the economic transformation as well as the industrialization of sports. They also provide opportunities for the development of sport and leisure tourism (Gibson, 1998). Modern cities are considered destinations that provide "activities related to consumption and tourism, sports, culture and entertainment" (Hannigan, 2003). In general, sports activities are also useful for promoting physical activity as a means of strengthening the local economy (Matheson, 2009; Tien, Lo, & Lin, 2011) and enhancing the lives of residents (Bretherton, Piggin & Bodet, 2016; Frawley & Cush, 2011; Girginov & Hills, 2008; Ramchandani, Davies, Coleman, Shibli & Bingham, 2015; Veal, Toohey, & Frawley, 2012; Wicker, Hallmann & Breuer, 2013). Some cities, such as Melbourne (Francis & Murphy, 2005), Birmingham and Sheffield (Smith, 2005), use sports to promote their images. In addition, some cities, such as Manchester, Cardiff and Dubai, are considered "sport cities" because of the specific thematic sports zones in which their governments set up sports facilities (Smith, 2010).

With regard to the construction of sports cities, the role of governments must be supportive and offer strong political support on issues such as urbanization, the promotion of sport tourism and mass physical exercise, as well as the structural reform necessary for construction of sports cities, which also determines the prospects for their future development. A recent study by Zhang and Gan (2019) states that in the last two years, the Chinese government has formulated a series of related development plans (General Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2016; General Administration of Sport of China, 2016) and special support programs (General Administration of Sport of China, 2017; MOHURD 2016, 2017) in leisure sport cities. By some common standards (Si Land Wang, 2017; Zhang & HandSong, 2017), the construction of a sport city is done for a single sport event. This pattern, however, has a serious drawback, as the relevant sports facilities tend to remain dormant throughout most of the year and the lack of experience of the organizers can lead to further management problems and public acceptance. Therefore, researchers propose to build sport cities characterized by chains of sport events, where the single sport event is replaced by multiple sport events (Zhang & Gan, 2019). The ideal combination of multiple events must be closely related. Events should be designed in such a way that they can be an interconnected chain of events. Therefore, this type of sport city could help in the full utilization of sports resources, but also contribute in achieving the result of integration and the effect of branding, in order to attract social capital for the construction of sport cities.

Large scale sport events require large investments in human, financial and physical resources in order to offer the expected benefits at each destination, including tourism, sport, employment and services. Their offer is catalytic, creating opportunities regarding the presentation of tourism in the media, but also offering economic benefits for cities, regions and countries (Mc Cartney & Osti, 2007, Chalip, Green & Hill, 2003). Sport tourist events are used to enhance the image of the destination, but the elements of the brand image of an event have not been thoroughly studied. Keller (1993) suggested that the brand image consist of elements with features, benefits and attitudes towards the "product". Understanding these characteristics would help to identify the elements that constitute the sport tourist event image, which appear to consist of images related



to organization, environment, physical activity, socialization, self-fulfillment and emotions (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007). In this direction, a study by Papadimitriou, Apostolopoulou and Kaplanidou (2016) was carried out in order to determine the dimensions of the brand image of an international sport event. From the conclusions about the marketing of events and tourism, it appeared that the transmission of specific images increased the interest of key consumer groups. Also, the consumer experience itself enhanced or changed the image of the events. It is also argued that in addition to traditional marketing strategies, responsible managers of the brand of the events need to work creatively to unleash the hidden value of the brand of events. Some of their proposals include leveraging the history of the event, offering attractive clothing with the logo of the brand, attractive prizes-teams-stages, design of exciting finals and most importantly, participation-invitation of popular athletes as brand ambassadors (Chadwick & Holt, 2008).

### **3. Research Methodology**

A structured interview was designed and developed after an extensive bibliographic research (Gibson, 1998; Hannigan, 2003; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007; Kaplanidou, Kerwin & Karadakis, 2013) in which specific questions have been identified regarding the formulation of the policy of mass sports and leisure with the aim of developing tourism and specifically a sport city. Personal interviews were conducted with the collection of qualitative data from the interviewees, who are the individuals who define sports and leisure in four cities of Attica, the capital Prefecture of Greece. The total population of the municipalities was approximately 206,000 people and specifically, the municipality of Petroupoli was approximately 80.000 people the municipality of Agia Paraskevi was approximately 80.000 people and the municipalities of Papagou and Holargos was approximately 46.000 people (data from the Public Electricity Company, 2011). The structured interview consists a total of 53 questions which are divided into seven categories: sports development policy (15 questions), sports infrastructure (5 questions), sport events (13 questions), marketing of sport events (5 questions), environment (3 questions), cooperation (5 questions) and important elements in the decision-making process for visiting a sport event/destination (7 questions). For this research, 9 questions were selected that provide information for suggestions for destination improvement and are presented in the findings and analysis chapter. The entire interview is at the appendix. The research is qualitative and the sample consisted of seven interviewees who hold the positions of Deputy Mayors of Sports and Culture, Presidents of Sports Organizations and Heads/Directors of Sports Departments of Municipalities of Attica in Greece, who were given the opportunity to express and develop personal views and judgments in a communication process by telephone or live interview. Specifically, interviews were given by the president, director and head of the sports organization of the municipality of Agia Paraskevi, by the director and head of the municipal cultural and sports organization of Papagou and Holargos and by the head and deputy mayor of sports and culture of the municipality of Petroupoli. Following the approval of the study request by the research ethics committee, in January 2021, the research team contacted the heads of the sports programs of the municipalities that were planned to participate in the research. The interviews were scheduled to be given after telephone or email communication with the participants several days before the survey. The interview questions were sent to participants in order to decide if they want to participate. All interviews took place from the beginning of February to the

beginning of April and were conducted live, in their offices, except for the interview of the director of the municipal cultural and sports organization Papagou and Holargos, which was conducted by telephone. A tape recorder was used to record the participants' answers, after their written consent.

#### **4. Findings And Analysis**

The results of the present research showed that the bellow elements can contribute to the development of a sport city as a tourist attraction, such as the Government funds by the GSS, European grant programs such as the Corporate Pact for the Development Framework and private investment, the large scale sport events such as the Authentic Athens Marathon and mountain and city road «Imittos», the natural features and attractions of cities and the organized participation of sport tourists in historical sites, museums, parks, forests such as Imittos and Egaleo and shops, and the stable cooperation between the administrative and sport organizations such as GSS and municipalities.

The answer to the research question whether Government funds, European grant programs and private investment can contribute to the development of a sport city as a tourist attraction was given by the answers of the interviewees to the following questions.

In the interview question #7 of the category Development Policy "Can local governments support the development of self-funded sport events or should they rely on state funding?" all interviewees answered that it depends on the type and scale of the event. Until now, they can self-finance local small-scale sport events. However, in large-scale sport events, everyone replied that they needed help from the state subsidy. Specifically, they referred to the GSS grant programs, which they have received in some small-scale sport events, such as jogging, running, school tournaments, 3x3 sports and skiing with the GSS BE ACTIVE programs.

In the interview question #19 of the same category "Were the available European grant programs for the creation and improvement of sports infrastructure a catalyst for the rise of sport in your city?" the vast majority answered that European grant programs, and in particular the Corporate Development Framework Pact, have certainly helped in the past and will continue to help the rise of sport in their city, as they know that many sports facilities have been rebuilt with these programs.

In the interview question #43 of the category Cooperation "Do you think that private investment will improve the quality of sports services offered by your city?" most responded that the private sector can help to improve the municipality's sports facilities and services because the public sector, especially after the financial crisis, has no longer such capabilities. They believe that private companies should invest in sports for the development of sport cities. Many referred that private investment should not cause an increase in the price of the sport product, so as to remain accessible to the majority of the world.

The answer to the research question whether the large-scale events can contribute to the development of a sport city as a tourist attraction was given by the answers of the interviewees to the following questions.

In the interview question #23 of the category sport event "Do large scale sport events help create and develop a sports city?" in all answers it seemed that they argued that the large-scale sport events definitely help to the creation and development of a sports city, because it is an important

part in the development of sports in a city. The majority also argued that large-scale sport events are a major attraction for the world, but this does not mean that small-scale sport events are not important for the development of a sport city. In addition, they argued that all large-scale sport event can help to the development of a sport city, because it gains more publicity, and priority is given to improve facilities and logistics infrastructure. The small-scale sport events that are mainly of local character, can also contribute at the development of a sport city, as they keep active the participation and interest of the participants. These events can be organized easily and frequently and moreover they can create and maintain the sport's culture of citizens.

In the interview question #24 of the same category "Are large scale sport events a key by which cities can improve their sport programs, their image, their sights, their local economy and their publicity?" all respondents completely agreed with the question. They argued that a large-scale sport event will attract people from other destinations outside the municipality, the region and the country. So, the city will be more active, as they will take a walk in some central parts of the city after the sport event, they will go for shopping or they will dine at restaurants. Many have said that large-scale sport events are an advertisement and helps to the creation of a brand image of the sports city. Also, small-scale sport events, which are popular due to, in which it may be easier for people to participate, can be a means with which cities can improve their sport programs, their image, boost their local economy and advertise. They can also be organized more easily and at a lower cost and form a chain of sport events along with large-scale, and will take place over a longer period of time covering a wider range of sport activities and participants.

In the interview question #28 of the same category "What sports or activities do you think can help develop the sport events in your city?" all respondents completely agreed with the question. They argued that a large-scale sport event would attract people from other destinations outside the municipality. In particular, due to the pandemic, they suggested that it be possible to combine sports and recreation with the natural environment, outdoors, in order to have the standards of compliance with health protocols.

The answer to the research question whether the natural features and attractions of cities and the organized participation of sport tourists in historical sites, museums, parks, forests and shops can contribute to the development of a sport city as a tourist attraction was given by the answers of the interviewees to the following questions.

In the interview question #36 of the category Marketing "Do you think that it is important to promote the sights and features of your city, so as to contribute at the decision of selection of the destination for participating in sport events?" all interviewees answered that the sights and characteristics of the city are very important at decision-making process for a destination. In particular, they argued that if there is an important sight in the natural environment it should be highlighted, because it is the tool of the city to create a pleasant destination for sports and leisure. All argued that the existence of mountains with forests, parks and natural attractions in their area, contributed catalytically to the increase of participation and the success of sport events that take place in them. Specifically, the officials of the municipality of Petroupoli mentioned Mount Egaleo and the officials of the municipalities of Agia Paraskevi, Papagou and Holargos mentioned Imittos. They also mentioned the sports and cultural park "Stavros Kotsis" and the cultural area of Villa "Iola" in Agia Paraskevi and the cultural area of the theater "Petra", on Mount Zacharitsa, in the Egaleo mountain range.

In the interview question #40 of the category Environment "Can your city offer to sport tourists, in addition to their participation in sports activities, proposals for the attractions such as historical sites, museums, parks, forests and shops?" all responded positively and stated that the advantages of their municipalities are that it is a "countryside in the city". They also mentioned that a sport tourist who wants to come to a sport event in their city can combine the sights of Athens which are full of historical sites and museums and has the opportunity to visit the parks, the mountain forest and shops at the destination.

The answer to the research question whether the stable cooperation between the administrative and sport organizations can contribute to the development of a sport city as a tourist attraction was given by the answers of the interviewees to the following questions.

In the interview question #42 of the category Cooperation "Do you consider the cooperation between the administrative and sport organizations is important for the development of a sport city? Is there such cooperation in your municipality?" everyone answered that it is very important the stable cooperation between the administrative and sport organizations for the development of a sport city, because a sport event cannot take place without this cooperation. They noted that there is cooperation in their municipality with GSS, but there is a lack of staff in the sports departments resulting in some problems in relation to this fact. Also, most reported that in some cases due to bureaucracy, they resulted in delays in the procedures of sport events.

## **5. Conclusions**

The results offer the perspective of improving the quality of sports tourism activities parallel to the development of sport and recreation events, resulting in an increase in sport tourists and visitors. Sport cities will also contribute to the creation of standards (that include also standards for pandemic) for the extroversion of cities to visitors from other cities and countries to create safe customer experience. In this way attractive destinations will be developed and the new image of each sport city will attract a unique market and help the economic development of cities.

The vast majority of respondents referred that they are able to fund local small-scale sport events, but for the organization of large-scale sport events, all said they needed help from the state subsidy. They said that European grant programs, and in particular the Corporate Pact for the Development Framework, have certainly helped in the past and would in the future help in the rise of sports and tourism in their city. They also argued that private investment could help improve the municipality's sport facilities and services because the public sector, especially after the financial crisis, no longer has such opportunities. Some of these results are in line with researchers who argue that large-scale sport events require large investments in human, financial, and physical resources to deliver the expected benefits in a variety of sectors, including tourism, sports, employment, and services (Mc Cartney & Osti, 2007, Chalip, Green & Hill, 2003). The results of this research showed that the large-scale and small-scale sport events definitely help the creation and development of a sports city as a tourist attraction. The majority also argued that the size of the sport event determines the world attraction. This does not mean that smaller-scale sport events are not important for the development of a sports city. All this is harmonized with Kotler et al. (1993), who recognized the contribution of events to the enrichment of the image of society and Getz (2005), Raj et al. (2009) and Bowdin et al. (2011),

who argued that events act as "image-makers" for destination tourism. Events contribute at the creation of destination branding and offer a competitive advantage in the offered tourism product. This field of events has been extensively studied in the international literature, especially the mega events, such as the World Cup and the Olympic Games, but also small-scale events which offer opportunities to promote the destination (Skoultzos, 2014).

According to the results of this research the existence of mountains, forests, parks and other natural attractions in the area, contributed catalytically to the increase of participation and the success of sport events that take place and consequently to the development of a sports city as a tourist attraction. The findings are in line with the research of Kaplanidou and Vogt (2007), which has shown that the image of the sport tourism event, appeared to consist of images related to all the above natural elements of the environment.

The stable cooperation between the administrative and sport organizations seemed to be very important for the development of a sports city as a tourist attraction, because all the participants mentioned that a sport event cannot take place without this cooperation. These results can be correlated with the results of previous researches (Ilgoumenakis, 1999; Litras, 1991; Mela, 2018) in which it is stated that the factors for the development of sport tourism exist, but their utilization is lacking. In particular, cooperation is required for the development of a unified strategy between the competent organizations of tourism policy, the local government, the sports organizations, the event organizers, the organizations of private initiative (provision of sports services, hotel and tourist enterprises, etc.).

The most important elements that need improvement are the services' recruiting regarding sport events, the shaping and utilization of the natural environment and the sights of cities, the shaping and utilization of sports facilities, public and private funding, the legal framework, sponsorships, advertising, cooperation between the competent organizations and hospitality issues at small-scale sport event. In our opinion, this research is important because it is a first step towards the development of a quality evaluation tool for the elements that contribute to the creation of a sports city. An approach is made to the executives of the sports organizations of the cities not only for the sport events and programs that are organized, but also to assess whether there is the possibility and the perspective of using their tools in the development of sport tourism.

The results of this research contribute to the formulation of sport tourism policy by the competent organizations, the Ministry of Tourism and the GSS, which should coordinate, subsidize or co-finance sports activities, contribute to training seminars and cooperate with universities for scientific and technical support and with municipalities and cities intending to organize sport tourism and leisure activities. The findings can be used by marketers and sport and tourism managers to assess intentions and organize related programs and events to attract more sport tourists and visitors to their regions. In the future, more research could be carried out on the implementation of sport tourism activities by an inter-municipal network, with a wider geographical area, which will include the cooperation of many cities that adopt extroversion practices.

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## **IX. Appendixes**

### *Interview questions*

*(Deputy Mayors of Sports, Directors / Heads of Municipal Sports Departments)*

#### Introductory interview details

Date & time:

Location:

Name of interviewee & position:

Name of researcher and topic of doctoral dissertation: Avloniti Christina, " Creating a sport city through the contribution of municipal sport organizations and the implementation of negotiation strategies to enhance participation in exercise programs".

Municipal sports programs:

Sport events of the municipality:

Development Policy



1. Do you think that sports can be the primary reason for visiting your city and what are the main reasons for choosing your municipality as a sport destination?
  2. Does your municipality emphasize the planning and development of sport events?
  3. Do you agree with the view that the development of sport events in municipalities and regions should be planned by the municipalities and regions themselves?
  4. What do you consider to be the right strategy for the development of sport events?
  5. What do you consider to be the right strategy for the development of a sport city?
  6. Is there an office or committee in your municipality or Region that deals with sport events?
  7. Can local governments support the development of self-funded sport events or should they rely on state funding?
  8. What sectors do you consider key sectors for the development of mass sports in your city?
  9. What reasons contribute to the development of a sport city?
  10. What actions do you consider necessary to attract participants in sport events in your municipality?
  11. Since mass sports are aimed at everyone regardless of age, gender and physical ability, do you think that your municipality can meet the needs of all these consumers?
  12. Is the seasonality of some sport activities an important element in the design and implementation of tourism sport strategies?
  13. Do you consider that there are obstacles in the development and organization of sport events and if so, which ones?
  14. Does the legal framework help in the development and organization of sport events?
  15. What suggestions would you make that would help towards the development of a sport city?
- Sports infrastructure
16. Does the participants' choice of destination have to do with the sports facilities or sports entertainment offered by the event?
  17. Does the development of indoor sports facilities help the development of a sport city?
  18. Do you think that the infrastructure in your municipality is sufficient for the development of a sport destination?
  19. Were the available European grant programs for the creation and improvement of sports infrastructure a catalyst for the rise of sport in your city?
  20. Do you agree that every sport facility should be accessible to the citizens and can be used by them and not only by sport organizations?
- Sport events
21. What are sport events for you?
  22. How long have you been involved in organizing sport events?
  23. Do large scale sport events help create and develop a sports city?
  24. Are large scale sport events a key by which cities can improve their sport programs, their image, their sights, their local economy and their publicity?
  25. Do you think that sport events focus only on the sport or also on the destination image? If so, how?
  26. Do you think that the combination of sport events with their image and destination image has been developed locally?
  27. What do the citizens gain from their participation in the sports activities of your municipality?

28. What sports or other activities do you think can help the development of sport events at your city?
29. Which sports target groups would you address?
30. Do you think that the financial benefits from the sports activities provided by your city are important?
31. Has the impact of sport events on society been assessed significantly or it was measured only the economic impact for your city?
32. Do you think that sport tourism is only accessible to highly paid social groups?
33. Can the sport events of your municipality create positive attitudes of the local community towards sports and physical health and well-being?

#### Marketing

34. What is the role of the media and sponsorship in the development of sport events in your municipality?
35. How could the sport events of your municipality be better advertised to other cities of Greece or abroad in order to attract sport tourists?
36. Do you think that it is important to promote the sights and features of your city, so as to contribute at the decision of selection of the destination for participating in sport events?
37. Do you agree with the view that the main source of advertising is word of mouth and if so, how do you think this can be achieved?
38. Do you have a plan to promote your city as a sport tourism destination?

#### Environment

39. Are the physical characteristics of your city an important factor for the selection as a sport destination?
40. Can your city offer to sport tourists, in addition to their participation in sports activities, proposals for the attractions such as historical sites, museums, parks, forests and shops?
41. What privileged features of your city would you highlight in order to make your destination attractive to sport tourists?

#### Cooperation

42. Do you consider the cooperation between the administrative and sport organizations important for the development of a sport city? Is there such cooperation in your municipality?
43. Do you think that private investment will improve the quality of sport services offered by your city?
44. If the competent organizations cooperate, how would it be done and what are the relations between them?
45. What are the factors that affect the cooperation between the competent organizations?
46. In your opinion, which initiative of a sport event (public or private) has succeeded and for what reasons?

#### Important elements in the decision-making process for visiting a sport event / destination

47. Is it easy to access the venues for sport events or accommodation/ hospitality?
48. Are there medical facilities and appropriate medical staff to ensure the health of the participants?
49. Are there suitable cleaning and hygiene conditions at the facilities of the sport destinations?
50. Is the staff adequate and is there an information desk?

51. Is there appropriate information about the sport event with promotional posters, information leaflets, websites and social media?
52. Are there offers, discounts and rewards for loyal participants?
53. Is there a variety of sport events?

# Destination Management and Development of sustainability-based Tourism in Oman

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## **Abstract**

*Even though Oman is major tourist destination it is faced with a number of sustainability issues. This research examines unsustainable issues associated with Oman's tourism destination management. The study also involves investigation of components that involve improvement in the conservation efforts, cultural and environmental education as well as ethics and responsibility. The study was conducted using different techniques of qualitative research: primary data collection (interviews) and secondary data collection. The interviews were used to identify the Oman's major tourist attractions and sustainability issues affecting the industry. The secondary data collected from the literature review were used to identify ways in which sustainable tourism development in the Omani tourism industry can be achieved. The result shows that there is lack of sufficient community involvement in tourism activities. The result also shows that there is lack of proper control of waste generation at the attraction sites. The results also indicate that there are laws and policies in place help in preservation and conservation tourism facilities. However, further strengthening is needed to increase the number of natural reserves from the available 15. The results of the analysis also show that in Oman, there is great tourism potential, because of the great management and conservation of natural resources.*

**Keywords:** *Ecotourism, Sustainable tourism, Oman, Destination management, Environment conservation*

## **1.Introduction**

The Sultanate of Oman has recently made serious priorities to its tourism and hospitality sectors so as to increase their contribution into the country's economy. Tourism industry has been identified as one of the industries that has a greater potential of catalyzing the growth of Oman's economy other than the oil sector (Bontenbal & Aziz, 2013). It is also seen a way of diversifying the country's oil-based economy. Serious efforts have been put by government to enhance investments into the industry (Bontenbal & Aziz, 2013). For example, the government has made serious large-scale investments into the industry by building infrastructure and hotels. Taxes and permits costs associated with operating businesses in the country tourism sector have been lowered (Bontenbal & Aziz, 2013). Priorities are also given to tourism sector related education. For instance, the government is currently encouraging citizens to train in courses associated with tourism and hospitality in preparation of tourism sector related job opportunities (Bontenbal & Aziz, 2013).

It is no doubt that tourism is amongst the world's largest industry if not the largest and employs more millions if not billions of people. In fact, it is estimated that tourism more than one ninth of the world's entre is employed in the tourism industry (Khan & Krishnamurthy, 2016; Prabhu, 2021). As of 2013 the industry was estimated to have directly employed more than 101 million people globally resulting into 2.155 trillion USD contribution to the global gross domestic product (GDP) (Conaghan et al., 2015; Khan & Krishnamurthy, 2016; Prabhu, 2021). By 2024 it is estimated that tourism industry will employ more than 126 million people (Khan & Krishnamurthy, 2016). It is for this reason that many nations around the world are viewing tourism industry as alternative and viable alternative ways of the supporting their economies.

Oman is not an exception. Tourism industry contributes more than 9% of the Oman's GNP (Prabhu, 2021). In Oman, as for 2014, 3.3% of the of the entre country's work force was employed in the tourism industry (Prabhu, 2021). This represented approximately 37000 people (Prabhu, 2021). In 2024, it is expected that the number of people who will be employed in the Oman's tourism industry will exceed 60000 people (Prabhu, 2021). Researchers have also shown that this industry can employ more than 535,000 Oman people if fully tapped (Prabhu, 2021).

Regardless of the huge contribution tourism industry makes in Oman's economy, the potential environmental and social impacts associated with the industry can may be significant if not managed in time. For instance, due to well development of the tourism industry in the Oman's coast, the rate of pollution along the country's beaches have gone up. People dump plastic waste and other non-biodegradable wastes along the coast. When these wastes find their way into the ocean, they can negatively affect the marine ecosystem so which are source of tourist attraction. Some of these plastic wastes are burnt by the hotel owners and local governments which contribute to air pollution. The problem has been worsened by the entry of the new players into the industry such as the public sector. Now the industry is dominated by both private sector players and government companies. Increase in participants in the Oman's tourism industry means potential increase in negative environmental and social impacts associated with the industry.

Therefore, research need to be carried out on the practical ways of helping Oman's tourism industry to move towards sustainable development. The results of the studies should focus on proposing new ways through which Oman's tourist destination can be managed in such a manner that is consistent with sustainable development. Focus should also be given to social, environmental and cultural of impacts of tourism on Oman's sustainable development.

This research examines unsustainable issues associated with Oman's tourism destination management. This is done through literature review (secondary research) and through primary research (interviews). The aim of the research is to identify destination-based success factors that necessary for the Oman's tourism destinations to attain sustainable development.

## **2.Literature review**

### *2.1 Environmental impacts of tourism*

The products that tourism industry sell are: unpolluted water, clean sandy beaches, perfect mountain slopes and terrains, diverse culture, litter-free streets, archeological sites, and well persevered historic buildings (Welford & Ytterhus, 2004). Because of this, tourism exerts pressure on nature just like other industries (Curtin & Busby, 1999). The industry produces waste products

which if not well managed may pollute environment (Arbulú et al., 2015; Arbulu et al., 2017; Martins & Cró, 2021; Mateu-Sbert et al., 2013; Mihai, 2013). The industry also consumes scarce resources either directly or indirectly. For instance, jewelry which is associated with tourism industry is scarce (Atamtajani, 2018; CHEN et al., 2019; Putra et al., 2018; Timothy, 2005). The industry also consumes abundant but environmentally unfriendly resources such as building blocks, stones and other materials. This is because for tourism industry to succeed, infrastructural development is needed (Khadaroo & Seetanah, 2007, 2008; Kolupaev et al., 2018; Seetanah et al., 2011). Development of infrastructure requires the aforementioned resources.

There is common assertion in the tourism industry that “tourists destroy tourism” (Ashworth, 2009; Qinglei et al., 2008; Welford & Ytterhus, 2004). This is because the very tourism activity that the tourist come to visit is what they destroy (Purvis, 2008; Väänänen, 2020; Welford et al., 1999). For instance, dumping of wastes in the beaches by the tourists destroy the beach and consequently destroy tourism in the long run (Ashworth, 2009; Purvis, 2008; Qinglei et al., 2008; Väänänen, 2020; Welford & Ytterhus, 2004; Welford et al., 1999). Regardless of the fact that tourism industry contributes to the destruction of tourism, little attention has been given towards controlling its impacts or preventing the its negative impacts onto the environment.

## *2.2 Socio-cultural impacts of tourism*

Tourism is also one industry that is heavily integrated into the host community. Being that it is dependent on the host community for its survival it exerts pressure on the other community resources (Al Haija, 2011; Honey, 2008; Kapera, 2018; Li, 2002). Since tourism industry tends to import clients rather than exporting finished products, the cultural difference between local community and tourist risk causing conflict between the tourists and the local community (Muganda et al., 2013; Richards & Hall, 2002; Yang et al., 2013). Because of the above, for the tourism industry to be sustainable, enhanced management of the tourism destinations must be done. Additionally, in order for the sustainable tourism to be achieved, the industry must incorporate all the activities of the host community. Doing this, helps avoid the conflict between tourists and the local community.

### *Some sustainable issues of tourism*

It is no doubt that tourism is associated with the following:

- i. Tourism as an industry or industrial activity, it consumes resources, has infrastructural needs and creates waste (lots of waste).
- ii. Since tourism industry consumes resources, it can overconsume resources leading to their depletion which is not sustainable.
- iii. The industry is resource dependent and must compete with other industries for the scarce resources so as to survive.
- iv. The industry is dominated by private developers who main is to maximize profit. As such, the industry gives little regard to sustainable development. This is because sustainable development has some cost implications which the private investors are unwilling to undertake.
- v. Being that the industry is multi-faceted, it is very difficult to have full control over its aspects.
- vi. Tourism generates incomes by importing clients as tourists rather than exporting products. This is unlike other industries where foreign exchange is only achieved via exportation of products.

- vii. Tourists are consumers and not anthropologists.

### *2.3 Sustainable tourism development*

Principle of sustainable tourism refers to involving economic, environmental and socio-cultural aspects in the tourism development. It involves achieving a suitable balance amongst the aforementioned dimensions. When this is done, a long-term sustainability and survival of the industry is assured. Thus, sustainable tourism should entail the following aspects:

- i. Since environmental resources are amongst the key aspects of tourism development, ecological processes must be maintained (UNWTO, 2020). This helps in conserving biodiversity and natural heritage (Buckley, 2012; Harris et al., 2012; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018; Lu & Nepal, 2009; UNWTO, 2020; Weaver, 2007).
- ii. Tourism must respect the socio-cultural aspects and authenticity of the host communities (Buckley, 2012; Harris et al., 2012; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018; Lu & Nepal, 2009; UNWTO, 2020; Weaver, 2007). Tourism activities must conserve traditional values and cultural heritage of the host communities (UNWTO, 2020). The activities associated with this industry should also enhance inter-cultural tolerance and understanding (Buckley, 2012; Harris et al., 2012; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018; Lu & Nepal, 2009; UNWTO, 2020; Weaver, 2007).
- iii. Tourism industry must also ensure that there exists long term and viable economic operations that provide socio economic benefits to all the stakeholders (Buckley, 2012; Harris et al., 2012; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018; Lu & Nepal, 2009; Weaver, 2007). Such economic benefits include employment opportunities and income earning activities for the local community (Buckley, 2012; Harris et al., 2012; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018; Lu & Nepal, 2009; Weaver, 2007). This helps in alleviating poverty amongst members of the local community (UNWTO, 2020).

Achieving sustainable tourism development needs an integrated participation of all stakeholders including political leadership (Buckley, 2012; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018; Weaver, 2007). This ensures that that a consensus amongst the stakeholders is built. It is, however, important to note that sustainable tourism cannot be achieved in a single event, it is continuous process that needs constant monitoring of its impacts and implementation of the corrective as well as preventive solutions where needed (Harris et al., 2012; Lu & Nepal, 2009; Weaver, 2007). A sustainable tourism should therefore be able to maintain high level tourist satisfaction by ensuring the best tourist experience while at the same time minding the environment and the local community (Buckley, 2012; Harris et al., 2012; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018; Lu & Nepal, 2009; Weaver, 2007).

### **3.Method and materials**

This research employed qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research which was carried out through interviews was done so as to identify the sustainability issues affecting Omani top tourist destinations: Muscat, Wahiba Sands and Salalah. Those interviewed included workers (especially cleaners), and local communities. Representatives of the local communities were interviewed so as examine how the tourism affects their authentic cultures and efforts undertaken the tourism firms and government to protect their culture. The local community was

also interviewed on the waste generation by the tourism so as to examine how the waste is managed and if they are satisfied. Workers especially those cleaners in the beaches and other attraction sites such as sand dunes were also involved in the study. They were involved because they understand how waste they deal with get generated and they the link between the proper waste management and the authorities in charge of the waste management. It is, however, important to note that due to the on going pandemic (Corona virus pandemic) and limited resources, only a few individuals participated in the each of the attraction sites (Muscat, Salalah and Wahiba Sands).

The target areas for the participants were the densely populated areas within the tourist attractions sites and destinations, and the attraction sites themselves. Densely populated areas were targeted so as to get accurate community perspective regarding the tourism activities in or near their areas of residence. The questionnaires used in the data collection were simple and all the were self-explanatory. Simple and self-explanatory questionnaires were used because these some of the participants were semi-literature. The data analysis was commenced after field work team emailed the questionnaires. Other than primary data which as mentioned above was collected via interviews, the research also involved secondary collection of data which were collected via literature review. This type of data collection is called is archival research since it involves collection of data from archives (libraries) which can be online or offline. The secondary data collected from the literature review were used propose the how the sustainable tourism development in the Omani tourism industry can be achieved. This involved understanding what entails sustainable tourism and how it can be applied to Omani's tourist destinations especially those that have not implemented sustainable tourism.

Two techniques were used in archival research: keyword technique and snowballing technique. Keyword technique involved typing keywords into the several online databases' search engines. Relevant articles were retrieved after brief abstract review. The snowball technique involved identifying relevant articles from the already downloaded and reviewed articles. The identified articles were retrieved from the databases and their abstract reviewed to check for their relevance. Relevant articles were retained and subjected to literature review process. The results of the archival research are presented in the literature review section of the research paper.

## **4.Results and discussion**

### *4.1 Attraction centers and tourist destinations*

Some of Omani top tourism destinations are: Muscat (offering forts, palaces, museums and markets), Salalah (Sandy beaches, waterfalls and Al Baleed Archaeological Site), Al Hajar Mountains (beautiful mountain ranges), Nizwa (The Nizwa fort), and Wahiba Sands (beautiful sand dunes and authentic traditional culture). Of these attraction centers and sites, participants showed that most of the attraction comes from Oman's architectural styles where the culture is well kept. The participants also indicated that all attraction sites are well preserved.

Another major tourist attraction is wildlife. Level of protection and wildlife preservation has been key in understanding the available opportunities sustainability means the culture and religious orientation of the community are preserved amidst improving tourism activities. Other top tourist attraction sites are the sandy beaches and desert sand dunes.



#### *4.2 Sustainability issues affecting Omani tourism industry*

Even though the Oman is well endowed with tourism attraction sites and the fact there is great improvement in the tourism sector, due to the implementation of rules and policies which govern the tourism sector, the country' tourism sector still lacks some aspects sustainable development. It is true that ecotourism (sustainable tourism) has been the key player in the success of the relatively young tourism industry. It has promoted the tourism sector by environmental conservation and educating people on the importance of using the available resources in handling tourists in the area. However, some little things tend to still affect this success. This may be attributed to the relatively young age of tourism industry. The main issues identified by those interviewed identified a number of factors affecting the sustainability of the country's tourism industry. These are discussed below.

##### *Lack of efficient control of waste generation by the tourist which affect the wildlife*

One of the major issues affecting sustainability of Omani tourism industry is lack efficient control of waste generation by the tourist. According to those who participated in the interview, waste generation by tourists is great challenge to some tourist destinations. For instance, waste was identified as one of the major factors affecting the desert sand dunes of Wahiba Sands, Salalah beaches and Muscat beaches. According to the participants (workers especially the cleaners), even though there are signs indicating where to dump wastes during the visits, some tourists (in fact most of the tourists) do not follow these directions. They tend to dump waste they generate where they feel convenient. At end of the day, the sand dunes look dirty and risk losing their attraction. Also, during strong winds (which are often experienced in Wahiba Sands and the beaches in Salalah and Muscat), these wastes may be carried to great distances into the desert or into the sea depending on the wind direction. These wastes destroy the natural environment of the wildlife which is important for their survival. These wastes may suffocate the wild animals (especially marine life) by blocking their gills. They may also prevent these animals from feeding thereby starving to death. The animals may also be poisoned wastes generated by the tourists. Another reason for the lack of proper control of waste generation by the tourists is lack of sensitization. According to the participants, even though the tourists are often briefed on how to carry out themselves while at the attraction sites (of which waste management is part of the training), some tourist still inappropriately dump waste.

##### *Socio-cultural effects of tourism on local communities*

Another major factor affecting sustainability of Omani tourism is the negative socio-cultural effects of tourism on the local communities. Oman is a nation dominated by Islamic culture and tourists coming to Oman come from different religious cultures. When compared to other religions, Islam tends to be strict on the type of food people eat, the type clothing people put on, modifications people do on their bodies such as tattoos, and general sexual behavior of people. But according to the participants, tourist tend to be violating Islamic rules which the local community does not feel right. Therefore, at times conflict between the tourists and local communities arise, according to the participants. Some of these conflicts stated below:

- i. Some type of food the tourists eat such as pork are considered haram and unclean by the local community. The local community feels offended when such haram activities are

allowed to take place in the land yet it (according to them) it is their responsibilities to maintain religious sanity of their land.

- ii. The type of dressing and hair styles are considered anti-Islam. For instance, tourists have especially ladies have been accused of being necked or half-necked which is against the culture of the local community.
- iii. Tattoos associated with some tourists are considered offending by the local communities.
- iv. Tourist have also been accused of engaging in haram activities such as engaging in premarital sexual activities with the local communities or amongst the tourist themselves.
- v. Tourism has also been accused of promoting prostitution within the local communities which is against their cultures and beliefs.

The reason for these concerns of the local communities and their conflict with tourists may be tied to the diversity of type of tourists Oman receives. Some of these tourists tend to come from backgrounds where these activities are treated as normal activities. Even though research show that most of Omani tourist come from fellow Asian countries (which are also Islam dominated), a good number of tourists consist of people originating from nations dominated with religious backgrounds. The country is visited with a good number of Chinese, Korean, Taiwanese and Japanese tourists who despite coming from Asia most of them are not Muslims. In these nations, certain foods considered haram in Oman (especially the local communities) are considered good food such as pork. Some tourists especially those coming from the cold areas such as those coming Scandinavian nations tend to not feel comfortable with the warm Omani climate. As result, they may wear lose cloths which local community may find offending. Some of the tourists are young and come from nations where fashion and half nakedness sell. When such people come to Oman, they may be tempted to follow these lifestyles which may not go well with the local community. This affects tourists from Western countries and Sub-Saharan Africa which are dominated by Christianity.

The conflict between the community and the tourists has been caused majorly by the lack of community involvement in the country's tourism sector. Even though the government has done a lot to promote the Omani tourism industry, it seems like the community is left behind. It is no doubt that the government has been very strict on conservation of the wildlife and environment so to enhanced ecotourism and make Oman a top tourism attraction centre. However, from above findings it observed that there is a great need for community involvement in the conservation of resources. The involvement will make them protect all the available resources because they will an understanding of their importance and this will promote sustainability. Community involvement may also help the community develop tolerance with the tourists.

#### *4.3 How to make Omani tourist destinations sustainable*

According to the results of this study, Omani tourism industry faces two major sustainability issues: lack of environmental sustainability and socio-cultural sustainability issues. The environmental sustainability issue is the waste generation by the tourists, and socio-cultural issues are conflicts associated with difference in religious backgrounds and beliefs between the tourists and local community. The following recommendations are proposed to make the Omani tourism industry sustainable.

#### *4.3.1 Ways of achieving environmental sustainability*

##### *a) Sensitization of the tourists on the importance of minimization of waste generation*

According to UNWTO (2020), ecological processes must be maintained, improved or preserved by tourism in order to achieve the environmental sustainability of tourism. As further explained by Buckley (2012), Harris et al. (2012), Higgins-Desbiolles (2018), Lu and Nepal (2009) and Weaver (2007), maintenance, preservation and improvement of ecological processes help in conserving biodiversity and natural heritage. Therefore, waste generated by the tourists must be minimized. Otherwise the environmental sustainability of Omani tourist industry may not be fully achieved. One way through which waste generation by the tourists can be minimized is through sensitization. Tourists visiting Omani tourist destinations should be sensitized on the importance of not generating wastes unnecessarily. Additionally, non-waste generating activities such as using reusable materials such as paper bags should be encouraged at the tourist destinations.

##### *b) Installation of several waste collection points in tourist destinations*

Even though a number of waste collection centers have been installed in Omani tourist destinations such as beaches, participants stated that these collections points are in sufficient and are difficult to spot by the tourists. It is recommended that the more waste collection points to be installed in the beaches and other tourist destinations. Owing to the large number of people at the beaches, it is recommended waste disposal points be installed at intervals of 60 meters or less. Additionally, these waste collection points should to be as conspicuous as possible. Conspicuous colors such as yellow and red should be used on the waste collection points with clear labels indicating that they are waste collection points.

##### *c) Banning of non-biodegradable plastic bags at the tourist destinations*

Owing to the negative effects of plastic bags to the ecosystem (especially marine life), the plastic bags should be banned in Omani tourist destinations. Plastic bags may chock fish, birds and other marine life. They also be eaten by these animals thereby killing these animals and other marine life. Therefore, the use of alternative biodegradable but reusable paper and cloth bags should be encouraged instead.

##### *d) Community involvement in environment conservation*

Community should be sensitized on the importance of environment protection and they should be encouraged to participate in activities that promote conserve the environment. These include: using reusable materials, correctly dumping of waste, collecting inappropriately disposed of waste. The involvement will make them protect all the available resources because they understand their importance and this will promote sustainability. The laws and policies in place have been key in the preservation and conservation process

#### *4.3.2 Ways of achieving socio-cultural sustainability by Omani tourist destinations*

As stated by UNWTO (2020), by Buckley (2012), Harris et al. (2012), Higgins-Desbiolles (2018), Lu and Nepal (2009) and Weaver (2007) tourism must respect the socio-cultural aspects and authenticity of the host communities. In this respect, tourism activities must conserve traditional values and cultural heritage of the host communities (UNWTO, 2020). Additionally, activities associated with tourism should enhance inter-cultural tolerance and understanding (Buckley, 2012; Harris et al., 2012; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018; Lu & Nepal, 2009; UNWTO, 2020; Weaver, 2007).

##### *a) Community involvement and sensitization*

For Omani tourism destinations to achieve the socio-cultural sustainability, it is recommended that both local communities in the Omani attraction sites and the tourists should be tolerance to each other since they all have different social backgrounds. Tolerance and understanding need to encouraged by sensitizing the local communities as well the tourists on the diversity that now exists in the once non-diverse community. Tolerance campaigns and seminars should be organized amongst the community members on the importance of peaceful co-existence amongst people from different cultural backgrounds regardless of their beliefs.

**b) Sensitization of the tourists**

Additionally, the tourists should be sensitized on the importance of respecting the culture and social aspects of the host community. In as much as they come from different social and cultural backgrounds, when in public places where they interact with the local community, they should be encouraged to carry out the themselves in a manner that conforms with the culture of the local community.

## **5. Conclusion**

The major sustainability issues that Omani tourism industry faces: lack of environmental sustainability and socio-cultural sustainability issues. The environmental sustainability issue is associated the waste generation by the tourists. The socio-cultural issues are associated with conflicts which emanate as a result of difference in religious backgrounds and beliefs between the tourists and local community occasioned by lack of community involvement. To make Omani tourism industry both environmentally and socio-culturally sustainable, the following remedial actions are recommended:

- i. Both local communities and the tourists should be tolerance to each other since they all have different social backgrounds. Therefore, both should be sensitized on the importance of peaceful co-existence of people with diverse cultural practices and beliefs. Sensitizing the community on the importance of tolerance is a way of enhancing community involvement in tourism activities.
- ii. Tourists visiting Omani tourist destinations should be sensitized on the importance of not generating wastes unnecessarily. Additionally, non-waste generating activities such as using reusable materials such as paper bags should be encouraged at the tourist destinations.
- iii. Banning of non-biodegradable plastic bags at the tourist destinations

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# Home-sharing and overtourism in the eyes of residents of a tourism city – the case of Cracow, Poland

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## Abstract

*Sharing economy platforms such as Airbnb are often perceived as one of the important factors fostering tourism development in cities leading to overtourism and establishment of antitourism attitudes among residents (Zwolińska-Ligaj & Kacprzak, 2019; Moreno-Gil & Stefaniak, 2020; Zmysłony et al., 2020). The paper presents the results of the research conducted among residents of the major city destination in Poland – Cracow. Residents were asked whether they can see and suffer in their everyday lives the typical effects of overtourism that can be strengthened by the development of home-sharing. Research questions were focused on the issues of prices, including real estate rents, quality of everyday life, and the number of tourists met in residents' neighborhoods. Respondents were asked about the impact of tourism on their lives, on their friends and relatives, and on the city.*

**Keywords:** Home sharing; overtourism; tourism impact; urban tourism; tourism ghetto; Cracow

## 1. Introduction

Last twenty years big cities have been becoming more and more popular and fashionable destinations (Namberger et al., 2019). However, this trend is relatively new and tourists became interested in visiting cities and researchers' involvement in city tourism began in the nineties of the 20th century. Additionally, contemporary cities are functioning in extremely dynamic conditions that are difficult to predict. Given the globalizing economy, progressive urbanization, rapid changes in information and communication technologies as well as social, demographic, geopolitical, and economic changes, new problems appear and their solutions have to be implemented by cities. Among the most significant challenges for cities' authorities is facing the problem of overtourism which is often perceived as particularly evident in many cities attracting more and more tourists (Milano, 2017; Koens et al., 2018; Capocchi et al., 2019; Namberger et al., 2019). Numerous reasons and consequences of the phenomenon were described in the literature (Goodwin, 2017; Koens et al., 2018; Peeters et al., 2018; Kuščer & Mihalič, 2019; Milano et al., 2019; Żemła, 2020). Often, among the most important trends supporting the development of overtourism in cities, uncontrolled development of the home-sharing platforms is pointed out (Jaremen et al., 2020; Moreno-Gil & Coca-Stefaniak, 2020; Żemła et al., 2021). Sharing economy platforms such as Airbnb are often perceived as one of the important factors fostering tourism development in cities leading to overtourism and establishment of antitourism attitudes among residents (Zwolińska-Ligaj & Kacprzak, 2019; Moreno-Gil & Coca-Stefaniak, 2020; Zmysłony et al., 2020). The paper presents the results of the research conducted among residents of the major city destination in Poland – Cracow. The aim of the paper was to detect if negative impacts usually

related to home-sharing are experienced by the citizens. Residents were asked whether they can see and suffer in their everyday lives the typical effects of overtourism that can be strengthened by the development of home-sharing. Research questions were focused on the issues of prices, including real estate rents, quality of everyday life, and the number of tourists met in residents' neighborhoods. Respondents were asked about the impact of tourism on their lives, on their friends and relatives, and on the city.

## **2.Literature review**

The sharing economy also referred to as collaborative consumption, peer-to-peer economy, and collaborative economy represents one of the most important current megatrends (Jaremen et al., 2020) that has an impact also on the development of contemporary tourism. The sharing economy concept has created markets out of things that were not regarded as monetizable properties before (Geron, 2013). As profit-based online platforms for the peer-to-peer sharing of consumer goods and services came into being, new ways for end-users to generate income from their possessions were provided. The growth of commercial internet platforms for P2P sharing such as Uber, Airbnb, Lyft, Housetrip, or HomeAway has switched the way people travel and is of great importance and a threat to the traditional tourism industry (Heo, 2016). The development of home-sharing platforms, particularly Airbnb, is often regarded among the most significant effects of the popularity of sharing economy (Füller & Michel, 2014; Horn & Merante, 2017; Wegemann & Jiao, 2017; Di Natale et al., 2018; Żemła et al., 2021).

The fast development of the sharing economy, including the home-sharing platforms, can be seen particularly in big cities, where the new business model finds many supporters and followers (Ključnikov et al., 2018). This trend is in line with the growing popularity of big cities as tourism destinations (Pasquinelli & Bellini, 2017; Koens et al., 2018; Namberger et al., 2019; Żemła, 2020). Since the impact of the development of the home-sharing is multidimensional and ambiguous with its positive or negative effect, the cities' authorities must be engaged in the process of its development to understand properly the scale and the direction of the development of the sharing economy in a particular city as well as its impact and to manage that development and to adopt the applicable regulations. This issue became even more urgent last few years as more and more research (Horn & Merante, 2017; Wegemann & Jiao, 2017; Di Natale et al., 2018; Celata & Romano, 2020; Jaremen et al., 2020) underlined the negative impact of home-sharing platforms, especially in the context of enhancing overtourism effect. A primary risk that arises from online home-sharing platforms is that they allow unlicensed accommodation providers to start their businesses and they do not comply with the existing public health and safety standards that would apply to tourism operators who comply with the regulations (Gurran, 2018). Another important issue often associated with the rapid development of home-sharing platforms is negative change on the real estate market in many cities (Dredge et al., 2016; Horn & Merante, 2017). The essence of that impact is related to the big increase in the demand for the houses and flats created by prospect runners of the home-sharing services (Wegemann & Jiao, 2017; Di Natale et al., 2018). This increase caused several consequences which can be observed in different places and on a different scale. In many places, short-term tourism rental appeared to be more profitable than long-term renting (Horn & Merante, 2017). The natural reaction of the market to the increasing demand for home-sharing services was also a cause of increasing prices



of real estate, both to be bought and to be rent (Jaremen, et al., 2020). The effect was also the growing shortages of properties available on the real estate market in particular cities. As a consequence, affordability issues also arose. Housing affordability issues made financially challenged residents seek additional income through renting, which resulted in even greater housing shortages (Dredge et al., 2016).

Another negative impact of home-sharing development enhancing overtourism often pointed in the literature is increased tourism penetration into the residential parts of a city (Goodwin, 2017; Celata & Romano, 2020; Jaremen et al., 2020; Żemła, 2020). Home-sharing platforms not only contribute to increasing the accommodation capacity of urban areas but radically change the morphology of the tourist city (Celata & Romano, 2020). According to Celata and Romano (2020) in that way, short-term rentals contribute to the displacement of residents more directly than a generic process of gentrification or touristification of more and more quarters.

### **3. Research methodology**

Located in the southern part of Poland, Cracow is the second biggest city in the country as well as the most crowded and the most frequently visited city destination. The city was also the subject of several studies including those that analyzed it in the context of overtourism (Plichta, 2019; Kruczek & Szromek, 2020; Szromek, et al. 2020; Zmyślony et al. 2020) and home-sharing (Żemła, et al., 2021).

To achieve the aim of the research a questionnaire containing 17 questions (table 1) was distributed among the residents of Cracow. Those questions helped to estimate the impact of overtourism that might have been enhanced by home-sharing development and how this impact is perceived by the residents. The respondents were asked about possible conflict situations created by overtourism. The respondents were also asked about their opinions in specific views and their opinions on the issues under consideration, as well as to indicate whether they find certain views true or false. The variants of answers were ranked by assigning them subsequent positions. The scale of grades used here was of five-grade nature in the integer interval from -2 to 2, i.e., it was calibrated in point 0, where values below zero meant disagreement with the opinion formulated, and above zero - consent to the opinion presented.

By averaging the results and performing a comparative analysis using nonparametric statistical tests, an inference could have been done. The results were presented with the value of the arithmetic mean, supplemented by the standard deviation ( $\bar{x}_{AV} \pm SD$ ). The research questionnaire was analyzed for reliability using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which in this case was 0.8916. With that, we can be convinced that the research tool is highly reliable. As many as 371 randomly selected respondents participated in the research. The questionnaire was distributed online using the snowball method. The collected size of the sample allowed to achieve the assumed reliability threshold of the random sample.  $\pm 5\%$  maximum statistical error of the sample and  $p=0.95$  confidence level were assumed in the study. The answers were collected between April and June 2020. That specific time allowed researchers to analyze and compare to opposite situations: overtourism typical for the beginning of that year and previous months as well as no-tourism during the pandemic limitations. To achieve that 12 questions in the questionnaire were connected with overtourism while another 5 were dedicated to the estimation of respondents' opinions about no-tourism.

#### 4. Findings and analysis

The statistical analysis of the obtained data took into account questionnaires obtained from 371 respondents. There were slightly more women (67%) than men (33%) among the respondents. The essential part of the respondents is people in the middle age of 30-50 (49%) and young age (39%). Mature people aged 50-70 accounted for 12% of the population in the research. Most of the respondents had higher education (83%); 15% had secondary education. The vast majority of the respondents are permanent residents of Cracow (77%), while the other ones (23%) are people who lived outside the city but carried out various professional activities in these places. The interviewers collected data in various places of the surveyed destination. With that, information from different locations could have been collected. And so, 27% of the respondents lived in the center of the surveyed tourist destinations, 50% of the respondents lived around the center, i.e. in districts adjacent to the city center, and the other ones (23%) were city outskirts representatives. Almost more than half of respondents (55%) are inhabitants of Cracow who have been living there for over 20 years, and 13% have been living there for 11 to 20 years. Only 6% of the respondents have lived in this area for 2 years or shorter.

As it has already been mentioned, obtaining the respondents' opinions was based on a five-point scale containing extreme assessments of compliance with the previously formulated opinion. Then, these assessments were quantified, reducing them to a rating between -2 and 2, and then averaging the obtained scores. The close to zero ( $0.0 \pm 0.05$ ) result indicates that the respondents did not make a clear decision regarding subsequent opinions. With two subsequent ranges, the ratings expressing consent or objection to the formulated opinions can be graded. The rating here that ranges  $|0.05 \div 1.00|$  indicates moderate agreement or objection, while the rating in the  $|1.01 \div 2.00|$  range expresses clear compliance or objection.

Taking into account the adopted methodology, a table of mean scores for individual opinions (Tab. 1) was obtained. As it is visible in table 1 respondents moderately agreed that prices of real estate increased and their accessibility reduced due to home-sharing. They can see also higher prices of other goods and services which might be the effect of the increased number of tourists. They also hardly can see tourists renting apartments in their neighborhoods. Additionally, they claim that their quality of life is not influenced negatively by tourists renting apartments. Cracow inhabitants noticed the negative impact of tourism development mainly on a quite abstract notion of a location, but they definitely less often noticed it in their own lives. It can therefore be assumed that the inhabitants of destinations can isolate their private lives from the negative influences of tourism. By doing so, they only observe these influences but do not experience them. However, those results are radically different for a group of residents of the city center, including the historical Old City. It may be stated that they confirm experiencing all kinds of negative impacts of tourism included in the research. In questions where all respondents agreed with the existence of the impact (Q3, Q4), responses of inhabitants of the city center were much more radical, and in other questions where the general group denied the existence of the impact, they still were positive about its existence and in few cases (Q5, Q8) their agreement was really strong. The only thing that respondents living in the city center didn't confirm was the issue of security (Q11). Even though the respondents generally don't suffer too much the negative impact of tourism in their everyday lives, they confirmed, that they expected that post-pandemic

tourism was going to be more inhabitants-friendly (Q17). Residents of the city center again presented the same attitude, but their expectations were expressed by far much stronger.

Table 1 Average Rank Values in Consecutive Respondents' Opinions

No	Opinion	All Respondents Average Rank Values	City Centre Inhabitants' Average Rank Values
Q1	The number of tourists that visited the city/village was far too high	0.25±1.28	0,48±1,44
Q2	The large number of tourists that visited the city/village caused me discomfort	-0.23±1.43	0,31±1,54
Q3	Due to tourists, prices in shops and service outlets in the city are higher	0.56±1.23	0,6±1,44
Q4	Since residential premises are used for tourist rental, the availability of residential facilities for residents is limited, and their prices are increasing	0.47±1.32	0,52±1,46
Q5	In my neighbourhood, many apartments and houses are rented to tourists	-0.35±1.46	1,29±1,16
Q6	Tourists who live in my neighbourhood harm the quality of my life	-0.81±1.42	0,14±1,49
Q7	I do not use catering establishments where there are always many tourists	-0.06±1.45	0,25±1,53
Q8	A large number of tourists in the city/village causes traffic jams and parking problems	-0.11±1.32	0,88±1,33
Q9	Communication problems caused by a large number of tourists were the cause of my irritation	-0.52±1.39	0,66±1,43
Q10	The local security level is lower due to the number of tourists and their behavior	-0.35±1.32	0,12±1,45
Q11	I didn't feel safe in my city/ village because of the tourists	-0.94±1.24	- 0,37±1,45
Q12	Because of too many tourists in the city, I did not like spending my free	-0.29±1.41	0,17±1,46

	time there		
Q1 3	Without tourists, the city/village loses part of its charm	0.02±1.47	- 0,34±1,51
Q1 4	The lack of tourists was one of the factors that resulted in the improvement of the natural environment	0.64±1.28	0,82±1,33
Q1 5	I started to miss seeing tourists now	-0.47±1.38	-0,68±1,4
Q1 6	The city/village without tourists is a more friendly place to live	0.04±1.34	0,49±1,37
Q1 7	I hope that once the epidemiological threat is over, tourism in the city/village will change to be more inhabitants-friendly	0.67±1.16	1,11±1,07

The results obtained may suggest that tourism is strongly concentrated in the city center in Cracow and inhabitants of the other districts do not exercise the effects of overtourism. Confirmation of this can be found in official data provided by local authorities (<https://ekon.um.krakow.pl>). According to this data out of 1054 apartments and rooms for rent officially operating in Cracow, 787 (75%) are located in the Old City. Similar proportions, but much bigger numbers might be found in the data available on the Airdna web page ([www.airdna.co](http://www.airdna.co)). According to this data, there are 5519 (62%) apartments and rooms for rent listed in the home-sharing platforms (mainly Airbnb – 82%) and among them, 3410 are located in the City Center. Looking at this data it is worth remembering that the Old City is just one of nineteen quarters of the city which states for only 1,7% of the surface of the whole city and where 4,5% of citizens live. This creates a picture of a huge concentration of tourism in a very small part of the city. It is easier to understand the reasons for well-differentiated estimation of the impact of tourism by residents of the city center and the residents of the other quarters.

## 5. Discussion

The strong concentration of tourism and its negative impact in the central district of the city creates for the authorities responsible for its development a very important choice. Continuation of contemporary trends may change the Old City into a tourist ghetto (Vaníček, 2019; Volo, 2020), but this may prevent negative effects of overtourism spread across the city. Redistribution strategy (Panayiotopoulos, Pisano, 2019; Camati et al., 2020) may lower tourism pressure in the city center but it also brings a threat that more residents exercise negative impacts of tourism. Both solutions have pros and cons and both of them were implemented in various places and both of them were supported and criticized in the literature (Dumbrovská, 2017; Goodwin, 2017; Camati et al., 2020; Żemła, 2020). The local authorities' task is even harder as they can have only limited influence on the market processes. The development of the home-sharing market has its own dynamics which might be difficult to steer. High attractiveness of real estate located in

historical quarters of a city supports continuous tourism gentrification of those quarters. Alfama in Lisbon is often given as an example of this trend (Castela, 2018; Lestegás, 2019; Sequera & Nofre, 2020). In the context of this quarter, Sequera and Nofre (2020) use even the word Airbnbisation to underline how crucial the role of home-sharing is in unprecedented gentrification. According to those authors, touristification and Airbnbisation in Alfama have disrupted processes of gentrification and studentification occurring in the area since the late 1990s and early 2000s, transforming the entire neighborhood into an 'outdoor hotel' (Sequera & Nofre, 2020). A similar situation was detected also in other attractive cities like Barcelona (Cocola-Gant & Lopez-Gay, 2020), Dubrovnik (Camatti et al., 2020; Capocchi et al., 2020), or Venice (Celata & Romano, 2020). Definitely, the situation observed in the Cracow Old City is very close to those examples.

However, at the same time, another phenomenon can be observed in the development of home-sharing offers. Online home-sharing platforms for visitor accommodation blur the traditional boundaries between residential and tourist areas (Gurran & Phibbs, 2017). Providing accommodation in a district that has not been visited by tourists has become an attractive option for earning money for owners of flats and houses, and it attracted numerous guests lured by Airbnb's slogan 'live like a local' (Goodwin, 2017). It soon turned out that the city inhabitants who were able to bypass the tourist traffic by passing by the historic city centers where tourist traffic was focused, currently cannot do this, as they meet numerous tourists using accommodation services in facilities immediately next to them (Ključnikov et al., 2018; Źemła, 2020). Concerning those statements, the redistribution strategy seems to be risky, as it may support further "invasion" of home-sharing platforms and touristification of more districts in a city. Regarding the answers collected from the residents of the other districts of Cracow and their rather calm relation to the impact of tourism on their lives may suggest that this process has not started in the city yet.

Responses of all citizens of Cracow prove that they expect post-pandemic tourism to be much more residents-friendly in the future. Contemporary time of very limited scale of tourism temporarily hiding most of the problems connected with overtourism is the time for local authorities and other tourism stakeholders to reconsider the future priorities and directions of development. A long time of pandemic regulations and of low level of tourism traffic impacted also the home-sharing market. According to the Airdna web page ([www.airdna.co](http://www.airdna.co)) between the fourth quarter of 2019 and the first quarter of 2021 the number of listings available in Cracow diminished by 30%. Profitability of tourism short-term rental is lower and at least a part of apartments offered before via home-sharing platforms is now rented for residents as a long-term rental. It is difficult to predict if this trend is going to be continued in the post-pandemic reality, however, local authorities should be prepared for different scenarios. Expectations for such preparation were clearly declared by the respondents in the presented research.

## **6. Conclusions**

Results obtained from the research among residents of Cracow present a picture of a city with two completely different zones. In the opinions of citizens, the Old City is a place with a huge density of tourism, including home-sharing offers, where all negative impacts of overtourism might be exercised. Oppositely, the other districts are free from overtourism and tourists do not

disturb their residents too much. Still, the appearance of particular offers of home-sharing in those quarters impacts negatively the situation on the local real estate market, and the demand created by tourists also enhances rising prices in local shops. The situation described in the results creates a very important condition for local authorities about supporting of one of directions of future development of home-sharing and whole tourism in the city. Those directions are the further development of tourism in the Old City and protection of the other districts or redistribution of tourism and spreading it more equally throughout the city.

The results add value for contemporary scientific knowledge about the tourism impact exercised by the residents of a city. However, further research is necessary to better understand how this perception of the tourism impact on the general location is translated into residents' attitudes towards tourism. It should also be kept in mind that that the presented research results illustrate specific attitudes of residents observed in a specific moment of exceptionally dynamic reality. At the time this text is written, there are still no unambiguous forecasts showing the expected directions of the tourism development during and after the pandemic threat. The scale of economic losses to be suffered by tourism and the entire hospitality industry in connection with the pandemic, how the travel directions will change, and, above all, how the number of tourists will change - these factors are also unknown. However, obviously, the development of the pandemic is dynamic, and also the attitude of people towards this threat, necessary regulations, and above all, social and economic consequences are also changing. Answers collected among the same group of respondents several months later could have been significantly different than those obtained in Spring.

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