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Proceedings of the 5th International Conference on Tourism Research

A Conference hosted by
Polytechnic Institute of Porto
Portugal
19-20 May 2022

Edited by
Prof. Cândida Silva, Prof. Mónica Oliveira
and Prof. Susana Silva

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Proceedings of the

5th International Conference on Tourism Research

ICTR 2022

Hosted By

The School of Hospitality and Tourism (ESHT)
Polytechnic Institute of Porto
Portugal

19-20 May 2022

Review Process

Papers submitted to this conference have been double-blind peer reviewed before final acceptance to the conference. Initially, abstracts were reviewed for relevance and accessibility and successful authors were invited to submit full papers. Many thanks to the reviewers who helped ensure the quality of all the submissions.

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Preface

These proceedings represent the work of contributors to the 5th International Conference on Tourism Research (ICTR 2022), hosted by The School of Hospitality and Tourism, of Polytechnic Institute of Porto, Portugal on 19-20 May 2022. The Conference Co-Chairs are Prof. Cândida Silva, and Prof. Mónica Oliveira and the Programme Chair is Prof. Susana Silva, all from School of Hospitality and Tourism of Polytechnic Institute of Porto (ESHT/P.PORTO), Portugal.

ICTR is a well-established event on the academic research calendar and now in its 5th year the key aim remains the opportunity for participants to share ideas and meet the people who hold them. The scope of papers will ensure an interesting two days. The subjects covered illustrate the wide range of topics that fall into this important and ever-growing area of research.

The opening keynote presentation is given Dr. Luís Araújo, President of Turismo de Portugal on the topic of *Tourism: Time to act.* The second day of the conference will open with an address by Professor Marianna Sigala, University of Piraeus, Greece, who will talk about *Advertising Tourism During COVID-19: Marketization of compassion or re-setting tourism*.

With an initial submission of 128 abstracts, after the double blind, peer review process there are 57 Academic research papers, 7 PhD research papers, 3 Masters Research papers and 5 work-in-progress papers published in these Conference Proceedings. These papers represent research from Austria; Bulgaria; Canada; China; Cyprus; Czech; Finland; Greece; Ireland; Italy; Japan; Peru; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Slovakia; South Africa; Spain; Switzerland; Turkey; UAE; UK; USA; Vietnam.

We hope you enjoy the conference.

Prof. Cândida Silva, Prof. Mónica Oliveira and Prof. Susana Silva

The School of Hospitality and Tourism, of Polytechnic Institute of Porto
Portugal
May 2022

ICTR Conference Committee

Biographies

Conference and Programme Chairs

Cândida Silva is a Professor of Technologies and Information Systems at School of Hospitality and Tourism of Polytechnic Institute of Porto (ESHT/P.PORTO), Portugal. President of Technical-Scientific Council and Head of International Relations of ESHT/P.PORTO and was Director of Department of Informatics and Mathematics of ESHT/P.PORTO. Her PhD was in in Information Systems and Technologies, Master in Industrial Engineering, and a Degree in Computer Science Engineering, all by School of Engineering of University of Minho. Candida is a principal researcher of CiTUR – Centre for Tourism Research, Development and Innovation. Researcher and a collaborator in the group of Information Systems and Technologies for the Transformation of Organizations and Society (ISTTOS) at the Algoritmi Centre of the University of Minho. She is an active member the organization committee of several national academic seminars and conferences, reviewer of several international conferences and journals, and has several scientific papers and communications.

Mónica Oliveira holds the title of Specialist in Hotel and Restaurant studies, Vice-President and professor at School of Hospitality and Tourism of the Polytechnic of Porto. She developed the training, coordination, educational guidance for Turismo de Portugal from 1998 to 2017 and was nominated by Turismo de Portugal to prepare their exams and be a member of the evaluation jury. She was also appointed as a representative of Turismo de Portugal for evaluation of the Final Assessment Tests of some Professional Courses in active service. Both her professional and research experience in Tourism and Hospitality since 1991, gives her the ability to critically analyse market needs and future trends.

Susana Silva is a full professor at School of Hospitality and Tourism of Polytechnic Institute of Porto (ESHT/P.PORTO), with master and PhD degrees in Psychology. She teaches in the degree and master courses of restaurant management, tourism, and hospitality. Currently, she is the President of Pedagogical Council and Head of Communication Office at ESHT/P.PORTO. Member of the Unit of eLearning and Pedagogical Innovation of P.PORTO (EIPP/P.PORTO) As researcher, she integrates as principal researcher CEOS.PP – Centre of organizational and social studies and as research collaborator CiTUR – Centre for Tourism Research, Development and Innovation. Her research interests are in the field of social sustainability, human resources management, leadership, communication, hard and soft skills, research methodologies, costumer behaviour applied to the field of tourism and hospitality. She has been member of the organization and scientific committee of several national and international academic seminars and conferences, and has several scientific papers and communications.

Keynote Speakers

Luis Araújo has been the President of Turismo de Portugal (Portuguese National Tourism Authority) since February 2016. He is also President of ETC – European Travel Commission, a role he took on in September 2020 and President of NEST – Tourism Innovation Center in Portugal. He has a background in Law, and he started his career in the Legal Department of the Pestana Group. He has worked both with the Pestana Group and held roles on their boards specializing in Hispanic America hotels operations (Argentina, Venezuela, Colombia and Cuba) for many years. He served the Portuguese Government as Head of the Cabinet of the Portuguese Secretary of State for Tourism between 2005 and 2007.

Marianna Sigala is a Professor at the University of Piraeus, Greece. She previously held the position of the Professor of Tourism and the Director of the Centre for Tourism & Leisure Management at the University of South Australia (2015 – 2021). She has also been an academic staff at the University of Strathclyde and Westminster University (UK), and the University of the Aegean (Greece). Her academic credentials are combined with her professional experience in the tourism industry. Her interests include services and experience management, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in tourism and hospitality, as well as wine tourism. She is a widely published and multi-awarded authority: nine books, numerous papers in academic journals, and (keynote) presentations in international conferences.

Mini Track Chairs

Daniel Binder studied Health Management in Tourism and teaches in German and English as a senior lecturer at FH JOANNEUM University of Applied Sciences in the fields of marketing, tourism research, destination development as well as communication and digitalization. His responsibilities also include the development of study programs and the management of research projects in (health-)tourism education and training, and (digital-)tourism research.

Ana Caldeira holds a PhD in Tourism from the University of Aveiro and is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Geography and Tourism, University of Coimbra. Her research focuses on spatiotemporal tourist behaviour and on the management of tourist experiences in heritage attractions and urban destinations. She coordinated the "Evaluation study of the implementation of the Action Programmes of PROVERE in the Centro Region (2016-2018)" and currently integrates the research teams of the FCT project "TWINE - Co-creating sustainable Tourism & WINe Experiences in rural areas".

Fernanda A. Ferreira is a full Professor at the School of Hospitality and Tourism of Polytechnic of Porto, Portugal. She is Director of the Department of Information Systems and Mathematics. She holds a M.Sc. (in 2002), and a PhD in Applied Mathematics from the University of Porto (in 2007). A researcher and coordinator of UNIAG (Applied Management Research Unit, since 2013), her publications, more than 120, cover her main research interest areas Tourism Research, Hospitality Management, Industrial Organization, and Operational Research. (ORCID ID: orcid.org/0000-0002-1335-7821).

Carlos Cardoso Ferreira, PhD in Geography (Regional and Local Planning) from the University of Lisbon. He is assistant Professor in the Department of Geography and Tourism, University of Coimbra, Portugal. He has coordinated several national and international projects, on tourism in coastal areas; social tourism; territorial and tourism planning and development. He is a member of the Alliance on Training and Research in Social and Fair Tourism. His research i9nterests include geography(s) of tourism; social and inclusive tourism; regional and local planning and development; tourism analytics.

Malgorzata Lesniak-Johann is a social-economic geographer and an environmentalist. Her dissertation was on "The Competitiveness of Polish – German Borderland". Currently She is working at University of Business in Wroclaw Poland (Assistant Professor, Chair of Tourism and Recreation). She's responsible for teaching students in the field of political and economic aspects of tourism development in regions. She cooperates with many NGO-s and Local Governments from The Lower Silesian Region supporting them with professional analysis and participating in the common projects. Malgorzata has written four books and many papers on relation on Polish-German Borderland and tourism as a development factor of regions.

Jorge Marques is Assistant Professor at the University Portucalense (UPT), researcher at REMIT - Research in Economics, Management and Information Technologies and CEGOT - Centre of Studies on Geography and Spatial Planning. He holds a PhD in Tourism, Leisure and Culture, from the University of Coimbra (Portugal). Over the last few years, he has developed research in the area of events, more specifically in the area of business events (Business Tourism)

António Melo is Professor at the School of Hospitality and Tourism, Polytechnic Institute of Porto and a member of CiTUR (Centre for Tourism Research, Development and Innovation) and CIDTFF (Research Centre on Didactics and Technology in the Education of Trainers). His educational background includes an undergraduate degree in Hotel Management, a Master Degree in Management and a PhD in Education. Antonio has more than 25 years of practical experience working in hospitality management and almost 20 years in academia.

Carla Melo is Professor at the School of Hospitality and Tourism, Polytechnic Institute of Porto, and collaborating member of CiTUR: Centre for Tourism Research, Development and Innovation. Her educational background includes an undergraduate degree in Tourism Planning & Management and a Master's Degree in Information Management (University of Aveiro). Currently, Carla is developing her PhD research in transformational tourism experiences, and, in parallel, she also carries out research in the area of tourism education practices.

Christopher Moon is a multiple award-winning eco and social entrepreneur and Senior Lecturer in eco-entrepreneurship at Middlesex University. He has a PhD from Imperial College and is a fellow of the RSA, HEA and EEUK. He was formerly Head of Sustainability at two companies and teaches sustainable tourism, sustainable business and entrepreneurship and sustainability. He has over 100 publications including in the International Journal of Hospitality Management 2018. Chris has taken tourism students to Mallorca on study tour regularly where Middlesex has an Erasmus agreement with UIB, Palma. He has presented at UIB international week and was interviewed by Spanish TV on sustainable tourism.

Alcina Nunes, PhD in Economics, is a Professor in Business and Social Sciences at the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança, Portugal. She is responsible for the bachelor degree in International Business Management (European Degree) and is an integrated member of UNIAGShe has collaborated with national and international higher education institutions throughout her academic activity, participated in research projects, and published scientific articles in conference proceedings, indexed scientific journals, and book chapters.

Birgit Phillips holds a Masters degree in transcultural communication and a PhD in education sciences and is a certified systemic coach. In her current position at the University of Graz, she leads a research project on digital literacy in tourism education. Her research interests include transformative learning, intercultural and gender studies. Her work and her teaching and research activities have provided her with opportunities at various universities in Europe, the USA and Asia.

Norberto Santos is Full Professor in the Department of Geography and Tourism at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Coimbra (Portugal), where he directs the Ph.D. in Tourism, Heritage and Territory; he is the coordinator of the RG Tourism, Heritage and Territory of the CEGOT - Centre of Studies in Geography and Spatial Planning (R&D unit of the Portuguese Scientific and Technological System). He is also the manager of the UNESCO Chair/Unitwin Cultural Tourism and Development, Paris 1 Sorbonne - Pantéon (FLUC-DGT).

Sandra Vasconcelos is Professor at the School of Hospitality and Tourism, Polytechnic Institute of Porto, and at Águeda School of Technology and Management, University of Aveiro, Portugal. She holds a PhD in Multimedia in Education and is an integrated member of the Research Centre Didactics and Technology in Education of Trainers. In addition to teaching English for Specific Purposes, she has been involved in different international projects involving mobile learning, heritage management and tourism education.

Biographies of Contributing Authors

Elhaam Abrahams is a Masters' Degree candidate at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town, SA. She specialises in Tourism & Hospitality and is due to graduate in 2022. Her main research interests include educational tourism; tourism development; sustainable community development & tourism marketing research.

Hilal Akdemir studied Tourism and Hospitality Management at the Yeditepe University of Turkey. In 2019, she completed her master's degree in Bogazici University on Sustainable Tourism Management subject. Now, she is a PhD student of CinTurs (Research Center for Tourism, Sustainability and Well-being), in the subject of Tourism in the University of Algarve, Portugal.

Mohammad M. Alazaizeh is an Associate Professor in Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management at the College of Communication and Media Sciences, Zayed University, UAE. Dr. Alazaizeh uses interdisciplinary research methods to study and address tourism sites development, planning and management issues. His research provides information to help scientists, site managers, and tourism professionals manage visitors and their experiences.

Vera Antunes, attending a PhD in Communication Sciences at the University of Beira Interior, with the work plan entitled "The Influence of Strategic Communication in the Projection of Portugal as a Thermal Tourism Destination", funded by FCT. She is a researcher in LabCom and member of SOPCOM. Her current research interests are strategic communication and thermalism.

Shahboz Babaev is a PhD student at the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest. He received his Bachelor's degree in International Business from University Malaysia Perlis in 2014. He completed his Masters in Business in 2016. Areas of expertise include Irish and Uzbek foreign direct investments, tourism and poverty in Central Asia.

Alberto Badenes-Rocha is Research and Teaching Fellow at the University of Valencia. His research interests focus on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), communication strategies through social networks and customer engagement, especially in the tourism sector. He has contributed in more than 15 international conferences.

Alina Badulescu is professor of Economics at the University of Oradea, Romania, and doctoral advisor in Economics and in Business Administration. She is editorial board member, guest editor and reviewer for international journals and conferences, her research being focused on tourism economics, entrepreneurship, innovation etc.

Hilary Bama is a Senior Lecturer in tourism at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town, SA. He received his PhD in Tourism & Hospitality from the University of Johannesburg in 2018. His main research interests include mega-events legacies; tourism development; sustainable community development & African political economy of mega-event research.

Christoph Bauer is a university assistant at the institute of educational sciences at the University of Graz in Austria and is currently working on his PhD about educational opportunities and social participation opportunities. Furthermore, he works on a project about digital literacy in tourism and one about pandemic resilience in Styria. His research interests include social inequality, intercultural studies and empirical lifeworld research.

Karl Bolton 25-year corporate career including working in Zimbabwe and South Africa. Studied marketing and business studies prior to moving into tourism. Worked for several travel companies, including First Choice, Nielsen, Flight Centre and Explore. Managed numerous departments including leading product, contracting, customer service and marketing teams. Industry experience enables him to relate lecture content to real life scenarios assisting student learning. Nominated for lecturer of year at university institutions in 2018/19 and 2919/20 academic years.

José Luís Braga assistant professor at Institute of Higher Studies of Fafe (IESF) and guest lecturer at the *European Master on Wine Tourism Innovation - WINTOUR*. 10 year's experience aslecturer at a higher education level. PhD in *Tourism Planning and Management* from University of Santiago de Compostela, in scientific field of Rural Tourism; received MS in Tourism and Regional Development from Catholic University of Portugal in 2007. Fellow of Portuguese Association for the History of Wine (APHVIN).

Michael Brett is the author of 12 books on conservation and tourism in Kenya, South Africa and the USA. His primary research interests are ecotourism, environmental history and Critical Theory. He is a lecturer in the Education Faculty at the University of Zululand, Kwa Dlangezwa, South Africa.

Amanda Cecil is in her 20th year on the Indiana University's Tourism, Event, and Sport Management faculty. As a Professor, she teaches several courses in event management and international travel. Currently, she serves as the Director of the Event & Tourism Institute and the editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Conventions & Event Tourism.*

Alexandra I. Correia, holds a Ph.D. from Bournemouth University (UK) and is a lecturer and researcher in the tourism field at School of Technology and Management (ESTG), of Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo (IPVC), and of Applied Management Research Unit (UNIAG), and Centre for Tourism Research, Development and Innovation (CITUR)

Berta Costa is a PhD student in Tourism at the University of Seville. She graduated in Portuguese and English at the University of Coimbra. She is an Assistant Lecturer at the School of Tourism and Maritime Technology (IPLeiria), Portugal. She is a researcher at CITUR-IPLeiria since 2018 and her research comprises circular economy, sustainability and tourism.

Vânia Costa has a PhD in Economics from the University of Vigo. She is an Assistent Professor in the School of Hospitality and Tourism of Polytechnic Institute of Cávado and Ave, a full researcher of CiTUR, a researcher of GOVCOPP and UNIAG. Her current research interests include Human Capital in Tourim, Sustainable Tourism, Corporate Finance for Tourism Industry and Air Transport.

Carlos R. Cunha, PhD in Computer Science. He is currently Vice-Dean of the School of Communication, Administration and Tourism of the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança. He is integrated member of the Applied Management Research Unit (UNIAG) where is main research topic is ICT in Tourism.

John Deely is a post-doctoral researcher in NUI Galway. He was awarded a PhD in environmental economics in 2019. He has worked on the ALICE project examining the use of blue-green infrastructures networks. John is currently working on the UISCE tourism project which aims to identify policies that can create a sustainable marine tourism sector.

Lenka Dzúriková She is a PhD student in Tourism at the Department of Tourism at the Faculty of Economics, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia. Her research is focused on destination management, on the performance of destination management organizations and sustainable tourism development.

Paula Escudeiro is Professor at Porto Polytechnic. Ph.D. in Computer Science. Director of the Research Unit GILT. External Evaluator/Expert for the European Commission and associated agencies. Researcher and coordinator in the field of Learning Technology. Editor of several journals and Books.

Author of over 100 scientific articles. Author of the Patent No. 20151000065572 Bidirectional Translator Sign Language

Hazal Eser is research assistant at Baskent University, Tourism Management Department. Her research interests include human resource management practices, employer branding, employee attitudes and behavior and deviant workplace behaviors.

Sofia Teixeira Eurico Professor at the Polytechnic of Leiria, was the Coordinator of the Tourism Degree during 7 years. received her Ph.D. in Tourism from the Faculty of Economy, University of Algarve. Key research areas are Higher Educadion in Tourism; Ethics; Social Responsibility and Sustainability in Tourism. Effective member of CiTUR - Centre for Tourism Research, Development and Innovation and associated member of CIEO - Research Center for Spatial and Organizational Dynamics.

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Paula Odete Fernandes, PhD in Economics and Management, Professor of Management at Polytechnic Institute of Bragança, Portugal, (1992). Researcher/Scientific Coordinator of UNIAG (Applied Management Research Unit, 2013); was a researcher at NECE-UBI, 2010-2017. Participated in international /national R&D projects (7 as Responsible Researcher). Published over 200 publications in peer-reviewed journals, book chapters and proceedings;won 10 scientific awards. Serving member of Program Board and Organising Committees for some Scientific Committees of International Conferences and collaborates as reviewer with several journals. (ORCID: orcid.org/0000-0001-8714-4901).

Ana Ferreira is a Professor at the Tourism and Leisure Department of the School of Hospitality and Tourism (Polytechnic Institute of Porto), Portugal. She holds a PhD in Tourism from the University of Vigo under the "Water, Sustainability and Development" program. Ana's research work lies in different types of tourism, mainly literary, sustainable and event tourism. Researcher in CiTUR, (https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2908-1599)

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Chris Hattingh is a lecturer in the Department of Tourism and Events Management at the Faculty of Business and Management Sciences at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa. His primary research interests relate to leisure, tourism and events marketing. He has published in top refereed international journals including the Journal of Homosexuality, Sport in Society and the International Journal of Tourism Cities.

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Yuko Hoshino graduated from the Kogakuin University Department of Electrical Engineering Information Engineering Course in 1998 and Graduate school of Engineering Informatics Program in 2000, Japan. In the same year, she joined CREO CO. LTD. She is currently a junior associate professor at Tokai University School of Information and Telecommunication Engineering, Tokyo, Japan.

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Sandra Macher BA MA, born in 1994, completed her bachelor's degree in "Sociology" at Karl Franzens University in Graz in 2018 and her master's degree "Health Tourism and Leisure Management" at FH JOANNEUM University of Applied Sciences in 2020. Already during her studies, Sandra Macher worked as a research assistant at the Institute *Health and Tourism Management* on the project *Digi-T* (Digital Literacies in Styrian Tourism).

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Fátima Matos Silva holds a PhD at the University of Granada in 2008 (European Doctorate). Since 1988, she works as a researcher (REMIT and CITCEM Research Centres), professor and coordinator of study cycles at Universidade Portucalense, Portugal. In this scope, she directed several research projects, edited seven books and more than eighty articles.

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Taiga Mori was received the Information and Telecommunication Engineering from Tokai University, Tokyo Japan, in 2021. He is now a master course student of Tokai University. His research interest includes Human Interfaces using gaze information and natural language processing.

Margarida Mota Degree in Economics (2017) and Master in Financial Economics (2019) by the Faculty of Economics of the University of Coimbra. Currently, Master's student in Tourism, Territory and Heritage at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Coimbra, having joined the executive team of Associação Geopark Estrela, in 2021, as Project Manager.

Ngo Ngoc Thuyen from Ho Chi Minh City. I consider myself a result-focused agile manager with many years of experience directing and managing faculty in universities, as well as Director at SMES, brokerage company. I have a Master’s Degree in Finance and Banking from France and Bachelor’s Degree from the UK. Currently, I am PhD candidate at Tomas Bata University in Zlin. One of my life-long hobbies is Sudoku which hones my problem-solving skills, and activates my natural inclination to meet challenges

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André Pedrosa is a PhD student in Tourism at the University of Aveiro (Portugal), where he is a research fellow since 2017. His main research areas are Tourism routes, Geographic Information Systems in tourism, Nature-based tourism and Cycling Tourism.

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The COVID-19 Pandemic and its Effects on the Future of Study-Abroad Programmes at Selected Universities in South Africa

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Abstract: This study seeks to explore the early considerations that COVID-19 induced mobility restrictions placed on study-abroad programmes at universities in South Africa. The study considers how, given the negative impacts that were felt with international travel being largely restricted, universities in the Western Cape province approached study-abroad programmes during the restrictions and post restriction considerations. Data for this pilot study were collected via a mixed-method approach targeting international students and key resource persons through the international offices at four universities in the Western Cape. Twenty-three international students and two key resource persons responded to the pilot. Key indications highlight a European dominance in the demographic distribution of participants while illustrating a steady interest in the study-abroad programmes irrespective of the challenges induced by the pandemic. While the anxieties and uncertainties induced by the evolving nature of the pandemic were noted, emerging trends from the data highlighted areas of focus for future resilience strategies to shore up the sector from future crises, the scale and nature of COVID-19. As a pilot to a broader empirical study, it is hoped that the outcomes will contribute towards the development of conceptual tenets for the sustainable development of the study-abroad programme segment within the international higher education nexus while providing context for proposing mitigating actions and strategies which would help higher education institutions move from a crisis management situation to more long-term resilience planning.

Keywords: study-abroad programmes, edu-tourism, South Africa, COVID-19, travel intentions

1. Introduction

Globally, the higher education system has experienced and dealt with various crises (Ramsahar, 2021; Roy, 2021). The advent and current evolution of the COVID-19 crisis have been of an unprecedented nature and extent, affecting all aspects of human life, with international student mobility being no exception (Thravalou, 2021). With limited medical interventions available at the outset, most countries responded with various non-pharmaceutical interventions including lockdowns, social distancing, closing higher education institutions (HEIs) and non-essential businesses, cancelling or postponing events, banning mass gatherings, international travel restrictions and shutting down of entire countries and economies (Bama & Nyikana, 2021; Gossling, Scott & Hall, 2020). Chang, McAleer and Ramos (2020) claim that although the long-term physical, psychological, socio-economic, and environmental impacts are still unclear, the short-term effects are not optimistic. Admittedly, Kanwar and Carr (2020:326), note that many international students decided to either cancel or defer plans to study abroad because of the effects of COVID-19. Additionally, Schleicher (2020), notes that even though HEIs were quick-thinking in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic by replacing face-to-face lectures with online learning, these closures affected learning, examinations, safety and legal status of international students in host countries. As such there emanated a growing need for new insights and perspectives towards responding to the growing need to improve higher education policy and practice in the era of COVID-19, specifically by understanding the views of international students and HEIs on study-abroad programmes. The changing roles and responsibilities of institutions and international education leaders post-COVID-19 are also noted and worthy of exploration in the current context. According to South Africa [The Good News] (2022), there are an estimated twenty thousand universities globally and South Africa has thirteen universities ranked in the top two thousand; three of which are in the Western Cape province. These are the University of Cape Town (UCT), ranked 269th, Stellenbosch University (SU) ranked 435th and the University of the Western Cape (UWC) ranked 1239th. Such recognition highlights the potential of these institutions as highly sought-after study-abroad programmes destinations, thereby necessitating this study's objective which seeks to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on study-abroad programmes at universities in the Western Cape province of South Africa.

2. Literature review

According to Loss (2019) travelling across the globe is increasingly common due to the forces of globalisation, internationalisation and diplomatic relations among countries thus, inspiring tourists to travel more. Likewise, Bodinger de Uriatre & Di Giovine (2021:326) assert that the expansion rate of study-abroad programmes mirror that of global tourism. Study-abroad programmes have been noted to be beneficial to students by allowing them to study in a foreign country and take in the appeal and culture of the new destination (Obadire, Mashau &

Misumi, 2020). Similarly, host destinations also benefit from study-abroad programmes as international students are important to the economy and contribute to the cultural and developmental aspects of HEIs (Aliyeva, 2015). Study-abroad programme students are regarded as a significant source of diversity and revenue, as they are mostly financially independent and an important part of the cultural mix of students at HEIs (Eder et al. 2010). According to Ramsahar (2021), the cost of study-abroad programmes sometimes cost up to USD7400 for one semester abroad, illustrating that international students do bring value to the host country.

COVID 19 demonstrably impacted the international higher education sector, and international student mobility was severely affected, particularly due to the closure of many university campuses and international travel restrictions (Kersher & Plasa, 2020). According to an Institute of International Education (IIE) COVID-19 survey, 285 higher education institutions reported a total of 22,041 students studying abroad at the start of the academic year in 2020. However, 253 of these institutions evacuated a total of 17,787 students due to COVID-19. Unsurprisingly, popular study-abroad programme destinations such as Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, France, China, Japan, and the United States of America were the most heavily affected countries during the height of the pandemic (UNWTO, 2020; Zaremba, 2021). Bodinger de Uriatre and Di Giovine (2021:328) contend that the most reforming and lasting changes to the university experience due to the COVID-19 pandemic can be linked to study-abroad programmes. In concurrence, Heleta (2020) notes that globally, study-abroad programmes have been heavily disrupted by the pandemic, with universities having to transform overnight, switching from in-person to online teaching and learning. Consequently, this led to major economic as well as psychological impacts on study-abroad programmes. Wood (2021) claims that because of the COVID-19 pandemic, fewer students were studying abroad due to ongoing mobility restrictions, visas delays, and the general unease about international travel. As a result, millions of students including those currently and aspiring to study abroad. Paterson (2021) argues that many of the less funded public universities, as well as a substantial amount of private higher education providers worldwide, struggled to adapt to the economic damage induced by COVID-19. Heleta (2020) notes that the ability of students who had intended to study abroad for a semester or for a full degree was curtailed, and this will linger for years, with such recovery likely to be linked to economic recovery globally.

The suspension and cancellation of study-abroad programmes created stress and psychological hardships for those working directly with students at HEIs such as workers at study-abroad programme operators, professors, guides and other on-site instructors (Bodinger de Uriatre & Di Giovine, 2021:331). Furthermore, the loss of income and feeling of abandonment from some HEIs were psychologically taxing as plans and expectations of students were being altered. Pang (2020) asserts that HEIs should alter their approach in delivering the study experience to adapt to the unpredictability of the COVID-19 pandemic. Roy (2021) concurs that apart from moving to online/virtual classes and abiding by government COVID-19 guidelines, HEIs globally should adopt measures to attract more international students and meet their evolving requirements such as changes to application processes and deadlines, reducing fee structures and offering virtual campus tours to students and parents.

South Africa has established itself as an international higher education hub and has been hosting increasing numbers of international study-abroad programmes students up until the recent COVID-19 pandemic (Jooste & Hagenmeier, 2020). According to the International Education Association of South Africa (IEASA), the mobility of international students to South African universities for face-to-face education and research was hit hard by regulations and restrictions contained in the five (5) level risk-adjusted strategy of the South African government (IEASA, 2020). To reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus, The South African government implemented this strategy, whereby level 5 signified drastic measures to limit a high spread and level 1 meant low virus spread and returning to normal activity with precautions and health guidelines (Cape Town Travel, 2021; COVID-19 South African Online Portal, 2021). With the implementation of COVID-19 regulations, all four universities were closed. As such, the figures for study-abroad students were gravely affected with universities not being able to host study-abroad programmes students (Lamson, 2021; Umwizerwa, 2021). Van der Westhuizen (2021) however notes that even though study-abroad programme student numbers declined in 2020, a resurgence was noted in 2021. Thus, although the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have proven to be more complex, the crisis paves the way for HEIs to become resilient and to seize the opportunity to reimagine the future of study-abroad programmes by being innovative to the changes engendered COVID-19 (Chasi, 2020:10).

3. Methodology

Based on the exploratory nature of this study, a mixed-methods focus was adopted. According to Fink (2014), a research design describes how the participants of a study are organised and how their behaviour is measured within the study. Purposive and simple random sampling approaches were implemented for the qualitative and quantitative data collections respectively. For the qualitative data, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with key informant personnel at international offices of the targeted HEIs in the Western Cape who were purposefully chosen based on their knowledge, experience, and involvement in study-abroad programmes, the higher education sector and the educational tourism industry. Of the four universities targeted, two successfully participated in the research study. After verbatim transcripts of the recorded interviews were generated, manual content analysis was used to code themes and sub-themes generated from the data, linked to the study's aim. The contents of these themes and sub-themes were synergised for succinct reporting.

Given the complexities of data collection and COVID-19 restrictions, the quantitative questionnaire survey was distributed via the international offices of all four universities targeted via Google Docs. The application enabled the capture and analysis of data in real-time. The main variables measured by the questionnaire included socio-demographic profiles, study-abroad programme students' behaviour, and motives for studying abroad, especially in the Western Cape. With the extended study targeted sample size of two hundred and sixty (n=260), this pilot study, due to the inaccessibility of international students based on COVID-19 restrictions collected a total of twenty-three (23) valid questionnaire surveys. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 was then used to capture and analyse the data from the questionnaires. This software described and summarised the data using descriptive statistics, the details of which are discussed next.

4. Results and discussion

Following the quantitative data analysis and the content analysis of the qualitative data, the research findings are presented according to the order of themes guided by the predefined research objectives of the study.

4.1 Demographic profiles of respondents

From the demographic results displayed in Table 1 it is evident that in terms of age and gender, a homogenous pattern is identified, which concurs with current literature (Anderson & Bhati, 2012; Lam, et al., 2016; Harazneh, et al., 2018). 60.9% of the respondents were female while 39.1% were male. The data collected further reflects most participants (69.9%) were between the ages of eighteen (18) and twenty-four (24) years of age, while the remaining 30.1% were between the ages of twenty-five (25) and over thirty-four (34) years of age. In terms of the origin of the students, the feedback highlights a European dominance of the participants as reflected in Table 1. with Dutch (4.3%), Finnish (4.3%), French (13.1%), German (39.1) Hungarian (4.3%), Italian (4.3%), Norwegian (4.3%), Swiss (4.3%), and Ukrainian (4.3%). The remainder of the participants (17.4%) originated from the United States of America (USA). In terms of the institution at which they were enrolled, 39.1% were at CPUT, 30.4% at UCT and 30.4% at SU. The majority (43.5%) were undertaking business studies, 30.4% enrolled on social sciences, 8.7% natural sciences, 4.3% in humanities and education respectively, and another 8.7% selected the 'other' category (automotive, business/economics, foreign trade). Regarding their source of funding for their study-abroad programme, most of the respondents (39.1%) noted that they were self-funded, 26.1% partially self-funded and partially on a scholarship, 2107% on a full scholarship and 13.1% were on financial aid scheme from their country's government.

Finally, when the participants were asked to indicate their current form of accommodation the majority (43.5%) were renting with strangers followed by 34.8% who were renting by themselves. 13% were making use of the university's residences while 8.7% were renting with family members. These results concur with extant literature on the characteristics of study-abroad programmes (University of Hawaii, 2017). The participants in the qualitative interviews were mainly the international exchange coordinators and study-abroad programmes officers within their respective institutions who had spent between three and five years in that portfolio, thereby providing them with extensive knowledge to provide feedback on the current trends within the study-abroad programmes sector.

Table 1: Demographic profiles of respondents (n=23, in %)

Characteristics	Category	Total (in %)
Nationality	American	17.4
	Dutch	4.3
	Finnish	4.3
	French	13.0
	German	39.1
	Hungarian	4.3
	Italian	4.3
	Norwegian	4.3
	Swiss	4.3
	Ukraine	4.3
Gender	Female	60.9
	Male	39.1
Age (in years)	18-24	69.9
	25-34	30.4
Current university	CPUT	39.1
	SU	30.4
	UCT	30.4
Current place of residence	University residence	13.0
	Renting by myself	34.8
	Renting with family members	8.7
	Renting with strangers	43.5
Study major	Humanities	4.3
	Natural Sciences	8.7
	Social Sciences	30.4
	Business	43.5
	Education	4.3
	Other (Automotive Business/Economics, Foreign Trade)	8.7
Main source of funding	Self-funded	39.1
	Scholarship	21.7
	Both	26.1
	Other (Financial aid from US university, partial student funding)	13.1

4.2 Travel experience and behaviour in South Africa

Looking at their travel experiences, most of the respondents (73.9%) indicated that they were first-time travellers while 26.9% indicated having had prior travel experience to South Africa. For those who had prior travel experience to South Africa (26.9%), a majority (65%) stated they had visited South Africa once before and the remaining (35%) indicated they had been to South Africa twice. Asked about the tourism-related activities they engaged in during their time in South Africa (see Table 2 below), most of the respondents had participated in some or other tourism-related activity. It was interesting to note that watersports were not considered a very popular activity among them. All participants noted that they would recommend South Africa as a study-abroad programmes destination.

Table 2: Tourism-related activities

Tourism Activities	Yes	No
Visit key tourism attractions	95.7%	4.3%
Wine tasting	87.0%	13.0%
Shopping	82.6%	17.4%
Sun, sea, and sand	95.7%	4.3%
Partake in cultural and historical activities	73.9%	26.1%
Multi-day tours	69.6%	30.4%
Hiking	95.7%	4.3%
Nightlife and casinos	82.6%	17.4%
Watersports	39.1%	60.9%
Safaris	65.2%	34.8%
Festivals and concerts	47.8%	52.2%

4.3 Motivations for engaging in study-abroad programmes

Respondents were quizzed on factors that motivated them to study abroad. On a 5-point Likert scale ranging from not at all important, unimportant, neither important nor unimportant, important, and very important, statements regarding the motivational factors were posed to respondents. Responses were grouped in certain instances of the analysis to represent either Important (important + very important) or Unimportant (not at all important + unimportant) for ease of reporting. Table 3 provides a snapshot of the feedback provided by the respondents. Most respondents saw the lure of a different cultural experience (95.6%), international experience (95.6%) and living in another country (91.3%) as important factors for embarking on a study-abroad programme. Other important factors included international exposure to the specific field of study (65.2%) and the making of new friends (65.2%). Study abroad marketers could benefit from such feedback in the designing of programmes that consider these motivations in attracting more participants in future.

Table 3: Motivating factors for engaging in study-abroad programmes

Statement	Important	Neither important nor unimportant	Unimportant
Expected as part of your university programme	34.7%	13%	52.2%
University marketing activities influence	13%	17.4%	69.5%
University counsellor influence	13%	17.4%	69.6%
International experience	95.6%	4.3%	0%
Lack of available programme in the home country	13%	8.7%	78.3%
Quality of education	43.5%	43.5%	13%
International exposure in the field of study	65.2%	21.7%	13%
Different cultural experience	95.6%	4.3%	0%
Living in another country	91.3%	8.7%	0%
Sponsorship	13%	4.3%	82.6%
Cost of study	39.1%	17.4%	43.4%
To become independent	47.8%	26.1%	26.1%
To further career prospects	47.8%	21.7%	30.4%
Parental encouragement	21.7%	4.3%	73.9%
Where my friends are going	0%	13%	86.9%
To make new friends	65.2%	26.1%	8.6%
To be with my partner	8.6%	0%	91.3%

4.4 Motivations for engaging in study-abroad programmes in the Western Cape province

Respondents' motivations for selecting the Western Cape were considered. Respondents highlighted natural and environmental factors (91.3%), favourable climate and weather conditions (86.9%) common language (65.5%) and, utilisation of English as a teaching medium (65.2%) as primary motivating factors for selecting the Western Cape as the destination. Irrespective of the negative media that the province is sometimes exposed to, issues around safety and security did not feature in the list of important motivational factors suggesting that respondents viewed the Western Cape as a safe study-abroad programmes destination. Table 4 provides further elucidation of the respondents' responses about the selection motives of the Western Cape.

Table 4: Motivating factors for selecting the WC as a study-abroad programmes destination

Statement	Important	Neither important nor unimportant	Unimportant
Natural and environmental factors e.g., landscape and beach	91.3%	0%	8.7%
Favourable climate and weather condition	86.9%	4.3%	8.7%
Favourable government policies	8.7%	21.7%	69.6%
Easy to get visa/visa-free	8.6%	13%	78.3%
Political or historical ties with South Africa	26%	8.7%	65.2%
Low rate of discrimination	17.3%	26.1%	56.5%
Safety and security	21.7%	21.7%	56.5%
Common language	65.5%	21.7%	21.7%

Statement	Important	Neither important nor unimportant	Unimportant
Familiarity with own culture	21.7%	8.7%	69.6%
Closeness to the home country (proximity)	4.3%	0%	95.6%
Welcoming attitudes of the locals	47.8%	26.1%	26%
Lower cost of living in South Africa	39.1%	34.8%	26.1%
Accreditation and reputation of the country and its institutions	34.7%	34.8%	30.4%
Easy admission	26%	13%	60.8%
English as a teaching medium	65.2%	17.4%	17.3%
University ranking	34.7%	30.4%	34.7%
University services	17.4%	34.8%	47.8%
Qualified and friendly academic staff	43.5%	30.4%	26.1%
Availability of labs and research instruments	21.7%	8.7%	69.6%
Expertise and specialisation in the area of study interest	30.4%	34.8%	34.7%
Media advertising	4.3%	13%	82.6%
Overseas websites	8.6%	21.7%	69.5%
Domestic websites	4.3%	17.4%	78.3%
Referrals from friends, family members and social media	30.4%	26.1%	43.5%

5. Perceptions of COVID-19 impacts on study-abroad programmes in the Western Cape

The key resource persons noted that the educational tourism sector was negatively affected, with programme cancellations and suspensions, travel suspensions and bans which engendered negative socio-economic outcomes for the HEIs. According to one of the key informants:

> *The impact of COVID-19 in higher education has immensely affected the activities of study-abroad programmes and exchanges, the international travel bans at our university because of COVID-19 has stopped all physical exchange mobilities and E+ funded projects funds cannot be used up as some of the criteria for it, requires for student and staff to travel to another country.*

This seemed to resonate with both key resource persons with another indicating that:

> *Student intake and recruitment of students were heavily affected due to the COVID-19 because of mobility and travel restrictions.*

These findings highlighted the existence of an adverse relationship between study-abroad programmes and the COVID-19 pandemic induced restrictions, indicating the restrictions had engendered a major negative effect on study-abroad programmes and their ability to attract prospective students.

To understand the impact of pandemic induced challenges on the study-abroad programmes, pre-pandemic data was considered. Both key resource persons noted that the Western cape was a very notable study-abroad programmes destination, as reflected in the large number of study-abroad programme students HEIs often attracted each semester. In this light, one of the key informants indicated that:

> *Before COVID-19, our numbers were significantly higher because everyone wants to come to our university and everyone wants to come to Cape Town, because it is a very highly sought out tourism destination, so location is probably a very big deal. Students are coming for the experience, so it was a big thing when things went online, and the numbers of international students declined significantly.*

In the same vein, another key informant supported this by highlighting one of the motives for choosing the Western Cape as a preferred study-abroad programmes destination, noting that:

> *The Western Cape is a popular study-abroad programmes destination for many exchange students, and it appeals to the students due to its many attractions and tourist activities available to students at a low cost. Also, the cost of living in a city like Cape Town is low compared to other European/American cities".*

Correspondingly, both key informants were quite positive in noting that the pandemic would not have a major long-term impact on study-abroad programmes because the situation would evolve, and with vaccination rollouts and the destination image, the study-abroad programmes sector would not suffer. Furthermore, the respondents noted that though COVID-19 induced restrictions might have had a negative impact on the attitudes of international students regarding study-abroad programmes in the interim, long-term prospects were positive. One of the key resource persons noted that:

> *The attitude of students has not changed in the slightest. Students want to come to Cape Town; they want to come study at our university. Our numbers are currently increasing. It seems like they are just waiting for the pandemic to end or to get vaccinated. Despite being in the pandemic, we still had students travelling and still wanting to receive study-abroad programme experience in Cape Town. Even though the students were staying here and studying virtually in their accommodation, they still came, when they could have stayed at home and studied online.*

Additionally, one of the key resource persons in agreement with the expression of the other as noted above highlighted that:

> *I don't think South Africa is worse off I feel [that] like every country, we are doing our best to recover from the pandemic, and we have the necessary precautions in place, and we are taking the necessary steps, by informing students of what they can do when they come to the country. We, as a university has taken so many steps to combat the COVID-19 situation and there are many procedures in place like any other university globally. Our guidelines are clear, we put the students' interests first and we protect them.*

However, they were quick to caution that effective and efficient communication was indispensable to maintain such a positive outlook and consideration, especially in the light of contentious media rhetoric around the evolution and management of the pandemic and various viral mutations being reported, sometimes targeting South Africa as the origin (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2022). As such, credible information dissemination and communication sources regarding COVID-19 in South Africa, if encouraged and maintained could further promote the destination to international students and encourage travelling post-COVID-19 into the country for international students. Pang (2020) claims that studying abroad remains at the top of many students' bucket lists, but COVID-19 has complicated the question of when and how they'll make it happen.

6. Future considerations for study-abroad programmes post-pandemic

Regarding future considerations in connection with the recovery of the study-abroad programmes, which would directly benefit the educational tourism industry, the respondents identified the need for a heightened uptake in vaccination initiatives as critical to the reopening of international travel, thereby making it viable again for students to consider engaging in these programmes. From an institutional perspective, one of the key resource persons noted that:

> *University EM members need to be decisive and take measures to ensure that study-abroad programmes students are also included in the overall institutional planning considering that internationalisation is an institutional key objective.*

In addition, and supporting the previous position, another key informant indicated that for universities in the Western Cape

> I think communication is key, we [should] focus on that a lot, just informing them, keeping our programmes open and keeping them running, working on creative ways to offer our programmes and to keep our programmes going. As well as keeping our relationships with our international partners open and going and working on our internal processes to offer better and more appealing things to partners and working on our virtual offerings and orientations.

Both key informants again noted the need for communication and suggested that this can be achieved by redoubling marketing efforts of the Western Cape as a safe COVID-19 compliant student travel destination while also claiming that this engagement can be promoted through government communications and information and greater engagement and dissemination of COVID-19 related research. Furthermore, augmented reality (AR) was identified as a marketing tool to potentially influence students' decision making in selecting the Western Cape as a preferred study-abroad programme destination in a post-pandemic era.

Furthermore, the key resource persons conceded that the key elements of attraction as highlighted in the current study would need to be leveraged upon. Aspects such as the cultural experience of the students, the viability of the programmes and the allure of the Western Cape generally were some of the highlighted elements that would have to be focussed on in marketing efforts. Along this line of thought, one of the key informants noted that:

> *Yes, it would just depend on the course offerings and what students mean to take and the credits that they need. The thing about study-abroad programmes is yes, it is an experience, yes, it is exciting you going to another country but then there is also the educational aspect in doing well in your courses and being able to graduate getting your credits. So, if you want to take courses that require a lot of social engagement, how can we then do that virtually? Presence would be required.*

The responses above are considered quite important in highlighting the need for collaboration and the strengthening of partnerships between government and study-abroad programme stakeholders within universities and international partners. The effective kick-starting and relaunching of the study-abroad programme in the Western Cape hinges on such collaborations and involvement of all stakeholder groups in resolving the current issues that the pandemic has bought to the fore. As such the involvement of all stakeholders in proposing solutions and working in collaboration with the government and other international partners cannot be undervalued.

7. Conclusion and recommendations

With little available empirical inquiries into the impact of COVID-19 on the future of study-abroad programmes at universities in the Western Cape, the findings from the study may assist in understanding the attitudes and perceptions of the study-abroad programmes stakeholders going forward. This pilot makes a small but important contribution towards determining trends in the theoretical advancements relating to pandemics and their management and implications on the educational tourism and study-abroad programmes industry, especially from a South African point of view. This area of focus has largely been neglected in the past and as such findings in this study will add to the literature in this respect. In this study, for example, it was established that although the COVID-19 restrictions had a major impact on the viability of study-abroad programmes, the future of study-abroad programmes would not be eternally affected as the evolution of the pandemic provides an opportunity to design resilience strategies for the reboot and recovery of the sector more generally and the study-abroad programme subsector primarily. On a practical level, the outcomes of the broader study are expected to have implications on both the government and stakeholders of study-abroad programmes about fostering more effective communication and collaboration for better outcomes.

This study is not without its limitations, and thus should be read with these in mind. Firstly, owing to the lockdown restrictions and university COVID-19 policies, going directly to the universities was impossible, and as such, the researcher was limited to university call centres and switch offices to reach the intended offices. Additional stakeholders such as private study-abroad programmes were reached out to, but no response was received. Staff members at the various universities were sometimes unavailable leading to very limited audience response. Being a pilot study, it is hoped that this provides the trends that would be relied on in the context of the broader study to ensure the wider objectives are achieved.

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A Theoretical Reflection on the Importance of Branding to Promote Thermal Destinations

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Abstract: Based on a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), the aim of this article is to present a conceptual approach to the importance of communication in thermal destinations. Through an in-depth analysis of scientific publications, characteristics of thermalism are identified that may be important for the creation of a brand strategy to promote thermal destinations. An SLR was conducted, using the PRISMA Statement method, carried out in May 2021 using the Web of Science and Scopus databases. A total of 133 articles were found, of which only 31 were used for the qualitative analysis. EndNote20 and Nvivo software were used to identify the articles for the study, their analysis and systematisation of the collected information. The results, among others, identified important characteristics of thermalism, presenting a framework of destination attributes in the international context of thermalism. By elaborating a conceptual model contributes to identifying operationalised strategies and guidelines impacting on publications for the strategic creation of a thermal destination brand. The main contribution of this study is to leverage the characteristics of thermalism to generate unique and differentiating brands that reflect the way customers perceive them, providing relevant findings for better understanding of the destination perspective in the international thermal tourism context for future research and the practices of a destination's tourism communication strategy. The analysis highlights the need to develop further knowledge in a sector with great potential for growth, the thermalism.

Keywords: tourism destination, branding strategy, strategic communication, thermalism

1. Introduction

Thermalism has gained importance in recent years, both in the global context of tourism and in academic research, visible in various approaches and scientific areas such as marketing, health, and psychology (Majeed and Ramkissoon, 2020). A rigorous and in-depth analysis of the research produced on thermalism led Antunes et al. (2021) to conclude on an urgent need for research on emerging themes in communication related to thermalism, through the publication of scientific articles in journals with a high impact factor. This article will adopt a conceptual approach to the definitions integrated in the thermal destinations and analyse the importance of branding as a potential instrument for the development of a tourist destination.

Branding is studied in various academic disciplines. Its impact on strategic development plays a vital role in a destination's transformation processes. From this perspective and to increase understanding about the importance of branding, this research presents an SLR that combines the attributes of destination, thermalism and communication. The aim is to present a conceptual approach to the importance of communication in thermal destinations. It is also intended to analyse scientific publications and to identify characteristics of thermalism that may be relevant for the strategic creation of a brand for thermal destinations. For this purpose, the following research questions were raised: *What are the main themes highlighted in scientific publications related to thermalism? What characteristics of thermalism, identified in the SLR, could be integrated in the creation of a brand strategy for thermal destinations?*

The SLR was developed using the PRISMA Statement (Preferred Reporting Items Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis) method, because it uses systematic and explicit methods to identify, select and critically appraise relevant research and collect and analyse data from studies included in the review (Higgins et al., 2011). The literature on branding applied to thermal destinations is scarce and recent. The interdisciplinary nature of thermalism, involving health sciences, life and earth sciences, exact sciences and social sciences, poses challenges for the development of a coherent knowledge base. Through the central themes of the scientific publications under analysis, we sought characteristics of thermalism and developed a conceptual model, supported by four pillars for the strategic creation of a brand for thermal destinations.

This article is subdivided into a theoretical approach to the main themes related to thermalism, communication and branding; a description of the methodology applied, the main results and their discussion, and finally, the conclusions, implications, limitations, and future lines of research.

2. Theoretical perspectives

Visiting thermal centres for medicinal purposes is one of the oldest forms of tourism in many parts of the world (Boekstein, 2014b). The reputation of thermalism for health and wellness benefits is maintained in the European tradition by qualified medical specialists with experience in applying treatments using natural hot springs(Erfurt and Cooper, 2009). Therefore, there is a need to understand the evolution and future of thermalism, exploring opportunities, identifying differentiating characteristics and driving market changes that fully integrate thermalism in its deeper meaning, rather than just being a trendy marketing label. Boekstein (2014a) recommends that developing countries create thermal tourism products that combine thermal water resources with site-specific healing methods and remedies, but also including surrounding natural and cultural attractions, and wherever possible, involving and benefiting local communities.

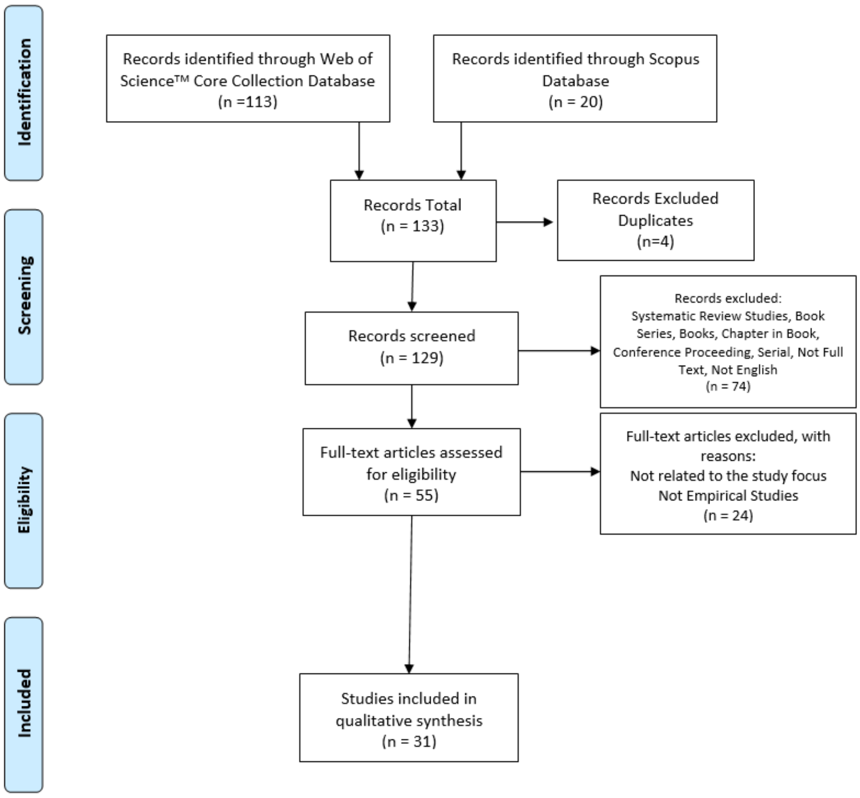
According to Boekstein (2014b), although all resorts have thermal water as their main attraction and all offer health and recreational activities, the core offering may differ from resort to resort and may have a focus on wellness along with medical treatments (e.g.Bad Wildbad and Blue Lagoon), or only wellness activities (e.g.Thermae Bath Spa, Hanmer Springs and Peninsula Hot Springs), or recreational activities (e.g.Warmbaths and Badplaas). The synergy between mineral and thermal waters for bathing and consumption and the possibility of developing new health product brands containing the natural resources of the thermal spa would stimulate local communities to improve their visibility and build a national brand bringing together a range of attributes and characteristics of the destination (Nistoreanu and Aluculesei, 2021). From this perspective, the creation of a brand should take into consideration a set of differentiating characteristics and also the positioning of a country's thermal spaces and resources. For Nistoreanu and Aluculesei (2021), the non-existence of a brand referring to water resources that can be associated with a balneotherapy product is a weak point for the thermal destinations. Although Romanian thermal spas are well-known and there is a long tradition of using them to improve health, there is no strong brand in the international market that can promote their potential in foreign countries, i.e., they have high visibility, but only at the local and national level. This is found in many countries with thermal tourism, which makes it difficult to implement new procedures, including the management of water resources and valorisation of thermalism worldwide.

For Chang et al. (2012), destination branding comprises all the elements that lead tourists to form a brand impression of a destination, referring to the offer of products and services that tourists encounter when travelling. Listening carefully to tourists' perspectives and local contacts with the brand are key to achieving brand success, which creates a competitive advantage for tourist destinations. Aluculesei and Nistoreanu (2016) say that a destination's tourism heritage, represented by its wellness tourism resources, can represent an important tourism product, but it is necessary to know how to communicate in order to create value. Destination brand value creation has been recognised as a crucial tool for competitive advantage in the development of tourism destinations.

Currently, communication plays a strategic role in trying to influence and persuade tourism consumer behaviour in a multichannel offline and online context, which is both symmetrical and multidirectional. The growing number of platforms and social networks allow Internet users to collaborate, communicate, search and publish original content in various ways(Hays et al., 2013).Social networks are increasingly used to socialise; questions are answered on Wikis and chats; information is absorbed in newspapers, magazines and online radio; internet users can comment on the news and podcasts. Joukes and Gerry (2010) analysed the presence and use of the Internet in the Portuguese thermal industry. Their findings show there are opportunities to improve these sites' content and function to attract current and potential spa-goers. This being so, it is necessary to strengthen and investigate these approaches from a scientific perspective.

3. Methodology

The method used is an SLR using the PRISMA Statement because it is an iterative process and researchers may need to specify or modify their original review protocol in the course of the review (Moher et al., 2009).The SLR process carried out in May 2021 consisted of 4 steps. First, the keywords "strategic communication" OR "tourism communication" OR "corporate communication" AND "destination branding" OR "tourism destination" AND "thermalism" OR "thermal tourism" OR "thermal spa" were identified to be used in the search in the Web of Science and Scopus databases. These were chosen because they cover several areas including Science and Technology, Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences. In addition, together, they broaden the search and reduce the possibility of bias in journals indexed exclusively in one of the databases, having the necessary breadth to be really comprehensive in any research (Mongeon and Paul-Hus, 2016).In this stage, 133 articles were found. In the second, after careful screening, 4duplicates were removed, and based on the exclusion and eligibility criteria defined to fine-tune the review, 74articles were excluded due to being systematic review studies, book series, books, book chapters, conference proceedings, serial, not a full text, or not in english, and 24 full-text articles were excluded due to being unrelated to the study focus or not empirical studies. In the third phase, for abstraction and analysis, the abstracts were initially read and then the full texts, to identify the themes and sub-themes established. The last stage of the review resulted in 31 articles that were used for the qualitative analysis. EndNote20 and Nvivo software was used to identify the articles for the study, analyse them and systematize the information collected, according to the research objective.



Source: Adapted from(Moher et al., 2009)

Figure 1-The Flow Diagram of the Study

4. Results

In this section, the results of the study and a brief analysis are described. As this is an SLR, the results focus on content analysis.

Figure 2 shows an exploratory analysis of the word frequency through the representativeness of the 100 words, with more than 3 letters, most mentioned in the publications:

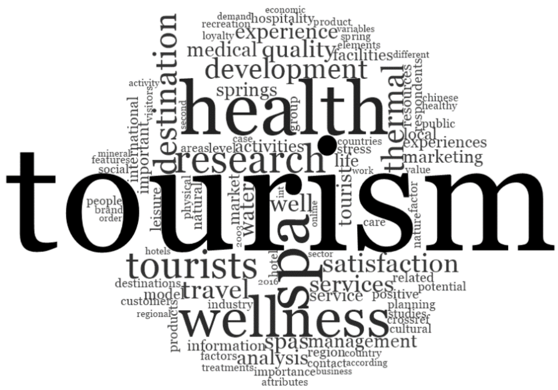


Figure 2: Representativeness of the 100 words, with more than 3 letters, most mentioned in the publications studied

According to Boekstein (2014b), the links between health and tourism are numerous and varied. From this perspective, and given its importance for economic development, also in the analysis of these publications the most mentioned word was "tourism", followed by "SPA", "health", "wellness" and "thermal". Smith and Puczkó (2015) say the concept of "well-being for life" will probably remain forever, the terms "tourist", "satisfaction" and "experience" are also revealed in this analysis as important for the dissemination of this type of tourism. "Water" and "hot spring" highlight the importance of this endogenous resource which differentiates thermalism from any other type of wellness tourism. Anaya-Aguilar et al. (2021b) indicate that communication needs to be enhanced as a window to a vast world full of potential customers that can be attracted at relatively low cost, which justifies the continuation of "research" and "development" of "destination". Finally, to mention that although the search used terms related to communication and branding, they are not prominent in this word cloud, thus considering the relevance of this study to the area of social sciences and thermalism.

Through the coding of scientific articles, the main topics addressed were identified, as presented in table 1:

Table 1: Identification of themes by study

Studies	Thematics
Anaya-Aguilar et al. (2021b); Joukes and Gerry (2010)	Digital Communication
Campon-Cerro et al. (2020); Chang et al. (2012); Huang et al. (2019); Lee (2010); Rodrigues et al. (2019)	Experience Tourism
Dutheil et al. (2019a); Dutheil et al. (2019b)	Product Innovation
Emir and Saraçli (2011); Thal et al. (2021)	Skills Management
Anaya-Aguilar et al. (2021b); Chrobak et al. (2020); Esiyok et al. (2017); Han et al. (2018); Irimiás (2013); Kurtulmuşoğlu and Esiyok (2016); Smith and Puczkó (2015)	Tourist Behaviour
Beriatos and Papageorgiou (2008); Beriatos and Papageorgiou (2009); Duman and Kozak (2010); Heung and Kucukusta (2013); Huijbens (2011); Lee et al. (2009); Liberato et al. (2020); Lindner et al. (2021)); Noviello and Smętkiewicz (2019); Papageorgiou and Beriatos (2011); Pillmayer et al. (2020); Ponte et al. (2020); Smith (2015)	Territorial Development

If we consider that this article intends to make a contribution from the branding perspective to the development of a thermal destination, strategic planning involving all these thematics is necessary. On the one hand, Anaya-Aguilar et al. (2021b), Joukes and Gerry (2010), analyse **Digital Communication**, particularly promotion/communication and marketing strategies to leverage this destinations. On the other hand, Campon-Cerro et al. (2020), Chang et al. (2012), Huang et al. (2019), Lee (2010) and Rodrigues et al. (2019) highlight the importance of **Experience Tourism** for loyalty and connection with the tourist and brand reinforcement. Dutheil et al. (2019a) and Dutheil et al. (2019b) propose new products for the sector with innovative characteristics: **Product Innovation**. Emir and Saraçli (2011) and Thal et al. (2021) point out the importance of **Skills Management** for tourist satisfaction. The results of these studies suggest that employees' qualifications and competence are the second most important factor for the customer. Anaya-Aguilar et al. (2021a), Chrobak et al. (2020), Esiyok et al. (2017), Han et al. (2018), Irimiás (2013), Kurtulmuşoğlu and Esiyok (2016) and Smith and Puczkó (2015) investigate **Tourist Behaviour**, namely the motivations and profile of this type of tourist, such as health, spirituality, while also seeking pleasure from the experience of well-being, relaxation, nature, unique environments, traditions and culture. Smith and Puczkó (2015) observed that tourists in these destinations are interested in ancient traditions and rituals, natural resources and therapies, exclusive treatments and services that reflect the locality, important considerations for creating experiences, a destination brand and consequently loyalty. Finally, Beriatos and Papageorgiou (2008), Beriatos and Papageorgiou (2009), Duman and Kozak (2010), Heung and Kucukusta (2013), Huijbens (2011), Lindner et al. (2021), Liberato et al. (2020), Lee et al. (2009), Noviello and Smętkiewicz (2019), Papageorgiou and Beriatos (2011), Pillmayer et al. (2020), Smith (2015) and Ponte et al. (2020) investigate factors, resources and products, they sought to determine the attractiveness of a country for the **Territorial Development** of a thermal destination.

Besides its therapeutic efficiency (Silva et al., 2020), thermalism is an antidote to stress (Erfurt and Cooper, 2009). It is a product of excellence that contributes to a country's regional development and consequently to the proper functioning of the engine that promotes tourism in the world. From this perspective, and for a more operational view, the following figure presents a set of characteristics about thermalism, identified in the SLR, which can be transformed into smart clusters to provide well-being to people and support the creation of successful thermal destination brands.

Figure 3: Characteristics of thermalism identified in the publications

The collaborative method reveals that thermalism, has much to gain from a multidisciplinary approach (Ponte et al., 2020). Heung and Kucukusta (2013) identify the attributes needed to develop this niche market (environmental resources, including clean air, water and natural landscape). Lee et al. (2009) and Lee (2010) also state the need to innovate services, revitalise facilities and diversify the supply of tourism products and activities in order to respond to this new and emerging market opportunity. The potential for developing **Wellness** tourism makes perfect sense in terms of resourcing and promoting a thermal tourism destination. Natural hot springs, through **Thermal Water**, are unique, rare, and irreplaceable assets that have already been shown to be of significant economic value. Rodrigues et al. (2019) consider that listening to the murmur of water communicates emotions/ thermal experiences, this being the essence of thermalism. The unique attributes of thermalism should be branded and promoted with innovation in order to broaden and enrich the **Experience of** visitors to thermal springs. Chang et al. (2012) contribute to a model of experience exploration by identifying critical brand contact elements in tourist destinations, considering ethnic customs and natural landscapes as attractive quality requirements.

For Emir and Saraçli (2011), it is essential to know the tourist and anticipate the sale, providing an emotional connection and arousing the desire to return to the destination. Smith and Puczkó (2015) provide a detailed overview of the current health and wellness tourism profile, people who believe that wellness is an important part of their lifestyle, implementing the new concept of lifelong wellness, essential in helping to manage **Emotions**. Duman and Kozak (2010) and Thal et al. (2021) point out that a more holistic approach will meet the needs and desires of today's tourists. Alongside **Spirituality,** which is gaining prominence in this new era, as reinforced by many authors (Han et al., 2018, Heung and Kucukusta, 2013, Huijbens, 2011, Pillmayer et al., 2020, Rodrigues et al., 2019, Smith, 2015, Smith and Puczkó, 2015, Thal et al., 2021). In the current worldwide pandemic, with sequels for many patients recovering from Covid and also in the economic sector, Campon-

Cerro et al. (2020), Chang et al. (2012), Dutheil et al. (2019a), Dutheil et al. (2019b), Huang et al. (2019) and Lee (2010) consider that both spas and thermal destinations have strong opportunities to assert their position as safe, healthy wellness destinations, with experiential tourism, **health** treatment and prevention being a particular strategy to create value in tourists and build loyalty.

In order to develop thermal destinations, according to Beriatos and Papageorgiou (2009), it is necessary to invest in **Sustainability,** through reliable and sustainable services that contribute to their attractiveness. Chrobak et al. (2020) propose a comprehensive model of thermalism, integrating **Environment,** through knowledge of the landscape and the scientific value of nearby geological features. Noviello and Smętkiewicz (2019) share the same opinion and reinforce the high social awareness regarding exploitation of the geothermal potential, a vision based on long-term plans with the implementation of sustainable development, local principles and policies, innovations, actions with local and regional communities, improving entrepreneurship, attracting investors and external resources. In summary, according to the above-mentioned authors, to develop a thermal tourism destination, it is necessary to create a brand based on a territory's values and attributes. There must be strategic planning to promote differentiated products, services, and activities for the thermal market, essentially based on memorable experiences for tourists.

5. Discussion and conclusions

This analysis aims to outline research trends in thermalism and address the main challenges currently facing the sector. Similarly to Buxton and Michopoulou (2021) and Antunes et al. (2021), who state that the thermal sector remains largely unexplored, this research intends to progress towards better understanding of the thermal context, exploring the characteristics of thermalism and their integration into natural landscapes as relevant factors for the development and creation of a brand strategy for thermal destinations. Although few in number, the articles reviewed provide a good perspective on the development of the important factors of the thermalism industry, which are fundamental to this discussion. According to Boekstein (2014a), as this apparent metamorphosis of thermalism occurs, it may be timely to reflect on the role thermal tourism has played in many countries for a long time, in some cases thousands of years. This study shows the need for more conscious communication of what thermalism is and highlights the importance of creating brands for thermal destinations to increase countries' visibility both nationally and internationally. One of the main contributions of this article lies in the proposed conceptual model, presented in the figure below, as a result of analysing the scientific articles in the SLR, as well as complementary, updated research and in-depth reading on destination branding:

Figure 4: Conceptual model

The literature on brands is very broad, and despite the growing importance of destination brands, most conceptual and empirical research has focused on destination images. We propose the ICTS model supported by 4 pillars that can assist industry professionals in strategic creation of brands for thermal destinations through four key issues. This model emerges from the main factors, themes and characteristics identified in the SLR, and is supported by Lederer and Hill (2001)who present a new mapping tool "the brand portfolio molecule", revealing how brands appear to customers. These researchers' study is divided into three important phases: first they identify the brands for the study, then they classify the brands through key questions, and finally, they use 3D modelling or the traditional method (hand, paper, and pen) to map the molecule, that is, to create brands with unique and differentiating characteristics that reflect how customers see them. This tool stimulates a new way of thinking about brand strategy.

From this perspective, to create thermal destination brands, the proposed model has four phases that anticipate the launch of a brand and should answer the questions asked in each pillar, serving as a guide for future research:

Brand Identity: *What are the main characteristics identifying the destination that may lead to a decision to visit?* In this phase, brand identity should be created, which means creating a brand that stands out in consumers' minds. Heung and Kucukusta (2013) and Lee et al. (2009) identified attributes considered necessary to develop this niche market. Huijbens (2011) identified nature-oriented wellness images, outdoor experience, and pleasure, combined with personal fulfilment, healthy local cuisine, local culture and clean air, nature and water emerged as essential attributes to create a tourist destination brand. Brand consistency is people's image of a particular place, which can be evoked by the mere mention of the name. However, the great challenge for thermal destinations is to identify the main characteristics, achieve global recognition and a positive national reputation in order to attract visitors.

Brand Connect: *How does the brand connect with other similar destination brands and the people visiting the destination?*
Brand resonance is the degree to which consumers believe they are connected to the brand and in tune with it. On the one hand, Chang et al. (2012) refer to the importance of the satisfaction model as the top priority for brand contact. Emir and Saraçli (2011) and Thal et al. (2021) on the other hand, mention employee skills as a key factor. Then again, concerning thermalism, we talk about experiences, and according to Campon-Cerro et al. (2020), water-based tourism activities imply a healthy purpose, as is the case of thermal tourism, which can lead to significant results, such as satisfaction, loyalty and quality of life, and therefore connection. At this stage, it is important to evaluate each of the characteristics suggested in the results to ensure the efficiency of the strategies and their connection.

Technology: *Which online communication channels have the greatest impact on the brand?* As brand presence appears in an increasing number of online platforms, its impact will also be greater. For Anaya-Aguilar et al. (2021b), Joukes and Gerry (2010) and Pillmayer et al. (2020), technologies are integrated into the value chain in promoting health and wellness tourism, and this has received some attention from researchers in the field. However, according to the authors whose studies focus on evaluating the information available on thermal spas' websites, guidelines need to be developed to promote their products and services effectively. According to Anaya-Aguilar et al. (2021b), the websites analysed in the study do not use two-way communication in real time, and taking into account current demands, implementation is urgent. Heung and Kucukusta (2013) identify other effective methods to promote health and wellness tourism, such as social media advertising, government support and organising regional events. At this stage, technology is an important factor to consider when creating a destination brand, identifying the most suitable channels for its promotion.

Brand Sensory: *What are residents, tourists and visitors' emotional responses and reactions to the brand?* Customers' emotional responses and reactions to the brand make the brand receptive. Here, it is important to assess the impact and understand which emotions are intrinsic to the experience. In their relationship with the brand, Schmitt et al. (2009) distinguished several dimensions of experience and built a brand experience scale including four dimensions: sensory, affective, intellectual and behavioral. The scale is reliable, valid, and distinct from other brand measures, including brand evaluations, brand engagement, brand attachment, customer delight, and brand personality. Furthermore, brand experience affects consumer satisfaction and loyalty directly and indirectly through brand personality associations. The study by Rodrigues et al. (2019) concluded that to leverage the demand for thermal spas and expand the thermal destinations, entrepreneurs and local governments must develop services and products that merge unique environments, local traditions and local specificities with world-class built environments and services that drive spa-goers' satisfaction. In this phase we propose to listen to people after contacting the brand and analyse their feelings.

This model suggests that before creating a destination brand, these steps should be implemented. If the brand communication ensures a relevant and correct connection with the different target groups, based on the relationship between attitude and perception of the destination and thermal experience, the strategy for creating a brand for thermal destinations will be more efficient.

Concluding, in an attempt to organise the proposed ideas, it was immediately evident that the answer could not be simple and obvious when research in the area of thermalism and communication is scarce. One of the questions raised was identification of the main themes in scientific publications. The second question concerned the characteristics of thermalism that could be assimilated to create a brand strategy for thermal destinations. The answers were organised in two major axes: According to the SLR, contributing to the evolution of thermalism are factors such as: Digital Communication; Experience Tourism; Product Innovation; Skills Management; Tourist Behaviour and Territorial Development, the main themes of the articles analysed.

The door to evolution could be opened by various challenges, but to answer the second question raised, among the various "keys" to that door, Noviello and Smętkiewicz (2019),Chrobak et al. (2020) and Beriatos and Papageorgiou (2009) indicate sustainability, through using thermal sources as a renewable (clean and economical)geothermal resource. Other characteristics were also highlighted such as: Health, Wellness, Spirituality, Emotions, Thermal Water, Environment and Experiences. Professionals of communication should focus on the model ICTS and these characteristics to create destination brands that form ties with people and with destinations with similar missions. We share the same opinion as Buxton and Michopoulou (2021), who argue that the consumption and production of experiences is central to understanding value creation in wellness service contexts. Erfurt and Cooper (2009) say that different countries, customs, cultures, and traditions have similarities in the use of water, since the resource is ubiquitous. However, almost regardless of culture, many hot springs have become known for their miraculous healing powers and still have at least one story or legend that supports the original healing event. Therefore, cultural history associated with innovation is an integral part of the communication strategy to maintain a thermal destination’s reputation over time(Chang et al., 2012, Lee et al., 2009, Lee, 2010).

6. Implications, limitations and future research

This study contributes to the literature by providing a theoretical framework of excellence in thermalism and by elaborating a conceptual model to identifying operationalised strategies and guidelines that have an impact when creating a brand for thermal destinations. The main contribution of this research is to leverage the characteristics of thermalism to generate unique and differentiating brands that reflect the way customers perceive them. From a communication perspective, this study discusses the implications of predictive factors in developing communication and marketing strategies that enhance the positive image of a destination and consequently attract tourists.

A limitation was the fact that only 2 databases were considered and only journal articles were included. Our research addresses the current scarcity of academic work on the importance of branding applied to thermal destinations and the lack of relevant strategic models for the diffusion / promotion of a destination. The analysis highlights the need to develop knowledge further in a sector with great growth potential: thermalism. It is hoped that the results will motivate other researchers to conduct further empirical studies on communication in thermalism. As future lines of research, the following research questions were raised: What are the main characteristics identifying the destination that could lead to the decision to visit? Which online communication channels have the greatest impact on the brand? What are people's (residents, tourists, and visitors) emotional responses and reactions to the brand? How does the brand connect to other similar destination brands and the people visiting the destination? The thermal destination brand should reflect a set of characteristics that, through communication, should be transmitted to people and institutions, to achieve a positioning of excellence and capture a greater share of international markets.

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Online Food Delivery: An Overview and Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract: Academic works on online food delivery so far have focused on the economic and social aspects of OFD. The economic interest and evolution of this activity sector contrasts with a scarce and fragmented approach from the academic perspective. This work intends to account for the existing literature on online food delivery through a descriptive and bibliometric mapping analysis. A bibliometric analysis was performed using Microsoft Excel and VOSviewer, a platform for analysing bibliometric networks. The results show an increasing interest on the topic, that start booming in 2019. Sources that gather online food delivery articles usually belong to one of two kinds: 1) customer-related variables in tourism and hospitality and 2) business/management publications. Since it is an emerging research area, not many authors hold a distinguished position in terms of articles published, with leading authors holding no more than 4 articles. Analysing keyword co-occurrence we find differentiated thematic approaches: technological support and features of online food delivery, health issues related to food delivery, logistic chain of food delivery and a particular field of interest relating it to COVID-19. This work contributes to literature by outlining the different theoretical basis considered in OFD research, and providing practical implications for a variety of agents (suppliers, restaurants, retailers, etc.). Guidelines for future research are offered in this emerging and relevant field of interest.

Keywords: bibliometric analysis, online food delivery, food delivery app, tourism, restaurant, VOSviewer

1. Introduction

Online Food Delivery (OFD) is turning into a revolutionary paradigm when it comes to alternatives for demand of freshly-prepared meals. The expansion of the Internet and related digital technologies, such as portable devices; the social and cultural changes; and, more recently, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are the breeding ground for an industry that has rocketed in the past three years, reaching $150.000 million net worth worldwide and more than doubling income since 2017 (McKinsey, 2021). In hospitality, and particularly restaurants, OFD has grown for mitigating the effects of COVID-19 and lockdowns (Zhao and Bacao, 2020).

From a managerial and customer perspective, existing studies have focused on the triggering factors of OFD use, attitude and recommendation, mostly at an individual level (Ray *et al.*, 2019; Belarmino *et al.*, 2021). From a theoretical perspective, conceptual frameworks used to give sense to OFD explanatory factors move from the technological field, such as Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) or Unified Theory of Acceptance of User Technology (UTAUT), to other psychological models and theories such as Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Since we are dealing with a still novel research topic, and literature is somewhat emergent and fragmented, integration of existing works is needed.

The aim of this study is to carry out a bibliometric analysis on previous literature focusing on online-to-offline (O2O) food delivery platforms from a customer perspective with a special focus in the hospitality industry. More specifically, we intend to 1) establish different research topics that are being addressed in current OFD literature, 2) identify relevant authors and sources that stand out in the OFD research area, and 3) outline existing gaps that open new academic opportunities in topics related to OFD. Our contributions reside in the originality of the topic explored in the systematic review and bibliometric analysis, which is the first attempt to the best of the authors' knowledge, the consolidation of previous knowledge and the identification of research gaps for future developments of a research area of maximum interest in the managerial world.

2. Conceptual framework

The raise of OFDs is linked to the raising gig economy and its particular effects on work conditions, which are the result of combining two main triggering factors: the digital revolution and the advancements in terms of communication and service rendering in the online setting, and the success of the sharing economy in which peer-to-peer operations are highly successful (Vallas and Schor, 2020). The gig economy is giving rise to a new paradigm of business model, where jobs become more poorly paid and conditions are more unfair for workers, getting closer to blue-collar tasks. OFDs are a good example of this trend, as employees in charge of food delivery (i.e. riders) have wrongly been considered as self-employed workers when they are actually working for a specific company. In this sense, recently enacted legislation imposes the burden of proof on employers (Reuters, 2021).

From an academic perspective, OFD have received increasing interest from a variety of disciplines. Works in the area of medicine and health have deepened on the role that food delivery as a cultural change is influencing problems such as sedentarism and obesity (Hughes *et al.*, 2020). In the field of computer science, data retrieval and configuration of food delivery services have also been approached (Yuen *et al.*, 2020). However, for the purpose of this work, we will focus our attention on business and marketing literature covering OFD.

2.1 Online food delivery in the customer context

Due to its practical relevance, several works have also approached the particularities of online food delivery in its different means from a business perspective, considering the importance of the processes and logistics in food delivery companies together with customer perceptions, attitudes and behaviors towards OFD.

In the business and marketing academic context, many studies from the tourism field have tried to know more about the antecedents of food delivery use, continuation and recommendation Muangmee et al. (2021) identified some, such as performance and effort expectancy, timeliness, and perceived trust and safety.

An important part of the literature deals with logistics and value chain particularities. These studies focus on the delivery process, transportation of the meals, and the role of workers or *riders* in this process. Niu et al. (2021) analyse the differences in willingness to pay and appropriateness in using self-logistics or a third-party OFD platform according to the market potential, as well as the impact on sales and sustainability.

Even though customer antecedents and delivery service are the most outstanding topics, other issues that have been covered so far in academia are the changes introduced in delivery processes and customer reactions to OFD as a result of COVID-19 impact (e.g. Gavilan et al., 2021), the creation and validation of measurement scales for particular OFD-related concepts (e.g. Chan and Gao, 2021), or qualitative approaches to specific cases on companies or geographical regions where OFD is rocketing (e.g. Zhao et al., 2021), amongst others.

2.2 Theoretical bases

Given the noticeable digital character of OFD alternatives for customers, there has been an important theoretical justification on theories such as Technology Acceptance Model (TAM, Davis, 1989) or Unified Technology Acceptance and Use Theory (UTAUT, Venkatesh et al., 2003). Choi, (2020) uses TAM to explain satisfaction and intention to reuse food delivery apps. Allah Pitchay et al., (2021) borrow four factors derived from UTAUT (i.e. social influence, information quality, price-saving orientation and time-saving orientation), which are found to significantly influence attitude towards OFD and the intention to adopt it.

The theory of Planned Behavior (TPB, Ajzen, 1985) has also been a fundamental framework to understand which are the motivations behind the adoption of this particular technology from a customer perspective. Hwang, Kim and Gulzar (2020), in their study about eco-impact of using drone food delivery services, tested how subjective norm and perceived behavioural control matched attitude toward the service in explaining behavioural intention, with awareness of consequence moderating such relationship.

In addition, there is a growing trend to combine different variables or theories to give a more comprehensive understanding of OFD adoption, which is understandable given the complexity and the myriad of factors that intervene in the customer interaction with OFD services. For instance, Troise et al. (2021) bind TAM with TPB to explain OFD services adoption to discover that subjective norm as an external influence has a deeper influence on behavioural attention that attitude towards OFD. Zhao and Bacao (2020) integrate UTAUT with the Expectancy Confirmation Model (ECM) and Task-Technology Fit (TTF) model and confirm that satisfaction plays a central role in use continuation of OFD, with perceived task-technology fit, trust, performance expectancy, social influence and confirmation also exerting a direct or indirect effect, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Method

3.1 Sampling process

Data about the references used in the bibliometric analysis were download from the database Scopus. Scopus, handled by editorial Elsevier, is currently considered as one the highest-quality information aggregator about academic publications. This database contains high-quality data indexed through an accurate content selection and evaluation by an external Content Selection and Advisory Board, with almost 80 million records accumulated so far and an amount of approximately 3 million additions every year. Up to now, Scopus counts with 1.4 billion cited references, 70,000 institutional profiles, and 16 million author profiles. Its demonstrated quality records make of Scopus the chosen alternative for different bibliometric analyses (Baas *et al.*, 2020).

We performed a Boolean search to obtain our sample of references for the bibliometric analysis using the following terms: *online food delivery* OR *food delivery app* OR *food delivery mobile application* OR *food delivery aggregator* OR *online on-demand food delivery* OR *online food ordering*. We then limited the results to research articles as the only reference type, so that the considered references ensure the highest quality by having passed a double-blind peer review process. To ensure results reliability, we also focused on the Web of Science Core Collection. We focused on the "business, management and accounting" research area, and included all results published from 2010 till December 2021, and on references written in English. The search derived 154 results considered for the analysis.

3.2 Bibliometric analysis

Bibliometric analysis, one of the most important measures for the evaluation of scientific output, was applied to identify the range of scientific literature on online brand-centric relationships, describing the trends and main topics addressed. Bibliometric analysis identifies the most productive authors, the evolution of publications over time, the most influential articles and authors in a particular set of studies and the subjects most closely related to a specific research field (Veloutsou and Ruiz Mafe, 2020). After the sampling of academic references, we performed two different types of bibliometric analysis using Microsoft Excel and VOSviewer, a software platform for analysing bibliometric networks and graphically mapping results through clusters (van Eck and Waltman, 2010). The first consists of a co-occurrence analysis using author keywords, which establishes relationships and creates clusters based on how often two different keywords are used together in the sampled articles. The more times the keywords are used together, the closer they will be represented in a visual perspective. The second is a bibliographic coupling, using both sources and authors to group the different references based on these common elements.

4. Findings

4.1 Keyword co-occurrence analysis

To start with, we performed keyword data cleaning using a systematic approach with the 622 keywords employed in the sampled references. First, we proceeded to make similar words homogeneous: for example, *behavioural intention* and *behavioral intention*, or *continuance intention* and *reuse intention*, were all transformed into a common term to avoid misleading results. After the cleaning process, 583 keywords were considered for the following step. Second, we moved to the elimination of unrelated terms: this includes methodological terms (e.g. SEM, apriori algorithm) as well as general words or context (e.g. China, students) terms. The remaining 496 words were included in the analysis. Given the relatively low amount of references that have been published so far, we established a minimum threshold of 3 as a minimum of occurrences of the keyword, in order to avoid random results of keywords that are not truly related to the field of interest. In this way, we move from 496 to only 28 accepted keywords, which are listed in Table 1

As we can see, there are three keywords that outweigh the remaining results: *online food delivery*, *covid-19* and *food delivery app*. Logically, *online food delivery* acts as the central topic in this study, and hence holds the leading position in the studies considered. Very closely we find the impact of *covid-19* on the food delivery processes and the willingness to adopt and keep using OFD by customers. In the third place, we find *food delivery app* as the node for OFD supply and demand using digital, mobile technology. Of relevance are also *continuance intention* as one of the key dependent variables in business and marketing articles regarding OFD, and *e-commerce* as the research area where OFD is placed. Results of the graphical clustering can be seen in Annex 1

Table 1: Keywords list

KEYWORD	NUMBER OF OCCURENCES	TOTAL LINK STRENGTH
online food delivery	35	28
covid19	26	29
food delivery app	24	31
continuance intention	12	17
e-commerce	9	6
online food ordering	8	6
service quality	7	9
attitude	5	6
customer satisfaction	5	8
food delivery aggregator	5	8
gig economy	5	3
restaurants	5	5
technology acceptance model	5	7
internet	4	6
online to offline (o2o)	4	4
technology	4	3
behavioral intention	3	4
food waste	3	4
intention to use	3	4
logistics	3	2
o2o	3	4
persuasion	3	3
platform economy	3	5
service delivery	3	2
social influence	3	5
sustainability	3	3

As a general finding, we can state that mobile apps and COVID-19 acts as a central issue in OFD literature, acting as a nexus between different topics, as they permeate different aspects of food delivery, including the demand as well as the production and transportation process. We can find four differentiated cluster based on the co-occurrence of keywords. In Cluster 1, we can find *antecedents of food delivery apps*. Explanatory variables for the use of mobile food delivery services linked to restaurants, such as online food aggregators, are mostly focusing on the technological side (*TAM*, *internet*) and the intention to use/adopt food delivery apps for the first time. Moreover, it holds one of the three central topics of OFD in the business context. In Cluster 2, we find topics related to *Covid-19 impact on online food delivery*. This is a very relevant cluster, as it contains two of the most used keywords: *online food delivery* and *covid-19*. The studies in this cluster focus very importantly on how *logistics* and the transportation process have changed due to the pandemic restrictions, and how it affected hospitality businesses related to freshly-prepared meals. The increased demand as well as the greater need for hygiene and disinfection in food products since Covid-19 poses a significant environmental impact (*food waste, sustainability*) which is starting to be considered in academia: how does the use of delivery alternatives (no plastic, drones, more efficient delivery plans) supports sustainability and is positively regarded by customers- In Cluster 3: we move to studies with less impact, yet still important. Basically, this cluster encompasses *context studies about OFD* in specific companies or geographical regions. One of the main topics of this group is related to the *gig economy* and *platform economy*, which involves that *technology* provides a different task organization and job model for OFD employees. In Cluster 4 we can find antecedents on the *continuation of use of OFD*. This is a relevant change, since the mechanisms that lead to the adoption or usage intention are not necessarily the same than the ones that promote *continuance intention*; this is why we find other antecedents related to previous experience in this cluster, such as *service quality* and *satisfaction* with the delivery service rendered by the restaurant or food delivery company. This theme is closely related to covid-19 as well, and the intention to stay demanding OFD once the restrictions for dining out are weaker.

4.2 Most productive journals in OFD literature

We then proceeded to perform a bibliographic coupling using the journals where the selected articles were published. For this analysis, we considered sources that had published at least 2 articles out of our initial sample. Out of the 74 sources, 26 met this criterion and are included in Table 2.

Table 2: Sources list

SOURCE TITLE	NUMBER OF DOCUMENTS	TOTAL LINK STRENGTH
british food journal	20	1323
international journal of hospitality management	13	804
international journal of contemporary hospitality management	8	652
international journal of recent technology and engineering	8	53
journal of retailing and consumer services	7	532
international journal of scientific and technology research	5	71
journal of distribution science	5	78
international journal of production economics	3	71
international journal of retail and distribution management	3	153
academy of entrepreneurship journal	2	6
applied geography	2	64
emerald emerging markets case studies	2	1
foresight	2	129
industrial management and data systems	2	14
international journal of consumer studies	2	165
international journal of logistics management	2	85
international journal of logistics research and applications	2	24
international journal of physical distribution and logistics management	2	21
journal of advanced transportation	2	35
journal of hospitality and tourism technology	2	94
journal of theoretical and applied electronic commerce research	2	248
prabandhan: indian journal of management	2	1
socio-economic planning sciences	2	20
technological forecasting and social change	2	79
transportation research part e: logistics and transportation review	2	1
work, employment and society	2	4

The most relevant journals in OFD from a customer perspective are focused on food (e.g. British Food Journal), hospitality/tourism (e.g. International Journal of Hospitality Management, International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management) and technology (e.g. International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering). It is worth mentioning that other journals with a lower number of articles on OFD published still have a strong linkage to other sources. The network map can be found in Annex 2.

The main conclusion with this analysis comes with the configuration of two clusters. In Cluster 1, we find a set of journals closer to customer issues, mostly focused on the tourism and hospitality field, which accounts for the journals with the highest number of articles published, such as British Food Journal, International Journal of Hospitality Management, and International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management. In Cluster 2 we find a second, less prolific group of journals that are closer to corporate processes to deliver the freshly-cooked meal, including the International Journal of Production Economics, Industrial Management and Data Systems and International Journal of Logistics Management.

4.3 Most productive authors in OFD literature

Similarly, we performed a bibliographic coupling analysis using the authors of OFD articles as unit of analysis. We considered those who had written more than one paper on OFD and that were connected to other authors, leading to a final result of 20 valid data out of the 449 authors present in the initial sample. They are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: Authors list

AUTHOR	NUMBER OF DOCUMENTS	TOTAL LINK STRENGTH
dhir a.	4	1245
kaur p.	4	1245
bala p.k.	3	549
gunden n.	3	524
morosan c.	3	524
ray a.	3	549
talwar s.	3	957
al amin m.	2	486
arefin m.s.	2	486
chandrasekar k.s.	2	52
correa j.c.	2	138
defranco a.	2	426
fauzi a.a.	2	35
kumar s.	2	240
leung x.y.	2	113
rezaei s.	2	162
senthil m.	2	39
wang o.	2	214
wen h.	2	196

Taking a closer look at the results about fruitful authors in the OFD, we can derive two main conclusions. First, given the novelty of the topic, there are no clear "leaders" as only 2 authors account for a maximum of 4 research articles published in the field, and we find 5 other researchers with 3 publications, even more so if we consider that only 4.5% of the authors have more than one paper in this field. Second, two countries arise as prime movers in the field of OFD. India, with 6 of these authors, and US, with 5, account for the largest share of affiliated, most productive authors in this research area. South Africa also stands out with the 2 authors with the highest number of publications being affiliated at their North-West University. We now present the network map visualization in Annex 3.

Five clusters were derived. Cluster 1, considers a group of authors with geographical relationship, since all of them are affiliated to South-African universities. The authors within this cluster are specialized in the explanation of how customer values and motivations are important in the decision to adopt OFD. These authors hold the highest amount of articles, with two of them having published up to 4 articles. Cluster 2 includes authors based in India, with around 3 articles each. They deal with topics such as UGC and reviews, (emotional) reactions on OFD customers. Cluster 3 is formed by researchers for the University of Houston, US, who approach the persuasive effort on OFD based on visual cues and taking United States as the study context. Again, authors in this cluster have published around 3 articles about OFD. Cluster 4 is less homogeneous in geographical terms, with researchers from Colombia, United Kingdom, South Korea and India. Their research follows a more qualitative approach, using text mining techniques and analysing case studies. Cluster 5 encompasses authors who are less experienced in the field of OFD (with 2 articles published each), from different regions including Oceania, Asia and North America. Their topics of interest include different factors that affect the adoption of OFD. This general, yet transversal, topic acts as the central nexus in the map, as authors in Cluster 5 are dealing with topics that are applicable to the rest of clusters.

5. Discussion and conclusions

With this study, we intended to delve into existing academic research on the topic of OFD, knowing the current topics of interest, the state-of-the-art in geographical and source terms, and the future avenues of research that are opened. We made so by performing three different bibliometric analyses.

The keyword co-occurrence analysis is useful as an approximation to the topics of relevance in these 10-year research period. We found out that the main field of interest is that of antecedents for use of OFD, usually framed in the tourism and hospitality literature, including sociodemographic characteristics (Keeble *et al.*, 2020), perceptions (Gunden, Morosan and DeFranco, 2020), potential uses and gratifications (Ray et al., 2019) and technological factors (Troise *et al.*, 2021). Another important outcome of interest is the continuation after having tried OFD services for the first time (Zhao and Bacao, 2020). In this sense, covid-19 and perceived security is crucial as an antecedent or moderator of such reuse in the hospitality industry (Gavilan *et al.*, 2021). From a more business perspective, works included in the gig economy deal with working conditions of OFD riders (Puram *et al.*, 2021) and logistic alternatives for food delivery (Niu *et al.*, 2021). There are few, yet relevant, attempts to know more about sustainability in FDAs (Vo-Thanh et al., 2021; Sharma et al., 2021).

The source bibliographic coupling analysis also derives interesting insights. We can find two main groups of journals publishing OFD-related research: one more focused on the customer perspective and the hospitality and tourism fields, with journals in the tourism field such as International Journal of Hospitality Management and Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology, and issues such as negative experiences and the negative effects of interaction with OFD (Jabeen *et al.*, 2022) or how visual cues in the OFD platforms also affect future intentions towards the service (Kumar, Jain and Hsieh, 2021), and another group more into the logistics and transportation process (Niu *et al.*, 2021).

The author bibliographic coupling analysis provides relevant information in terms of matureness and geographical evolution of the topic. We find prolific authors from India, US and South Africa, but very few have managed to publish more than 2 papers in the field. We also identify initially-defined research directions by group, with one general cluster that permeates the others. Nevertheless, we still face a rising, fragmented literature, with no well-established research lines.

6. Limitations and future lines of research

The current research is not without limitations. First, and due to the novelty of the topic, the number of references used for the study may not be enough to yield definitive results. Hence, we encourage future on this topic to check any differences while also establishing a temporal evolution of research on OFD. In this sense, a comparison of results pre- and post-covid-19 would also be of interest. Second, we focused on the area of business economics to carry out this analysis, but there are other related fields that could be included in future updates of this review, such as communication or psychology, which can be closely related to the field of marketing or consumer behaviour and may yield interesting insights about visual cues the reactions of customers to different inputs provided by OFD platforms in the case of psychology. Third, these results could be complemented with an additional co-occurrence analysis using citations as a unit of analysis, so that we can also verify which are the common references in which the studied articles are based. This was not included in the present work due to space limitations. Both, results of the bibliometric analysis and research limitations, open interesting avenues for future research in OFD, a relatively young and underexplored field.

6.1 Antecedents of OFD use and continuation after covid-19

Two of the main variables of interest of existing studies are both, the intention to use OFD services for the first time and the continuance intention after an initial experience with this alternative. There are two focal points that can be further researched here. First, the consideration of behavioural intentions towards OFD after restrictions of covid-19 have been dismantled. There are opinions against a similar use once restaurants are fully open and available for dining-out, whereas other voices argue that OFD is here to stay and will act as a complementary alternative to restaurant dining (Deliverect, 2021). Second, the effects on real behaviours, not just intentions, related to adopting and keep using OFD. Experimental designs should be carefully designed so that they study these behaviours in realistic scenarios

6.2 Further integration of theories

OFD platforms and apps require complex interactions where factors from different aspects (i.e. technological, personal, social, etc.) come into play. Therefore, future works should keep in the same direction than current ones that opt for this alternative (Zhao and Bacao, 2020; Troise *et al.*, 2021) and integrate concepts from different theoretical backgrounds to provide a comprehensive and heuristic approach to OFD interaction.

6.3 Sustainability and OFD

An important topic that has partially been covered by academia, but is extremely relevant in the managerial and societal world, is that of sustainable practices in OFD. Issues such as the use of plastics for meal packaging, the excessive food waste, and the pollution derived from last-mile deliveries are important aspects that have a strong footprint in the ecosystem. Fortunately, the use of recycled packaging (Liu *et al.*, 2020) or less contaminating alternatives such as drones (Hwang, Kim and Gulzar, 2020) are studied and the effects on image perceptions considered, but there is still plenty of question marks in this aspect.

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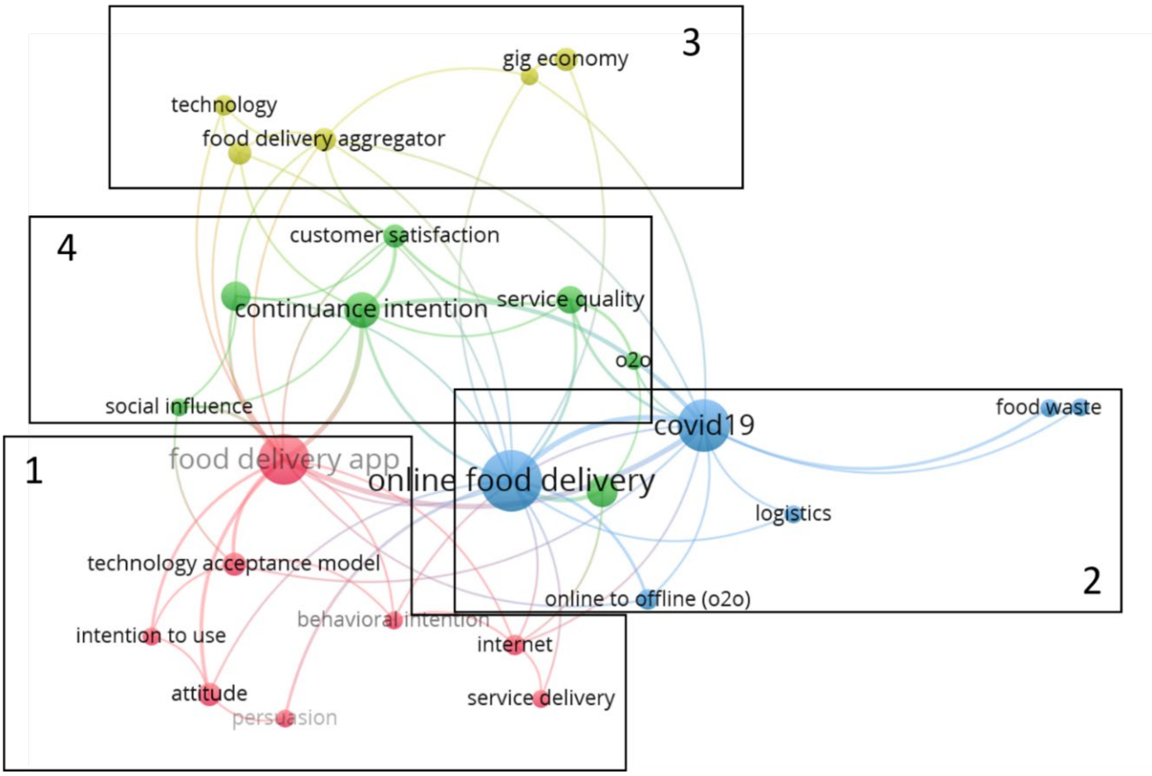
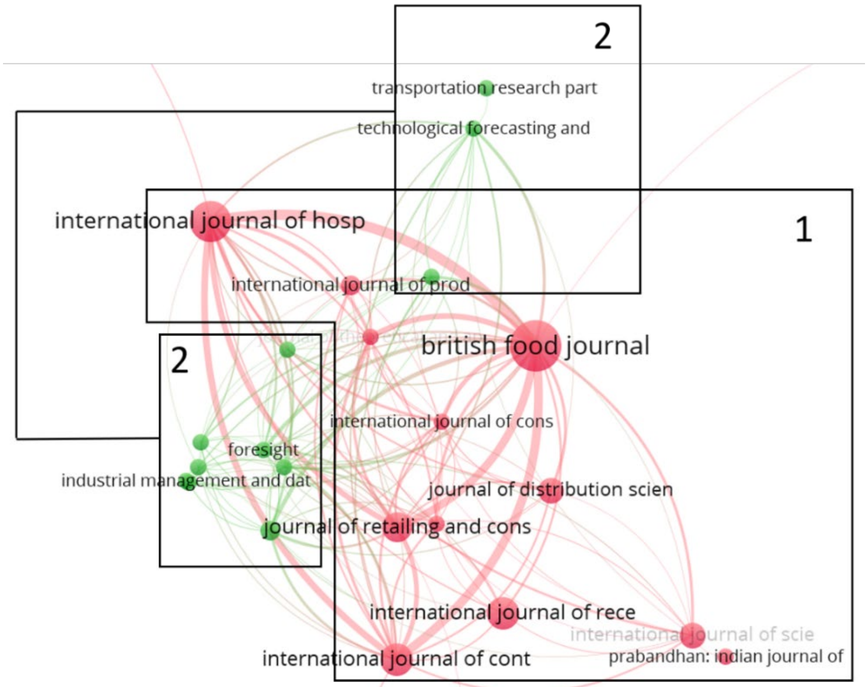
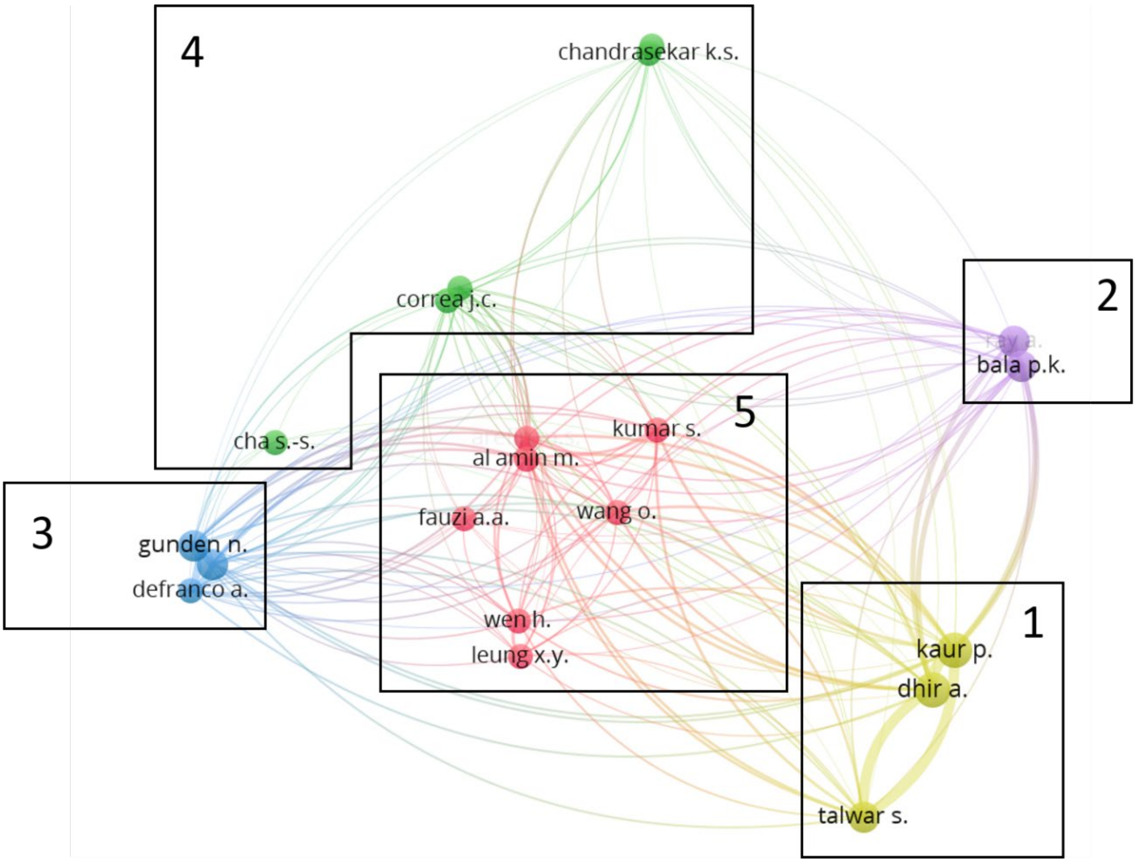
Appendix 1: Keyword co-occurrence network map



Appendix 2: Source bibliographic coupling network map



Appendix 3: Author bibliographic coupling network map



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The use of the Airbnb Collaborative Platform in Romania: A Survey-Based Research

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Abstract: Recent years have witnessed a wide and strong development of the sharing economy in various industries. As a result of the wide spread of intelligent mobile devices and customers' increasing digital skills, the use of collaborative platforms in tourism, in particular for accommodation services, has become an important alternative for many tourists. In this paper we try to investigate relevant aspects of the profile, motivations and habits of the Romanian tourists who are using Airbnb for renting accommodation services. Survey-based research was conducted during the summer of 2021, a period when very few COVID-19-related restrictions were being enforced in Romania regarding people's mobility and travel. The questionnaire was designed to capture not only the demographic, economic and social profile of the consumers, but also and more importantly the main aspects related to the type of travel (leisure versus business), the motivations of getting involved in the collaborative use of platforms etc., from a demand-side perspective. We have grouped the motivations for using Airbnb taking into account the following main classes of factors: price; comfort; ease of use and functionality; authenticity and local connection. Other investigated issues pertained to analyze the place of Airbnb compared to classical accommodation units, considering factors such as trust and efficacy. We found that there is a certain amount of conformity among the population in making the decision to book accommodation, but there is also an innovative trend, expressing people's desire to try other forms of accommodation that offer authenticity and new experiences, characteristics that are less common in traditional accommodation forms. Indirectly, we can identify several trends in respondents' preferences for tourist accommodation and consumption habits. Trends may include greater availability of accommodation alternatives, including through collaborative platforms and, gradually, the transformation of these alternative experiences into tourism consumption habits.

Keywords: collaborative platforms, accommodation, Airbnb, Romania

1. Introduction

Traditionally, the travel and hospitality industry were organized and operated in a "linear" manner, in the sense that accommodation and tourist transport services were provided by companies with their own means of production (or rented), with employed specialized staff (from drivers and pilots, to hoteliers- receptionists, cleaning staff or chefs). In addition to these providers, we also add intermediaries, i.e. travel agencies and tour operators, which reserved and distributed seats, rooms, built stays and holiday packages, through which consumers were helped (or influenced) to choose the desired option from several existing alternatives. The vast majority of these activities were carried out in specialized companies, legally registered in tourism activity.

The last decades marked by globalization, the democratization of travel, the impact of digital technologies, the Internet and communications, have also left their mark on domestic and international tourism. The tourism industry has reacted (somewhat slower compared to other economic activities), and gradually the elements of the digital economy, the revolution generated by the Internet, modern reservation and management systems have spread in this area as well.

However, the transformations have not stopped here, and while most "classic" intermediaries have entered, in part or in full, the online environment, a new range of intermediaries has emerged, offering to travelers similar services to those of traditional, "linear" business, but in a very different way, which could be described as "circular" (Belleflamme & Ha, 2020). Whether we are talking about leaders as Airbnb (in the short-term accommodation industry) or Uber (for urban transport), or a handful of small online intermediaries, their activities are characterized by an important element - they do not have the means to provides the service, they act as a platform, facilitating the interaction between those who want a service and providers (owners and / or entrepreneurs). As a European Parliament report (2017) states, the sharing of goods and services between individuals is nothing new in itself, economic history can provide many examples in this regard, but in the current period, the development of the Internet and the creation and development online platforms have made sharing easier than ever.

Throughout this paper, we have tried to understand and analyze the main characteristics and aspects of Romanian tourists, type of travel and motivations, when engaging in collaborative use of platforms, from a demand perspective. In order to do that, we have used the results of a survey applied in 2021 and developed a sample-based study. Thus, the paper is structured as follows: after this part of introduction on the context and motivations of our research, we continue with a theoretical and literature background related to the transformations of the hospitality and travel industry brought by the new realities of the collaborative economy, as well as the worldwide and regionally impact and performance of the leader in the field - Airbnb. We also added some considerations regarding the profile and expectations of consumers of the services offered by the collaborative platforms. Then, in the next sections our focus concern research methodology, analysis and the interpretation of the results. In the end, we have drawn conclusions, also issuing several recommendations on economic policies.

2. Theoretical background

The sharing economy could be found in literature under various definitions and terminology (Araújo, 2021), as peer economy (Zervas, et al., 2017), collaborative economy (Paulauskaite, et al., 2017), collaborative trade (Sigala, 2015), hyper connectivity economy (Rifkin, 2015), a new socioeconomic system (Tussyadiah & Pesonen, 2016) or a hybrid alternative economic model (Rifkin, 2015), (Dredge & Gyimóthy, 2015).

All these approaches, sometimes near, sometimes discordant, start from a few common elements. Thus, most approaches recall that the collaborative economy includes activities of sharing of underused resources, i.e. their owners make them available to other individuals, reproducing the supplier-consumer relationship (Belleflamme & Ha, 2020). However, the approach is quite general and insufficient for the diversity of forms of manifestation of this economy. To complement it, the analysts consider some features of this collaborative economy need to be discussed (Botsman & Rogers, 2010), (Hamari, et al., 2015), (Belleflamme & Ha, 2020), such as (1) the existence and continued development of digital platforms, which reduce transaction costs and facilitate interaction between suppliers and consumers; (2) decentralization trends and the partially informal nature of consumer-provider relations; (3) innovative governance of relationships, gradually replacing traditional economic interactions, (4) networks and assessment systems that build trust between individuals who cannot interact face to face, increase value as networks grow and repeat interactions; (4) the disruptive, innovative but also destructive character of the new economy, which generates conflicts and tensions not only between traditional suppliers and representatives of the new economy, but also between various stakeholders (segments of society, generations, local public administrations, local communities, property-owners and tenants) generating risks and decisions almost unimaginable two or three decades ago (Guttentag, 2015), (Aguilera, et al., 2019), (Zervas, et al., 2017).

The shared economy is therefore a booming phenomenon, and traditional tour operators and tour operators perceive this as a threatening situation, increasingly disadvantageous. As of 2017, reports indicate that in the European Union, tourism is one of the sectors most affected by the collaborative economy (European Parliament, 2017), by this disruptive potential, to replace a property with the temporary use of products and services in many areas.

For tour operators, not only is the rapid advance of private housing rentals alarming, but also the expansion of this economy in other areas such as caravan rentals, pleasure boats, various tourist transports etc. Moreover, the traditional operators see another very worrying aspect, this time in the demand area - younger tourists are the ones who choose such offers. In 2017, according to PwC studies, more than half of the users of collaborative tourism platforms were between 18 and 39 years old (Beutin, 2018), and year after year the proportion and number of those who choose these platforms tend to increase, the new generations being much more willing to these forms of tourism. Younger tourists are not only motivated by lower prices, even if half of them consider it an important aspect of their trip, but also by novelty, perception of authenticity, informal relationships, networking, etc. According to Fes, many of the representatives of this generation, the so-called millennials associate the idea of "holiday package" with the expressions as "heteronomy", "mass processing" or "a kindergarten for adults" (Fes, 2019).

3. Airbnb – facts and figures

The emblematic figure of the collaborative economy in tourism is Airbnb, a company that in less than a decade has become one of the most powerful players in the field of accommodation and more. Even though their innovative offerings, companies such as Airbnb have contributed to the development of the short-term accommodation market, statistics and studies show that most of their current market shares come from a decrease in the shares of existing companies. For example, the impact of the Airbnb offer differs across industry segments - very important in relation to budget and low-end hotels and motels, equilibrate with mid-range hotels, and almost none with high-end hotels.

Airbnb has become a global phenomenon in recent years, and without being spared much controversy, debate and crisis since its launching in 2008, it is still an extremely valuable company with a lot of potential. Publicly listed in December 2020, Airbnb were valued at about US $ 75 billion. Airbnb's market growth has been (relatively) steady, from about $ 24 billion in 2015 to $ 30-31 billion in 2016 and 2017, $ 38 billion in 2018, and a drop to about $ 35 billion in 2019 (Statista, 2020), (companiesmarketcap.com, 2021). At the end of 2021, its market value exceeded $ 100 billion (companiesmarketcap.com, 2021), even when, at the beginning of 2021, this target of $ 100 billion seemed uncertain due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism market and international travels.

While the rapid growth of Airbnb has received mixed reactions from specialists and the media (from strong enthusiasm to severe criticism due to the business model that exacerbates the housing crisis for locals in tourist cities, the spread of illegal rentals and problems security), the company has developed a large number of loyal users, interested in tourism and travel alternatives considered (subjectively or not) more "authentic" and cheaper compared to traditional hotel offers. While Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) and North America, respectively, are some of the most productive and profitable markets, Latin America has the most nights with Airbnb / travel, on average, than any other region in the world, with an average of over four nights, while in other regions the average was between two and three nights per booking (Statista, 2020).

Airbnb's total global revenue reached US $ 3.38 billion in 2020, a sharp decline (after more than 6 years of sustained growth), mainly due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, which caused disruptions and restrictions for travel around the globe. However, the pace of Airbnb revenue growth in the 2014-2021 period (with available data) is impressive, from $ 0.42 billion in 2014, doubled in 2015 to nearly $ 1 billion, and then to steadily growing, to a high of about $ 4.81 billion in 2019. For the first three quarters of 2021, partial data shows a considerable turnover of almost $ 3 billion, impressive for the difficult conditions of this year.

Airbnb, beyond the alternative of accommodation offers, allows consumers to book so-called "experiences" in the regions they visit. From 2017 to 2019, Airbnb reported year-over-year growth in booked nights and experiences worldwide, from 185.8 million in 2017 to 250.3 million in 2018 and nearly 327 million in 2019. In 2020, the number of nights and experiences booked until September 30 was reported at 146.9 million, a decrease of 180 million over the previous year, this decrease was mainly due to travel restrictions caused by the coronavirus pandemic (Statista, 2020; Stiubea et al, 2021).

In regional terms, in 2019, the region with the most nights and experiences booked with Airbnb worldwide was Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA), with 139 million bookings, followed by North America (96 million bookings) and Asia Pacific (over 58 million). Latin America reported the lowest number of bookings (34 million), however, Latin America region had the highest average number of nights for each Airbnb booking in 2019, while the EMEA ranked third after North America.

The impact of COVID-19 on Airbnb bookings has been considerable, with many countries restricting international and domestic travel in 2020 to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and the tourism industry has been hardest hit by this change. Given that Airbnb's business model relies heavily on the tourism industry, the company saw a decline in bookings in 2020. Thus, in the first quarter of 2020, Airbnb bookings declined rapidly to about 90% compared to the previous period, and the decrease gradually tempered in the second half of the year. In evolution, we find that the average number of overnight stays on each Airbnb reservation tends to decrease quite quickly in the four years analyzed (and we still do not have data for the pandemic year 2020!), between 10 and 25%.

With a lower share of collaborative economy in total GDP (0.05%, in 2016) Romania is placed in one of the last places, at European level (European Commission, 2018). Even if the collaborative services in Romania are not used on a large scale, they have a tendency to increase, fueled by the interest of the young population for such services. Also in Romania, the most active users of these services prove to be the generation of millennials, a factor that has significantly contributed to the growth of the collaborative market - they travel more often and spend more on travel than any other generation. During their travels, they are looking for personalized, unique and authentic experiences. Thus, collaborative economy services such as Airbnb, Couchsurfing and Uber allow users to enjoy the places they travel in more authentic ways than if they had stayed through traditional accommodation services or used traditional services. All these collaborative services can be accessed very easily, through convenient and intuitive applications.

The accommodation capacity on the existing Airbnb collaborative platform in Romania is approximately 15,000 accommodation units (AirDNA, 2020), whether we refer to apartments, whole houses or spaces shared with other people.

Table 1: The main Airbnb indicators for the 5 most important tourist cities in Romania (in 2018)

Indicators / cities	București	Cluj- Napoca	Brașov	Sibiu	Constanța
Active rentals	4234	2194	1066	837	2385
Active hosts	1923	975	658	544	1448
Average daily rate (euro)	35	41	39	39	79
Percentage of whole house rentals	80%	78%	77%	71%	77%
Average occupancy rate	61%	54%	59%	52%	41%
Average number of guests/rentals	3,8	4	4,1	4,5	4,5
Annual growth	69%	180%	89%	103%	145%

Source: (AirDNA, 2020)

AirDna reports also confirms the rapid evolution in the number of listings in these cities. For example, in 2013, in Bucharest there were 312 accommodations for rent, but in 2016 there were 3541, and 4234 accommodations in 2018; an average annual increase with 70% in the last five years (AirDNA, 2020). Most of the Airbnb offers are 2-room apartments - 1,557 (53%), followed by 3-room apartments, 692 (24%), and then we have 472 studios (16%) (AirDna.co, 2019). The average rating of over 145,000 reviews of Airbnb accommodations is 4.7 out of a maximum of 5 stars. The average occupancy rate is between 37% in January and 66% in September. The average daily fare is stable throughout the year, around 35 euros (AirDna.co, 2019).

In a survey conducted by the European Commission, the benefits of services provided through collaborative platforms and their level of consumer satisfaction, could be concentrated in the answers to the question "Would you generally recommend services offered on collaborative platforms or not?". Thus, approximately 9 out of 10 respondents in Romania claim to recommend to others the services provided through collaborative platforms (European Commission, 2018). In fact, this situation is not typical for Romania. In all EU Member States, most users recommend the services offered through collaborative platforms, confirming the trend of increasing acceptance of the collaborative economy.

4. Research design

In order to investigate the relevant aspects regarding the profile, motivations and practices of the Romanian tourists using the Airbnb platform for accommodation rental, we conducted a survey in Romania between May and July 2021 and developed a sample-based study. The survey was carried out online and the questionnaire was distributed by using the online application Google Forms. The questionnaire was posted on various specialised tourism groups, Facebook, WhatsApp, with the majority of respondents being Facebook and WhatsApp users. Few responses were received from posting the survey on tourism specific platforms. The questionnaire consisted of three parts and comprises overall a combination of closed-ended (Yes/No) questions with pre-determined choice questions, with an overall number of 23 questions. In this paper we focus on highlighting the main characteristics of Romanian tourists, but also on the main aspects related to the type of travel (leisure versus business), motivations for engaging in collaborative use of platforms etc., from a demand perspective. Given that the questionnaire includes questions of interest to all consumers, it could be applied to a broad spectrum of respondents, not just those in a particular field or those with a certain level of education. The questionnaire was applied online and we received a total of 196 responses from Romanian tourists. Main description of the sample is as follows (Table 2):

Table 2: Main description of the sample

Characteristics	Category	Relative frequency (%)	Characteristics	Category	Relative frequency (%)
Gender	Female	65%	Place of work	Country	32%
	Male	35%			
Monthly household net income	2000 lei - 3499 lei	59%		Urban	68%
	3500 lei - 5999 lei	23%			
	6000 lei - 8499 lei	10%	Age	20 years old or less	6%
	8500 lei - 12.000 lei	8%		21 – 30	28%
Education level	High school or vocational school	9%		31 – 40	20%
	University studies	69%		41 – 50	35%
	Graduate/professional degree	1%		51 – 60	10%
	PhD	21%		61 – 70	1%

Source: authors' contribution

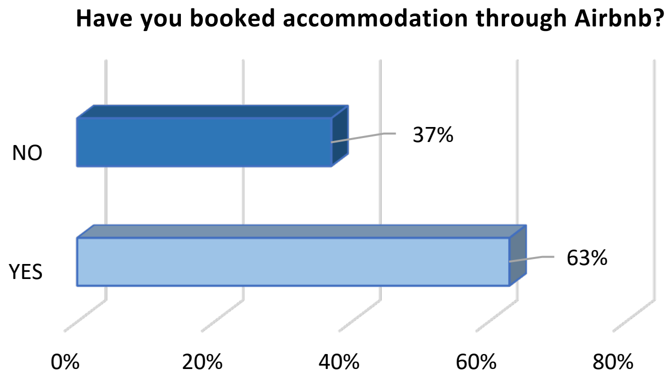
Through the analysis of our sample, we found that the respondents of the questionnaires were 65% women, and 35% men, having a job in urban areas - 68% and 32% in country areas. The most represented age group was the 41-50 years, with 35% of the total, followed by the age group of 21-30 years with a percentage of 28%. The group in the category of 31 - 40 years old accumulates 20% of the total, while in the age category of 51 - 60 it represented a percentage of 10%. The respondents who were under 20 years old, totaled a percentage of 6% and, finally, the respondents over the age of 60 represented 1%. Regarding the respondents' income, we observed that most of them, respectively 59%, had the total net monthly income of the household between 2000 lei and 3499 lei, followed by the households that have a net monthly income between 3500 lei and 5999 lei and were in proportion of 23%. They were followed, in a percentage of 10% by the persons who have the total monthly net income of the household between 6000 lei and 8499 lei. The lowest percentage was represented by the persons who answered that they had a net monthly income of the household between 8500 lei and 12,000 lei, respectively 9%. The results obtained after classifying the respondents by the four categories regarding the level of education, we observed that most of the respondents, respectively 69%, answered that they had higher education, 21% of the interviewees had doctoral or postdoctoral studies. The percentage of respondents who graduated only high school is 9%, while only 1% have only a professional specialization (graduate / professional degree).

5. Findings and discussion

Through this study we aimed to identify a number of relevant issues regarding efficiency and acceptance, respectively the use by respondents in Romania of the collaborative platform Airbnb. We are interested in finding out how popular the Airbnb platform is by respondents and to what extent they are willing to give up traditional accommodation for collaborative accommodation and what are the characteristics that Airbnb accommodation must have in order for people to give up to the traditional accommodation in favor of the collaborative one.

As preliminary results, we will briefly present the main findings concerning the following investigated issues:

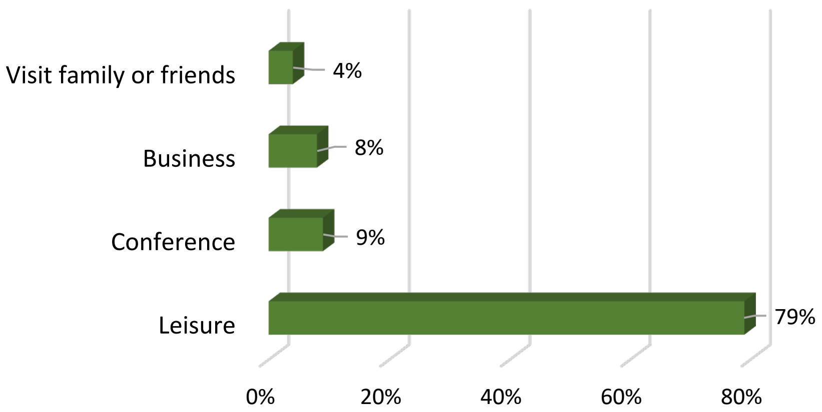
Have you booked accommodation through Airbnb? When we took the survey, we found that more than half of the respondents, 63% or 123 people, did not book accommodation through Airbnb. The percentage of those who have used this platform was 37%, representing 72 people. The fact that the majority of respondents did not use Airbnb is to be expected, given the novelty of the concept and the lack of promotion of Airbnb in Romania.



Source: Own representation

Figure 1: The share of people who booked or did not book accommodation through the online Airbnb platform

What was the purpose of your trip? The majority of respondents travelled for leisure purposes, respectively 79% of them. Those who travelled to attend a conference, convention or other event accounted for 9%, while 8% of respondents said the reason for their trip was business-related, and 4% of respondents stated that they travelled to visit family or friends. Even if we record percentages for purposes other than relaxation and leisure, we can still see that most respondents travel for relaxation.



Source: Own representation

Figure 2: The main purpose of the respondents' trip

Regarding the reasons for tourists choosing Airbnb over traditional accommodation we used a number of factors such as price, comfort, authenticity, new experiences, safety, the main factors that determined people to choose such a reservation. All these factors were determined based on statements based on between 3 and 7 items (Table 2). Considering that all the analyzed items were evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “1 = strongly disagree” to “5 = strongly agree”, in our analysis we determined the mean values, the median and the mode of each item. Thus, based on these items, we tried to find an answer to the question "What are the reasons for tourists choosing Airbnb over traditional accommodation?". The results obtained are presented in the Table 3, below.

Table 3: The decision to book through the Airbnb platform instead of another form of accommodation

The items regarding	Mean	Median	Mode
The price			
I chose Airbnb because it has relatively low costs	3.92	4.00	4.00
Airbnb accommodation has helped me reduce my travel costs	4.01	4.00	4.00
I chose Airbnb because I want high quality accommodation at a lower rate	4.01	4.00	4.00
Comfort			
I chose Airbnb for the convenient location	4.08	4.00	4.00
I chose Airbnb for the access to home facilities	3.94	4.00	4.00

The items regarding	Mean	Median	Mode
I chose Airbnb for the "home" feeling	3.51	4.00	3.00
I chose Airbnb for the large accommodation space	4.04	4.00	5.00
I chose Airbnb because the app is easy to use	4.00	4.00	4.00
I chose Airbnb because it has the instabook function	3.75	4.00	3.00
I chose Airbnb for the cancellation policy	3.78	4.00	4.00
The authenticity of the accommodations			
I chose Airbnb to have an authentic local experience	3.47	4.00	4.00
I chose Airbnb to receive useful local information and tips from my host	3.33	3.50	4.00
I enjoy interacting with the locals	3.43	4.00	4.00
New experiences			
I thought the Airbnb accommodation experience would be interesting	4.10	4.00	4.00
I wanted to do something new and different	3.78	4.00	4.00
I thought the experience was going to be unpredictable	3.26	3.00	3.00
To have an experience that I could tell my friends / family about	3.32	3.00	4.00
To have a unique experience	3.46	4.00	4.00
Safety			
I felt safe during my Airbnb booking	4.43	5.00	5.00
The area where I was staying was a safe one	4.46	5.00	5.00
I'm unsure if the Airbnb booking works legally	3.04	3.00	2.00

Note: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree

The price of accommodation booked through Airbnb was a significant factor in choosing Airbnb services. Thus, one of the main attributes of Airbnb, namely the lower price compared to the traditional accommodation price, proved to be an important factor when respondents booked accommodation through Airbnb. According to the results presented in Table 2, we can see that most of the respondents agree (mode = 4) with the statement that they chose Airbnb because it had relatively low costs

The majority of respondents considered the comfort of Airbnb accommodation as an incentive to use the platform. All items were appreciated by respondents, especially those who referred to the large accommodation (the mean = 4.04) space and convenient location (the mean = 4.08) provided by Airbnb hosts The majority of respondents considered the Airbnb platform's cancellation policy and ease of use as the main functional attributes of the platform. In addition, 42 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the instabook (one-click booking) feature is an opportunity for users.

We found that the authenticity of the accommodations listed on Airbnb was preferred by respondents. They expressed an affinity for authentic local experiences and interaction with locals. This fundamental characteristic of Airbnb adds value to the platform and is a great advantage over traditional industry competitors. However, most respondents used traditional means to book their trip. The following is a review of the main reasons why respondents chose not to use Airbnb's accommodation services. We noticed that most responses to the items on the trust factor fell into the categories: strongly disagree, disagree and neutral. Thus, this factor was not decisive in the decision not to use the services of the Airbnb collaborative platform.

The Airbnb platform was not used because, for the most part, it is neither known nor promoted. Therefore, 40 of the respondents gave the reason for not using the platform as not having enough information about how the platform works. It can be inferred that the high number of neutral responses reflects the lack of information about the Airbnb platform among the Romanian population.

6. Conclusions

Following our survey research, based on a comprehensive nationwide questionnaire, we have a (probably partial) picture of people's perception of collaborative versus traditional tourism in Romania. We investigated the demographic, economic and social profile of the consumers, but especially, the main aspects related to the type of travel (leisure versus business) and the motivations for engaging in collaborative use of the Airbnb platform.
We have discovered that there is a certain amount of conformism among the population in making the decision to book accommodation, but there is also an innovative trend, expressing people's desire to try other ways of staying that offer authenticity, new experiences, characteristics that are less found in traditional tourism. Based

on our analysis we believe that the Airbnb collaborative platform can make an important contribution to employment and tourism growth if encouraged and developed responsibly. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Romanian tourism has undergone similar, if not identical, protocols of lockdown and social distancing, which required adjusted regulations. Consequently, tourist became more interested in smaller accommodation units, adequate for one single family and which provide opportunities for cooking meals by their own. According to the survey we conducted, collaborative platforms and mostly Airbnb can contribute to the recovery of tourism sector in Romania. Our findings are limited due to the small number of respondents. However, the small number represents itself a symptom that needs thorough attention. Further studies are needed to investigate attitudes, behaviours and motivations regarding the use of collaborative platforms and what is their contribution for the future of accommodation sector.

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Pricing Strategies of Porto's Airbnb New Listings

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Abstract: Airbnb hosts' pricing decisions are the choices hosts make when setting the daily rate for their listing of properties. Some Airbnb hosts have a long run approach, charging lower prices to attract more customers and achieve higher occupancy rates, while others have a short-run approach, charging higher prices to maximize the short-run opportunities from the market. The pricing strategy of Airbnb hosts is the key to their eventual success and plays an important role, since it influences their relationship with customers. Airbnb listings can be hard to price. Therefore, each Airbnb host faces an important decision when entering the market: What is the perfect daily rate to charge such that to achieve their goal? Major aspects, such as property location, type (private room, entire home, etc.) and amenities, target customers, other Airbnb competitors, thinking like a guest, the safety and beauty of the neighborhood, seasonality, etc., must be considered. Considering Airbnb's exponential growth since it started in 2007, it is obvious that establishing a suitable pricing strategy is vital for any new host. The present paper uses information from the new listings in 2020 to investigate different hypotheses that explore the pricing strategies of Airbnb hosts for their new listings on the market. This study highlights, on one hand, the great need for Airbnb to encourage dynamic pricing among its new hosts and, on the other hand, the challenges faced by these hosts when they establish the price. An important characteristic of this article is the set of theoretical and methodological implications for the pricing strategy for the new Airbnb new hosts. Furthermore, this document reinforces the idea that the pricing strategy differs between cities and countries, emphasizing the strategy in the case of the new Airbnb new hosts.

Keywords: sharing economy, pricing strategy, new Airbnb host, accommodation, daily rate

1. Introduction

The hospitality industry has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, but even if there is tremendous uncertainty, travel is beginning to reinforce. Different survey research has identified a series of trends that will shape travel in the coming period. This expected regrowth is supported by tourism to destinations in emerging economies annually. Furthermore, an existence of the sharing economy has a particularly relevant impact and a major role in the tourism industry. This important role may lead to the increase, yearly, in the number of people involved as hosts.

Airbnb is one of the main platforms at the global level with a relevant impact on the tourism and hospitality industry. This platform was founded in 2008 San Francisco (two hosts accommodated in their homes three guests). Today, more than 4 million hosts welcome more than 1 billion guests almost in each country at the global level. Airbnb has several top competitors that have entered the industry over time, such as Trivago, 9Flats, Expedia Group, HomeAway, Booking.com, Booking Holdings (formerly Priceline), Fairbnb, and VRBO. Airbnb statistics reveal that the travel and tourism industry recover slightly from the previous two years generated by COVID-19 pandemic. Airbnb tries to implement a series of initiatives meant to support local / regional travel and economic growth (partnerships with destinations around the world; *Go Near*, an initiative to support local economies through local travel). These actions are the result of the fact that the travel industry takes small steps to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Airbnb's listings properties provide access to particular places to stay in more than 220 countries and more than 100,000 cities. Daily, Airbnb hosts offer rich experiences, unique accommodations, and activities that give guests the opportunity to achieve unique experiences while traveling the world. Airbnb hosts earn money by charging guests for short-term rental stays in their private homes or apartments booked through the Airbnb website. Since 2008, Airbnb hosts have earned more than 150 billion dollars, while the average income for one host is $9,600 annually (Airbnb.com, n.d.). The new hosts on Airbnb follow different types of pricing strategy to attract their guests and to maximize their profits. Since Airbnb includes a wide range of properties, the pricing strategies are also partially different, and there exists diverse factors that influence it: category of the property, amenities of the property, different fees available and discounts (cleaning fee, extra guest fee, weekly or monthly discounts, a security deposit).

At the European level, hosts apply cheaper prices than the average daily rate (from 8% to 17% cheaper). Additionally, consumers feel the value of services supplied through Airbnb platforms differently compared to traditional hotels. For example, consumers may value the sociability, trustworthiness and friendliness of Airbnb hosts and the experience they enjoy during their stay. Registering as a host on this platform is really challenging. At the global level, 22% of hosts declared that they decided to host after their Airbnb experience as guests. As gender, women represent 56% of hosts and are slightly more likely to register as new hosts on Airbnb (Airbnb Statistics 2022).

In this paper, using structural equation modelling, the main attributes that new hosts use when establishing the pricing strategies for Airbnb listings in Porto are revealed. This city is ideal for investigating various hypotheses that explore the pricing strategies of Airbnb new hosts compared to old Airbnb hosts on the market, for several reasons. First, Porto has experienced rapid tourism growth, being one of the most visited destination cities in Europe, and Airbnb penetration in Porto is high – from 2732 listings in 2015 to approximately 6,350 listings at the end of 2021 (AirDNA, 2021). Second, Airbnb accounts for most of the short-term rental activity in the city, far ahead of its competitors. In 2018, there were 4411 local lodgings (AL) located in the Union of Parishes of the Historic Center of Oporto, while in 2021 the number of AL registrations increased to 8338 (Turismo_de_Portugal, n.d.).

Being the second largest city in Portugal, Porto represents also the Union of Parishes of Cedofeita, Vitória, Sé, Santo Ildefonso, São Nicolau and Miragaia. Since Porto is an interesting case for our study, we will analyze the data of Airbnb new listings in 2020 for it.

The paper focuses on the investigation of the different hypotheses which explore the pricing strategies of Airbnb new hosts on the market, in Porto. The present document supports the belief that the pricing strategy differs between cities, countries, and regions, highlighting the pricing strategy in the case of the new Airbnb new hosts. The variables categories taken into consideration highlight the performance of the listing's characteristics, host involvement, the listing's location, performance, and rental policies. The model was applied for 2020 for the new properties listed on the platform.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews various studies related to the main objective of the paper; Section 3 describes the research methodology that has been applied, Section 4 presents and discusses the research results, and finally, the last section of the article concludes this research.

2. Literature review

Airbnb represents one of the main platforms on the sharing economy marketplace based on its value and market share (Dogru, 2017). Sharing economy is based on the idea that individuals share their underutilized recourses with other individuals or peers in the market (Botsman and Rogers, 2011). The main benefit of using underutilized resources is given by the fact that additional value can be created for individuals, such as extra sources of income (Koopman et al., 2015). This encourages more and more people who own extra rooms / space / apartments to enter the market, run a room-sharing business, and become an entrepreneur (host). In addition, it stimulates the growth of peer-to-peer short-term residential rentals in the marketplace (Guttentag, 2015; Karlsson et al., 2017).

Over the last decade, more and more people have rented extra space on room-sharing platforms motivated by this additional source of income. Therefore, they must pay a lot of attention to apply the right price for the listing(s) they manage. Managers in the hotel industry do not face a real problem when establishing the price, since they have available technical tools for revenue management and different industry benchmarking reports, but Airbnb hosts do not have sufficient revenue management training and support of pricing resources (Gibbs et al., 2018b). Airbnb hosts are confused when trying to set the price to maximize a listing's revenue performance (Hill, 2015), so different tools can help them setting the right listing price, although they take the final decisions of how much hosts want to charge a listing against others in the same neighborhood.

Pricing is one of the most analytical factors influencing the long-term success of the accommodation industry (Hung, et al., 2010). Different studies were conducted on Airbnb host pricing strategies or how price is determined on an Airbnb listing (Chattopadhyaya et al., 2019; Gibbs et al., 2018a and 2018b; Magno et al., 2018; Oskam et al., 2018; Wang and Nicolau, 2017).

There are different studies that examined the factors influencing the host's pricing strategy, such as host photos, host badge, property characteristics, ratings, amenities, reviews, etc. Hosts with a "Superhost" badge, which is a status given to hosts with good standing and excellent service standards, post their properties with higher prices, especially when they receive more reviews and higher ratings (Liang, Schuckert, Law, & Chen 2017). Many studies revealed that factors associated with property and site characteristics, rental rules, amenities, customer reviews, and services influence the prices of sharing economy-based accommodations (Wang & Nicolau, 2017, Li, et al., 2016. Specially, Airbnb listings properties that supply amenities, like free parking, wireless Internet and real beds perceive higher prices compared to those that lack these amenities.

The topic of pricing strategies for new hosts has not yet been widely discussed in the room-sharing literature, but we support the idea that it is necessary to conduct a city-level analysis to precisely determine the price determinants more accurately both for the new and for the experienced hosts.

The paper is focused on validating the following research hypothesis:

- 1. The characteristics of the listings will have the strongest impact on the new listings price, regardless of the pandemic situation.
- 2. Since people tend to use less public transportation during the pandemic, the higher the distance to the city center, the lower will be the price charged by the owners of the new listings.
- 3. An improvement in the new listings' performance will determine the hosts to charge a higher price.
- 4. Rental policies directly impact the price of new listings.

3. Methodology and data

3.1 Description of variables

The literature on pricing in the sharing economy identifies several categories of factors. Our analysis includes some of these variables, with a focus on the listings' characteristics, location, performance, rental policies, and host involvement.

The characteristics includes the main facilities/accessories that the listing has. The effect of different endowments on price was tested, like the availability of air conditioning, heating, washer, dryer, parking, cable TV, coffee maker, iron, hairdryer, dishwasher, microwave, fire extinguisher, carbon monoxide detector, smoke detector and first aid kit. The role of property type (apartment or other types) and listing type (private room, shared room, and entire property), the number of bedrooms and bathrooms, and the allowance of pets.

Two variables were used to characterize the location of the listing: the distance from the location to the city center (to Praca do Municipio, calculated in kilometers) and the neighborhood where the location is located (categorical variable).

To evaluate the performance of the listing, the following variables were used: occupancy rate, number of bookings, number of reviews, number of days the listing was booked and review scores (overall, communication, precision, cleanliness, check-in, location, and value).

The rental policies latent variable includes the Airbnb policies that an owner has the possibility to adjust to customize its offer: cancellation policy (strict – moderate – flexible), charging a cleaning fee, the minimum length of stay (nights) and the instant book enabled policy. An interesting aspect is represented by the fact that the owners do not charge a security deposit for listings opened during 2020.

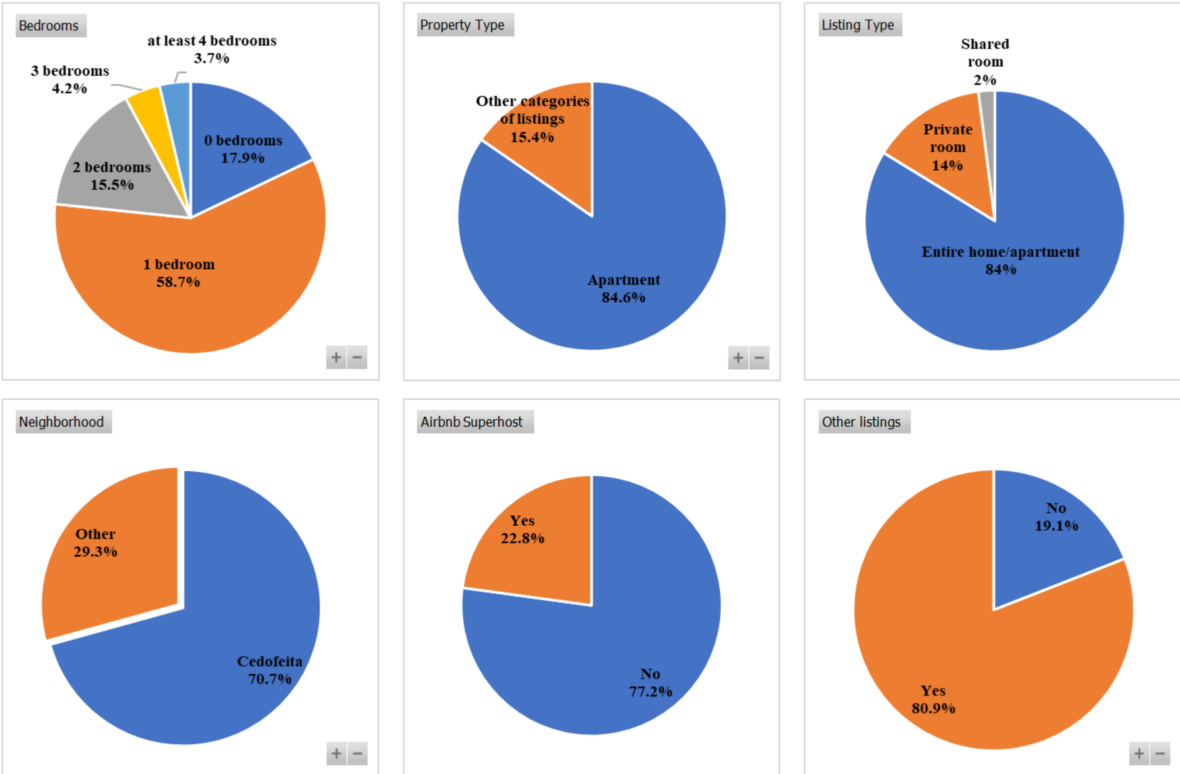
The host involvement is a variable the authors introduced in a previous study regarding the pricing strategies in the case of Airbnb platform and describes the host's efforts/involvement to make its listing more attractive (Toader, et al.; 2021). Having the status of *Airbnb Superhost*, responding fast to guests inquires, uploading more photos on the listing description, and adjusting the price according to demand fluctuations it is considered to describe a higher level of involvement.

3.2 Data collection and processing

To perform the study, yearly and monthly data of Airbnb listings from Porto, joining the platform in 2020, were obtained from AIRDNA (airdna.co). 1138 listings were selected from 1637 new listings, the following criteria being used in the selection process.

- The listings should have the average daily rate higher than zero – 301 listings were eliminated.
- The listings should not be operated by traditional tourism units - 135 listings were eliminated.
- Listings should have at least one booking in 2020 – 63 listings were eliminated.

Many of the listings are small apartments (17.9% are studios, while 58.7% have one bedroom), rented entirely to guests, without asking for a security deposit. More than 70% of the listings are in the Cedofeita neighborhood. An important characteristic is represented by the fact that more than 80% of the new listings were opened by experienced hosts (they have other listings), while 22.8% of owners are Airbnb Superhosts.



Source: authors' calculation

Figure 1: Characteristics of the listings opened in 2020

A multigroup analysis was performed to assess the impact of different characteristics on the pricing strategy. The analysis was focused on different variables that may influence the behavior of owners in setting prices, with the following variables obtaining significant results:

- Size of the new listing – small listings (0 or 1 bedrooms) versus the rest of the listings.
- Location of the listing - listings located in the Cedofeida neighborhood versus the rest of the neighborhoods.
- Experience of owners – having other listings on the Airbnb platform.
- Pets allowed – the possibility to host the guests' pets.

3.3 The model validation

The first step in model validation was represented by the analysis of statistical significance in the case of indicators' effects on latent variables. By implementing a bootstrapping procedure, all P values are below 0.05 (see Table 1), emphasizing that all the effects are statistically significant.

Table 1: Outer weights

Effects	Original Sample	P Values
AC -> Listing's characteristics	0.172	0.000
Bathrooms -> Listing's characteristics	0.495	0.000
Cancellation_Policy -> Renting policies	0.118	0.011
Cleaning_Fee_USD -> Renting policies	0.995	0.000
Listing Type -> Listing's characteristics	-0.219	0.000
Max_Guests -> Listing's characteristics	0.530	0.000
Overall_Rating -> Listing's performance	-0.392	0.000
Parking -> Listing's characteristics	0.115	0.001
Photos -> Host involvement	0.468	0.000
Response_Time -> Host involvement	0.304	0.001
Reviews -> Listing's performance	0.943	0.000
Superhost -> Host involvement	0.154	0.035
VAR(ADR) -> Host involvement	0.846	0.000

Source: authors' calculation using SMART PLS

Since multicollinearity must be avoided, especially in the case of formative models, the collinearity diagnostic was performed next. Table 2 emphasizes that all variance inflation factors (VIFs) are below 3.3 (Kock, 2015), the reason why there is no problem with multicollinearity in the model.

Table 2: Outer VIF values

Variable	VIF	Variable	VIF	Variable	VIF
AC	1.075	Listing Type	1.243	Response_Time	1.063
ADR_USD	1.000	Max_Guests	1.869	Reviews	1.003
Bathrooms	1.779	Overall_Rating	1.003	Superhost	1.024
Cancellation_Policy	1.000	Parking	1.043	VAR(ADR)	1.001
Cleaning_Fee_USD	1.000	Photos	1.049		

Source: authors' calculation using SMART PLS

To identify if there are significant differences between hosts in terms of the factors that influence their price decision, a multigroup analysis was performed. The proposed model was applied to the categories of owners described in the data collection and processing section, to identify significant differences between the path coefficients.

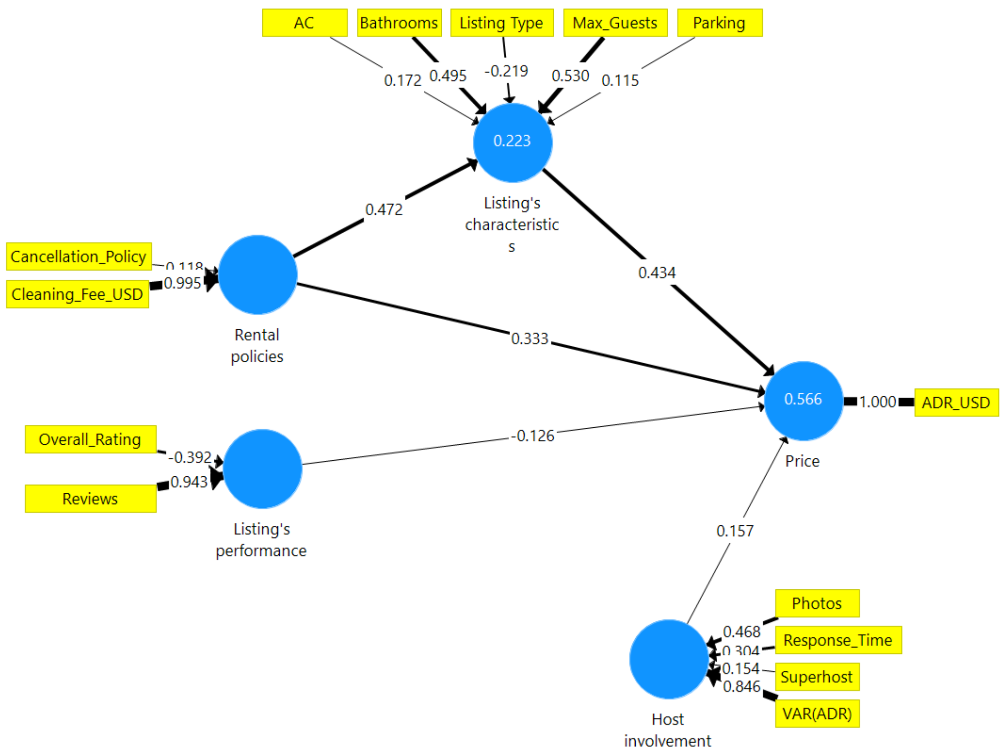
Table 3: Inner VIF values

Variables	Host involvement	Listing's characteristics	Listing's performance	Price	Renting policies
Host involvement				1.170	
Listing's characteristics				1.370	
Listing's performance				1.008	
Price					
Renting policies		1.000		1.326	

Source: authors' calculation using SMART PLS

4. Results and discussion

The model used to explain the behavior in setting the prices for the listings they opened during the COVID-19 pandemics (year 2020) was applied in the case of the city of Porto, Portugal.



Source: Authors' calculation

Figure 2: The model

According to the model, the listings' characteristics variable has the most significant effect on price. For each additional standard deviation unit, the price will increase by 0.434 standard deviation units (when all other independent constructs constant). The hosts will charge a higher price as the size of the listing will be higher (a higher value for the maximum number of guests that can be accommodated and more bathrooms).

Analyzing the differences between hosts having other listings and those who have only one listing (opened during the pandemic, in 2020 – the new entrants in the market), an interesting conclusion arises: a statistically significant difference of 0.441 (p-value = 0.001) was identified between the path coefficients in the case of hosts owing other listings and the new hosts. For new hosts, the rental policies are more important when they establish the price. They are charging more for the higher flexibility provided to their customers. During the pandemics, the uncertainty of the situation and the travel restrictions led many travelers to search for greater flexibility in terms of bookings cancellation. Thus, some of the new hosts, being aware of this need, accepted to provide a flexible cancelation policy, but they increased the price to cover the risks.

Another category of hosts that do not valuing the most the listing characteristics when establishing the price is represented by hosts who allow travelers to bring with them their pets (a statistically significant difference of -0.363, p-value = 0.027, was identified between the path coefficients in the case of hosts that allow pets and the one who do not allow pets in their apartments). This category of hosts focuses on rental policies, usually charging a higher cleaning fee.

In conclusion, the first research hypothesis is only partially validated. For all hosts, the price charged is directly related to the characteristics of the listing, but there are some categories of hosts who do not value the most this aspect.

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the travel pattern of both residents and tourists, with the public transport network perceived as being riskier than other means of transportation in terms of COVID-19 infection (Bucsky, P., 2020). Many people preferring non-motorized means of travel, it is expected that the hosts would charge higher prices for the listings located closer to the main tourism attractions in the city, usually these being in the city center. However, the second research hypothesis was not validated in the available case of the listings on the platform starting with 2020. There is no statistically significant relationship between any item on the location of the listing and the average daily rate. Although multigroup analysis emphasize a statistically significant difference of 0.334 (p-value = 0.050) between the path coefficients in the case of listings located in the Cedofeida neighborhood compared to other neighborhoods in the city. It seems that this neighborhood generates additional benefits for the hosts, and being aware of this aspect, the hosts owing a listing in this region will charge a higher price than in other neighborhoods, no matter what the listings characteristics are.

The conclusion of studying the relationship between listing performance and price is that the third research hypothesis is not validated. There are two reasons that can generate this situation. First, as other studies emphasized, to increase visibility on the platform and to attract more customers (this will result in more and better reviews), hosts charge for the new listings (Toader, Negrusa, Bode, Rus; 2021). Secondly, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the demand decreased significantly, the competition between listings being stronger than ever. In such a situation, most of the new listings (which do not have a significant notoriety on the platform), prefer to use the pricing strategies gaining short-term notoriety.

In addition to travel restrictions, uncertainty, and decreased demand, the COVID-19 pandemic generated additional costs for hosts to provide their customers safe and healthy hosting conditions. In this direction, two Airbnb policies are statistically significant: the cancellation policy and the cleaning fee policy. Both impact directly the final price; the fourth research hypothesis is being validated. Moreover, in the case of the new listings in 2020, the rental policies latent variable has a stronger impact on price than the listing performance or the host involvement latent variables - for each additional standard deviation unit, the price will increase by 0.333 standard deviation units (when keeping all other independent constructs constant).

As noted previously, during COVID-19 pandemics, guests are searching from flexibility in terms of cancellation of bookings. The hosts are aware of this; most of them (85.7% having at least moderate cancellation policy, while 52.4% have flexible cancellation policy) provide this facility to their customers, but at the cost of a higher daily price.

The multigroup analysis emphasized that hosts who entered on the platform in 2020 (they do not have other listings) value the most the rental policies when they establish the price; a statistically significant difference of 0.516 (p-value = 0.003) was identified between the path coefficients in the case of new hosts and the one due other listing. The hosts having other listings, knowing the differences between their listings, value fewer rental policies and focus on the differences between the listings when they establish the price.

5. Conclusions

The COVID-19 pandemics significantly influenced the travel and tourism industry, both in terms of supply and demand. Despite travel restrictions and healthy risks, some tourists continue to travel (even if they did it more often at the national level), while some units continue to open (since they planned this before the pandemics). Furthermore, there were some people who decided to join for the first time the Airbnb platform or decided to develop their activity by listing new locations. This article focuses on identifying the factors that influenced host price decisions for the new listings they opened in Porto in 2020.

The characteristics continue to represent the main criteria used by hosts to establish the price, as emphasized in the literature. However, the new hosts in the platform (they have only one listing opened in 2020), due to situation generated by the pandemics, focus the most on the rental policies, a higher flexibility of cancelation policy and the cleaning fee, determining them to charge a higher price.

Even if the literature emphasizes the effects of listing location on the price charged, no effect identified for the listing location on price. Moreover, a better listing performance determines a decrease in price as hosts are searching for building notoriety in the first months of operation.

5.1 Theoretical implications

There are two pricing strategies implemented by hosts in the case of new listings – value based, and customer based. The value-based strategy is employed mostly by the hosts owing more than one listing in the platform, they are adapting the price to the characteristics of the listing. On the other hand, to differentiate their listing, some hosts focus on customers' needs, providing higher flexibility in the case of cancelation and allowing pets policies. The market penetration pricing strategies is used mostly by the owners of the new listings. Due to the strong competition existent especially in the urban destinations, many hosts have this approach in the short and medium run, until their listings gain notoriety.

5.2 Practical implications

To achieve better performance, hosts may focus on a reduced number of characteristics/aspects that influence the price and improve, at the same time, the guest experience. First, they should take into consideration the number of bathrooms, which is an important criterion, especially for groups. A higher number of bathrooms allows hosts to charge extra people fee, and thus to increase their revenues. The availability of air conditioning and parking represents other characteristics for which guests are willing to pay more. Thus, especially for the hosts renting small listings (maximum one bedroom), located in other neighborhoods than Cedofeida, the availability of these facilities will generate additional revenues. These two facilities represent a strength also for the hosts who entered for the first time on the platform. Second, even if the host involvement variable does not have a strong impact on the average daily rate, uploading a higher number of photos and responding quickly to the guests' inquiries has a positive influence on the willingness to pay higher prices. The hosts having many locations (most of them being listed on the platform before 2020) are already aware of the benefits generated by uploading many photos, an aspect that is recommended to be implemented also by the new hosts.

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Creating a City Image Based on Foreign Visitors' Views Retrieved From Historical Documents: The Case of Porto

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Abstract: Porto has been a city with a mercantile vocation since at least the 12th century. In fact, in 1353, during the reign of Afonso IV, the Porto merchant Afonso Martins Alho assumed a pioneering role when negotiating the first trade treaty with King Edward III of England. As the commercial cosmopolitanism of this city has been known since ancient times, it will be important to know how foreigners described the landscape of the city once known as *Portucale* during the Early Modern Age (15th to 18th centuries). In this context, this study will seek to reveal the evolution of the imagery of the city of Porto built by foreigners. Therefore, we will characterize the profile of the first travellers who settled in the village and who poured their experiences into travel book accounts. These precocious travellers were diplomats, nobles, soldiers, scientists, artists, among others. The narratives, in this historical period, still had a biographical bent, where personal considerations and opinions about the places they visited were prominent. These types of reports are useful, if seen as a complementary source to others, as they present testimonies that are far from the reality of Porto, as well as comparative views with the reality of the country from which these travellers come. Therefore, the methodology used will focus on a space delimited by the city of Porto and its term and on a time interval that will begin in the mid-fifteenth century and end in the beginning of the eighteenth century. Through the analysis and documentary interpretation of secondary and primary sources, we will seek to know the specific ways in which outsiders represented the "Porto destination". With regard to the implications of our investigation, we believe that this will prove useful for the marketing managers of the Porto destination, since, by getting to know the way in which the imagery of the city was constructed by outsiders, during the Early Modern Age, they will be able to promote the Porto destination in a more authentic and differentiated way than the direct competition.

Keywords: travel books, tourism, early modern age, Porto, travel guides

1. Introduction

The identity of the city of Porto is indelibly marked by several elements: river, commerce, industry, wine, granite, the Atlantic Ocean and the opaque blanket of morning fog that can be seen along the Douro River (Cabral, 2011).

From early on, this city prospered with the treatment that was carried out in its port, located on the right bank of the Douro River and close to the Atlantic Ocean. One of the commodities that quickly gained preponderance in the trade of the largest port in the North of Portugal, in addition to salt, was wine, which, at least since 1371, was already exported by Porto merchants (Cardoso & Silva, 2007). In fact, even before that, in 1353, Afonso Martins Alho, as a representative of Portuguese merchants, established with 'Eduardo III of England the oldest international trade treaty in our country' (Sousa, 2000, p. 237). In fact, wine – and the taxes that were applied to its trade – influenced the urbanism, architecture and society of the city of Porto (Cabral, 2011).

However, commerce only flourished in the city of Porto from the twelfth century onwards. *Portucale*, the pier of the village that gave its name to the country, developed, and its people expanded along the Vila River (watercourse that runs underground through *Rua de S. João* and *Rua de Mouzinho da Silveira*) until they arrived to Alto da Pena Ventosa where, in the 12th century, the Cathedral and the episcopal facilities were erected, in what constituted 'a walled and fortified village in conditions of solidity, nobility and art such as had never been seen in the place' (Machado, 1968, p. 139).

As far as tourism is concerned, it was in the late 17th and early 18th centuries that The Grand Tour became popular among the English aristocracy. This phenomenon took the form of a journey – lasting from six months to two years, which was undertaken by young British nobles to Continental Europe and which normally gave priority to destinations such as Paris and Rome, the latter city being connoted with the heritage of antiquity. (Braga, 2007).

In the 18th century, travel guides were published, offering practical information about the places to visit. According to Matos and Santos (2004), travel guides had a utilitarian and pedagogical character in providing their readers with information about the trips to be carried out and the places to visit. In the 18th century, people travelled with the aim of “knowing other lands and other people, different laws and different customs” (Chaves, 1987).

Already in the 16th century, diplomacy – and the itinerancies and cultural diffusion that it promotes – constitute relevant sources for historians (Buescu, 2019). As Saldanha (2021), mentions, in the 18th century, these works constitute travel reports where knowledge and experiences are recorded and where new territories are exhibited.

However, the oldest accommodation guide dates back to 1225 and is called Pilgrims Guide. This manual included information about hospices, inns and hostels located in Central Europe. The development of commerce and cities during the Late Middle Ages contributed to greater dynamics in land, sea and river transport. This evolution created favorable conditions for the emergence, in 1553, of the *Guide to the Ways of France*. In turn, from 1616 onwards, there was an unequivocal increase in ‘publications with travel reports and informative guides that were successively published in Germany, describing this country, France and Italy’ (Domingues, 2013, p. 160).

The present investigation intends to constitute itself as a study of travel narratives that portrayed, during the 15th, 16th, 17th and early 18th centuries - until the eve of the signing of the Treaty of Methuen (1703) - the city of Porto, under outsiders' point of view. The research problem arises from the lack of studies on the History of Tourism in Porto detected by us. So far, there is no study that deals exclusively with travel reports that portrayed the city of Porto at the dawn of the Modern Age. It is this gap that we intend to contribute to fill with this work.

2. The current concept of tourist image

The tourist image of a destination is crucial as it allows to distinguish it from the others and influence the process of choosing, repeating the visit or recommending it. A tourist destination is something dynamic, constantly changing, which is embodied in the set of services and infrastructures to support tourism activity and to respond to visitor requests (Borges, 2017).

Tourism and culture play a key role in the image creation process, in order to respond to consumer needs (Richards & Wilson, 2005). The image of cities and regions is based on physical elements, but, in the same way, it is transformed from the experiences built around these elements, which normally encompass the “living culture” and the “atmosphere of the places” (Wilson, 2002, cited in Gonçalves, 2008, p. 12).

Kastenholz (2002) argues that the current use of the term “image” is sometimes used in the marketing area as a way for the consumer to mentally perceive products, brands, companies and/or their representatives. In his view, the concept of image is increasingly relevant, since the competitiveness of companies and products is also increasing.

Still on this topic, Baker (2007) argues that there are two models to follow: the bet on the physical and material aspects of a place, or the bet on the place as an experience, space and as a space that promotes experiences. To this end, it is necessary to structure and build the image of the place according to three parameters:

- 1. *Organic image*, which is formed by the knowledge we have of the place through the influence of the media, books, movies, family and friends and studies. This image is all the more powerful, the longer and more interesting its history, the distinctive cultural traits, the stunning landscapes, and it can also be a political and economic center of interest.
- 2. *Marketing-induced image*, using media such as advertising, public relations, websites, brochures and fairs; that is, it is built through promotional messages, allied to the organic image or the basic knowledge of the place.
- 3. *Experience phase (experiential phase)*, where the image is improved after the consumer's first contact with the place. All places that attract for leisure or business, go through this phase.

Thus, the image is the perception that others have of the place, while the identity is the reality, which is why it is not only important to change the image and not change the reality. On the other hand, it must be remembered that a strong image promotes trust, if it corresponds to the veracity of the place, because, when promoting it to the market, tourists, entrepreneurs, residents, they have to be confronted with a reality, but positive and authentic.

Promoting a territory requires the identification of its distinctive features and the structuring of an attractive and competitive value proposition, building a strong brand and promoting a good relationship between all stakeholders – residents, visitors, institutions, entrepreneurs, among others.

The tourist offer in Porto has experienced a significant improvement over the last few years. The need for innovation, creativity and the growing influence of culture in the area of tourism have converged to the emergence of a new paradigm in terms of the offer of destinations, with implications for their image and, consequently, for their brand: creativity, through the development of new products related to various special interest tourism. It is therefore crucial that the representation harmoniously corresponds to the real, so as not to disappoint the tourist's expectations. Persuading tourists to visit (or revisit) a particular place over another is directly related to visibility, knowledge and empathy with the destination and its values.

3. Travel books and guides

Travel guides are presented as an introduction to the territory, being good or bad, constitute a mediation with space (Roncayolo, 2011). In them, reality and its representation are expressed, travel guides are a way of thinking and organizing the real, the territory and the city. From this point of view, in an analysis of a long-term collection of guides, that is, in a temporal space with analytical relevance, it is possible to highlight the strata of the mutations that took place in the city and in the ways of representing it.

The collection of travel guides, over time, allows us to observe how different points of view about the city and its elements influence the way itineraries are chosen (Roncayolo, 2011). Thus, the true legitimacy of the guide is due to the fact that it offers a reading of the historic part of the city, which leads us to affirm that a travel guide presents a mediator of representations acquired through the testimonies of different travelers.

The printed guides highlight two levels of construction, these being the textual and the spatial, that is, a particular way of reading places and peoples. In a way, the guides build landscapes, places and stereotypes of people (Cohen, 2005, p. 85).

The reports of travelers written during the 15^{th} and 16^{th} centuries make room for us to think about the reported peculiarities of distant and not-so-distant peoples, which were the stuff of the feathers of those who ventured on sea and land to see them up close. It is also said of itself in the other, allowing to see, equally, the approximations and distances between cultures (Albuquerque, 1983).

In this way, the reports are part of a plot that help to highlight the changes and permanence of customs, such as the singularities of human practices, within the kingdoms, peoples or cultures, in this dynamic “of those who from here, speak of those from there” (Veyne, 2014, p. 42-45).

The specificity of these narratives written throughout the Modern Age consists in their writing in vernacular languages to the detriment of Latin, giving way to technical terms and personal interest in everyday life (Mollat, 1990, p. 9-12).

Although motivated by different reasons in the venture and in the objective of their travels, the Portuguese kingdom, in the 15th century, constituted a territory of interest to foreigners due to the attractive overseas trade of the caravels that used to travel with the intention of importing products from Africa and the East.

Portugal was then considered an attractive country for foreign travelers, due to its culture, customs and economic activity, not only during the 15th century, but also throughout the Modern Age. Hence, travel books, throughout this period under study, were considered as subsidiary documents of the social history of the Portuguese people, to be used as such, they had to be subjected to analysis and criticism. Authors were evaluated according to the circumstances of their stays and the purposes for which they wrote the account of their travels.

The facts narrated had to be verified, within the scope of history. The historical conditions of acceptance of such works and their scope in space and time also had to be evaluated, in order to make travel books viable.

The genre of narratives under analysis – travel literature – is considered by many authors as a fundamental step in the act of traveling, making it possible, in this way, to create a mark of distinction and an individual path through writing (Vicente, 2003).

It is through writing that the traveler proves his presence in a given space and, through it, his readers create images from the written reproductions, which is a "passing vision" (Duncan & Derek, 1999).

The expression "travel literature" raises some controversy regarding its use as a source of research, since it refers to testimonies left by non-natives: "Men who live in a different social and mental climate, men with other interests and having a new scale of values to judge things and events, given that their origin, their social environment and their way of life are different" (Serrão, 1970, p. 283).

4. Methods

Regarding the chronology of the present study (1447-1702), it begins at a time when Portugal is in a period of maritime expansion along the African coast (Carpentier & Lebrun, 2002),, under the aegis of Infante D. Henrique (Cape Verde was recognized in 1445 and the illustrious Porto native died in 1460) and ends on the eve of the Methuen treaty (1703). The signing of this treaty took place in a context in which 'Portugal, as a result of the conflictual situation between England, France and Spain, gained important shares of the British wine market that it was also important to maintain in peacetime' (Cardoso, 2003).

The objective of our investigation is to know how the image of Porto was built by foreigners who visited the city at the dawn of the modern era. In this case, we understand image as a way of "simplifying, symbolizing and qualifying the value and meaning that people attribute to objects, people and places" (Braga, 2007, p. 71). In this context, we researched primary sources, that is, original texts, written by the authors themselves, devoid of other people's interpretations (de Haro et al., 2016). Instead of undertaking a search of printed sources in libraries, we favour the analysis of sources through virtual catalogs associated with national and international public library websites. We also used bibliographies by renowned authors that dealt with foreign travelers who visited the Iberian Peninsula from Antiquity to the 20th century (works by Arturo Farinelli (1920), Foulché-Delbosc (1896) and Garcia Mercadal (1999)).

Travel narratives can be written by tourists, scientists, artists, etc. As José Amado M Mendes (1993, p. 135): refers:

> *Its value depends a lot on the competence of the respective author, but also on the optics through which he observes reality. In many cases, they are foreigners who, if they do not always show a thorough knowledge of the Portuguese reality, their distance – as they are foreigners – and the tendency to compare Portugal with their own countries make many of their testimonies very interesting. This is one of the sources to be used as a complement to others.*

This aspect will justify the internal criticism of sources (which can be of interpretation, competence, veracity, accuracy, verification of testimonies). External criticism or authenticity criticism (of provenance and reconstitution) seems to us to be less relevant Mendes (1993).

With regard to the spatio-temporal delimitation of the unit of analysis, the present study is limited to the territory included within the Fernandina wall since the 14th century, the new term (Campanhã, Paranhos, Cedofeita, Massarelos and Lordelo) and the old (Gondomar, Bouças, Maia, Aguiar de Sousa, Penafiel de Sousa, Gaia, Vila Nova de Par de Gaia, Azurara and Pindelo) in the city of Porto (Silva, 2000).

Taking into account Veal (1997), historical science helps us to know the origins of practices, attitudes and institutions that are combined with tourist activity, as well as allowing us to understand the evolution of this phenomenon from Classical Antiquity to the emergence of the 'Grand Tour', passing through the development of thermal tourism.

According to Ritchie e Goeldner (1994), the study of the past growth and development of the many facets of tourism provides the context for evaluating the industry today. Indeed, historical research can greatly contribute to the development and understanding of tourism. Not only by documenting the past, but also by identifying the potential for attraction. Thus, greatly expanding historic restoration and interpretation, as tourist attractions, requires rigorous research into past events and the details of places and vernacular architecture. Modern tourists increasingly require a sophisticated description and presentation of historic sites (Ritchie & Goeldner, 1994).

5. Results

In this article we present some testimonies of travelers from the 15th, 17th and 18th century – without claiming to be exhaustive. These travelers made, in their journey through the country, a description of the city of Porto. The first account we present is one of the oldest descriptions of our country and is from the work of Gilles Le Bouvier "herald of the king of arms of Charles VII king of France." (Buescu, 2019, p. 194). This traveler refers to the main Iberian rivers that flow into Portugal, referring specifically to the Douro River which, according to him, is born in Burgos and meets the sea in Portugal.

In turn, the Bohemian nobleman Leon de Rosmithal de Blatna (Fabié, 1889), who was in the Iberian Peninsula from 1465 to 1467, describes the city of Porto, referring to the episcopal palace, referring that the city is located between two hills and close to the sea. However, he sees numerous vessels, mentioning that numerous goods from other seas dock here. It also alludes to the infidels who are sold by Christians as slaves and who are taken captive every year. As it could not be otherwise, wine – and the respective fees – is also mentioned by the Bohemian nobleman.

The Polish nobleman Nicolaus Von Popplau, like Blatna, on the journey he undertook from 1484 to 1485, refers to Porto as the best city in the country, with the exception of Lisbon (Liske, 1878).

In turn, Jerónimo Munzer, a doctor and humanist, arrived in Porto from Coimbra, referring to the antiquity of this city located at the foot of a hill. He also mentions the city walls (*Muralha Fernandina*) that are reached by ships when the tide is high (Garcia Mercadal, 1999).

Erich Lassota de Steblovo, another Polish nobleman, refers, in the 16th century, to Porto as being a beautiful, large and industrial city, located on the Douro River that flows into the sea. This soldier refers to the dense, strong and beautiful wall that surrounds the city, he also mentions that above the wall you can go around the city, mentions the beautiful cathedral, churches and monasteries of the same city (Liske, 1878).

Sometimes travelers offer wrong information, as is the case with the Dutch humanist Henrique Cock (Garcia Mercadal, 1999), who, at the end of the 15th century, refers to the city of Porto as having been formerly founded by the French.

The account of the journey undertaken by the abbot of Clairvaux, Dom Edme of Saulieu, written by his secretary, Friar Claude of Bronseval is perhaps the most interesting of all due to its thoroughness. These regular clerics undertook an itinerary, in 1531-1533, through Portugal, intending to visit Cistercian monasteries with "reformist purposes" (Marques, 1997, p. 112). The travellers were often received with acrimony by communities refractory to the visit and the reform it implied.

Bronseval mentions that they both travelled long distances to find accommodation in the city of Porto. When they finally got a place to stay it was very bad and they were miserably treated and housed (Bronseval, 1970). Bronseval then gives a description of the city of Porto. He states that the city is built on two hills separated by a small valley. He also mentions the Ferdinand fortress, adding that Porto is enclosed by an imposing wall of ashlar, very strong and copiously covered with towers from the top to the river where it descends. This river, rather large and deep, he adds, is called the Douro. This watercourse surrounds the lower part of the city where the port is located, with a great number of vessels coming from all over the country. He also refers to the sea, which he says is a league away, and which strengthens and inflates the river. Both of them see a great amount of merchandise in the harbour. As regards the sociological characterization of the native population, for Bronseval, it is very rough and tough, lacking urbanity. As for minorities, for him there are more Jews and Moors in this place than Portuguese, and the Gaul finds them everywhere in the squares. At the top of a hill (the hill of Pena

Ventosa) stands the Cathedral. Bronseval ends his portrait on a picturesque note, mentioning that they could not visit it because they were expelled "by a kind of bearded, barbaric brute, who drove us out like dogs with a stick" (Bronseval, 1970, p. 315).

Jacobo Sobieski, also a Polish nobleman, refers, in 1611, to the undefeated city as a beautiful city, situated between mountains, possessing a very good port, which gave it its name (Liske, 1878).

French cartographer Albert Jouvin praises the quality of the port of the Invicta city (Garcia Mercadal, 1999). In 1699, Father François de Tours refers to Porto as a large and beautiful city and the most pleasant in the whole country (Serrão, 1958).For the French, the city streets were wide and very clean. It also makes mention of ships anchored along the city walls. Likewise, he refers to the dangerousness of the bar and the aesthetic quality of the convents in the city.

In 1702, William Bromley, a British politician, refers to the city of Porto as a beautiful city, well built, with well-paved streets and cleaner than those of the capital. He mentions the monastery of Serra do Pilar, located on the other side of the Douro River and where about 45 friars of Saint Augustine lived. He also praises the beauty of four parish churches. Bromley (1702) maintains that the Cathedral is much smaller than its counterparts in his country. The Fernandina wall is also referenced and Bromley (1702), who estimates the population of the city and its suburbs at 50,000 souls.

6. Final remarks

In the Middle Ages, traveling increased the circulation of news and stimulated the propagation of cultural practices, as well as contributing to closer ties between peoples. However, traveling often proved to be a dangerous enterprise, one that persuaded travelers to travel in groups. In the 15th and 16th centuries the situation was similar and the circulation of goods in the internal space was difficult. At that time, the complex of Portuguese roads was still similar to the one that punctuated in the Middle Ages, which, in turn, was a tributary of the great Roman roads (Marques, 1997). Most of these paths were unpaved. In spite of everything, according to Magalhães (1997), there is care on the part of the local authorities in the erection and maintenance of communication routes. There are even roads that can be traveled by oxcarts around Porto and Braga.

In inns and hostels, according to José Marques (1997, p.99), "passersby could find little more than a light meal, a fire to warm themselves up, water, salt and a lamp".

Frequently, river water courses interrupted pedestrian paths, this obstacle was overcome through bridges, fillies and piers. Nevertheless, the maritime routes were primordial and allowed the boats the fluvial penetration towards the interior of the country, or on the contrary. The river articulation between the city of Porto and its hinterland was not easy: "navigation along the Douro was not easy, and in 1531 it was hampered by the fishing devices that the fishermen used to build in them" (Magalhães, 1997, p. 291).

The results of the present investigation should be useful for the marketing managers of the Porto destination. In fact, by making known the evolution of the tourist image of Porto, the publicity of these results, in the form of a scientific article, may contribute to the management and dissemination of this tourist destination in a more authentic way, differentiating it. In a time of great competition between city breaks destinations, this aspect can be relevant. On the other hand, the opinions of foreigners who, over time, described what they felt during their stay in Porto, can be used by tour operators to get to know their source market better, since some of them share the nationality of these travelers who described the *invicta* city in the 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.

The accounts of the city of Porto that have been highlighted here came from the pen of travellers with very diverse profiles: military personnel, nobles, clergymen, diplomats and scientists, among others. Although some of the accounts herein may constitute unfounded stereotypes, most travellers' observations of geographical, sociological and cultural realities give us an idea of what the city of Porto would have been like in the early modern age. An idiosyncratic image leaks out of the travel books that emphasise the Douro River as a connexion between the city and its hinterland. The mercantile character of Porto is also valued in the accounts, the omnipresence of ships anchored in the Douro bar and the quality of its port. The industrious nature of the city, the quality of its streets and the aesthetic appeal of its churches, convents and monasteries equally seduce foreign travellers. Another distinctive feature of the city that is often referred to, in addition to the hills that characterise the topography of the city, is the Fernandina wall, which is an epitome of the Gothic city.

We believe that these elements, together with the ubiquitous Porto wine, constitute Porto's unique selling proposition. These are unique and unrepeatable features that can help marketers disseminate a concise and coherent image of the destination Porto.

Due to the scarcity of sources available for such a remote period, the current article does not present a set of representations as varied as would be desirable. Therefore, future studies that focus on the reports of travellers from the 18th and 19th century can cement these results or offer them new nuances.

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The Question of Sustainability - When Ecotourism Becomes Overtourism: The Example of the Kruger National Park, South Africa

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Abstract: The Kruger National Park is the largest protected area in South Africa. The park was opened to tourists in 1927 at a time when private automobiles were becoming a feature of South African cities. Since 1927 there has been a 67,879-fold increase in tourists until 2019. The current number of tourists is 1.8 million exceeds that of any other savannah, wildlife-based national park in Africa by at least four-fold and poses the danger of overtourism. The total number of tourists that can be accommodated by accommodation within the Kruger National Park is 7400, which is high for an African national park. The paper examines historic tourist trends and the regional concentration of tourist facilities within the park. Due to its accessibility, the southern region, which comprises 21.9% of the park, receives 73.9% of tourists and has 32.9% of the 2,562-kilometre road network and 49.8% of tourist beds. A survey of members of a social media group found that 90.9% believe the southern region is overdeveloped. Open Safari Vehicles (OSVs) could be part of an Alternative Transportation Programme (ATP) as they transport an average of 5.9 tourists, compared to an average of 2.4 tourists per private automobile. A survey was conducted on the same social media site to ascertain attitudes towards OSVs, which now account for 16.7% of the park's tourists. A total of 1,320 responses were recorded and 29.24% believed that OSV drivers have no regard for other park users, while others regarded these vehicles as an important contribution to park conservation and management.

Keywords: African national parks, ecotourism, Kruger National Park, overtourism

1. Introduction

The Kruger National Park is the largest protected area in South Africa. The park also attracts 1.8 million tourists annually and is in some ways a contradiction – South Africa's largest and most famous national park is also a major tourist attraction which includes 27 accommodation nodes, 24 concession lodges and 2,562 kilometres of all-weather tourist roads. In pre-pandemic years, tourist numbers were increasing at between six and seven percent per annum, which would result in a doubling of tourists to 3.6 million within 12 years.

Do such large numbers of tourists, and a concentration mainly in the southern region of the park, represent a crossing of the boundary between ecotourism and overtourism? Since the Kruger National Park was first opened to the public in 1927, there has been a 67,879-fold increase in tourists in the 94 years until 2019. A continued increase in tourists, and pressures for additional tourist infrastructure, could have an adverse impact on the natural environment.

2. Problem statement and research question

This paper addresses the following problems:

- The Kruger National Park currently attracts 1.8 million tourists per annum, which is the highest number of tourists to any wildlife-based, savanna national park in Africa.
- With tourists increasing at between 6% to 7% per year, the danger exists that ecotourism is being replaced by overtourism.
- An increase in tourists has an environmental impact in a semi-arid environment, results in negative publicity and is not ultimately sustainable.

The paper investigates the following research questions:

- 1. What is the historic pattern of tourist accommodation development and the spatial spread of tourist accommodation within the park?
- 2. Are there practical, workable alternatives to the self-drive mode of park visitation which has become entrenched amongst tourists since 1927?

3. Literature review

The IUCN defines a national park as a Category II protected area. The primary objective of a national park is, "to protect natural biodiversity along with its underlying ecological structure and supporting environmental processes, and to promote education and recreation." The provision of tourism facilities therefore has to take place in agreement with the objective of protecting biodiversity (IUCN). It could be argued that these objectives are contradictory and require very skilful decision-making to balance the often conflicting objectives of biodiversity conservation and the demands of tourism.

The first national park was established in the American state of Wyoming in 1872. Jones, Shipley and Ul-Hasan (2017) describe how that the tensions in this "dual mandate" emerged in the United States of America as far back as the 1920s, and that current policies favour resource protection over tourism.

Ansson (1998, 4) argues that many of the lobbyists for the first American national parks were railway owners who saw the creation of national parks as offering opportunities for transporting European tourists to the parks on trains. Park protagonists also realised that tourism development was often a lesser evil than other developments such as water reservoirs. Development of tourist facilities was therefore a core tenet of the national park system from the beginning.

Throughout the world there is increasing tourist pressure on national parks. Tourism, paradoxically, is able to damage the very environments which tourists regard as the most sought after, such as national parks. (May, 1999, 57; Miller *et al*, 2014, 256). Wearing and Neil have previously stated, "to accept increased levels of visitation as the price of support significantly compromises the natural qualities upon which parks are founded" (Wearing and Neil, 1999, 41). Eagles *et al* list nearly 30 negative environmental impacts which result from tourism in protected areas (Eagles *et al*, 2002, 33). Ferreira and Harmse, have argued that as ecotourism is a brand of tourism that is based on environmental sustainability, large concentrations of tourists are considered to be in conflict with this brand of tourism (Ferreira & Harmse, 2014, 20).

Edgell (2015, 29) makes the point that the principles of sustainable tourism are often difficult to operationalise in developing countries, where governments may be tempted to allow additional tourism infrastructure within a protected area if it is generating an income.

Spenceley and Snyman (2017) provide a detailed account of the issues pertaining to the provision of tourism facilities within protected areas in a special issue of the *Tourism and Hospitality Research* journal. A renowned scholar in the field, McCool (2009) argues that sustainable tourism in protected areas requires a number of trade-offs between two goals: (1) protection of the key values that form the foundation of conservation and (2) allowing tourists to experience and enjoy those values. McCool argues that these trade-offs occur within a context of a lack of consensus within society concerning the objectives of the protected area, and also a lack of scientific data on the relationships between cause and effect.

Manning *et al* (2014, 346, 347) argue that transportation and national parks are inextricably linked and transportation cannot be separated from the question of tourist carrying capacity. Of importance is the fact that transportation, apart from its environmental impacts, has a major impact on the quality of the tourist's experience. The researchers propose that national park transportation should be designed to comply with set management objectives and should not be merely demand driven (Manning *et al*, 2014, 351).

Daigle (2008, 58, 59) describes the adoption of the Alternative Transportation Program (ATP) in the national parks of the United States of America. As part of the initiative, the National Park Service formed partnerships with outside organisations, such as the Ford Motor Company, to provide innovative transportation alternatives. Daigle (2008, 60, 61) summarises the lessons learned from the programme to include: the private automobile cannot always be the primary mode of transportation, a park's resources are the attraction and not the transport system, existing infrastructure is often at or beyond capacity, and increasing numbers of tourists require complex and integrated transportation solutions.

4. Study area

The Kruger National Park is the largest protected area in South Africa and was the first national park established by the South African Parliament in 1926. The Kruger National Park is also the most visited wildlife-based, savanna national park in Africa and a key economic resource in north-eastern South Africa, a region where the park has become the cornerstone of the tourism industry.

Poverty and unemployment are persistent social problems in this semi-arid region of South Africa, as they are throughout the continent. Tourism accounts for 5.97% of the GDP of Mpumalanga province, where the southern half of the park is situated, or twice the national average for South Africa (Saayman & Saayman, 2006, 77). It is therefore tempting for government to regard the Kruger National Park as a valuable financial resource.

5. Historical context of the Kruger National Park

The first government game reserves were established in South Africa from 1894. The Sabi Game Reserve, the 4600-km² southern extent of the current national park, was proclaimed in 1898 by President Paul Kruger. The Sabi Game Reserve was the largest game reserve established by the Kruger government (Carruthers, 1995, 19, 27). But as there was no evidence of any conservation ethic amongst the general public, and no successful tradition of wildlife protection amongst white settlers, the accepted view was that the game reserves would eventually be re-opened for trophy hunting once wildlife populations had recovered (Stevenson-Hamilton, 1937, 115). After more than two decades, during which time the purpose of the game reserve was contested territory, the Kruger National Park became the first national park established by the South African Parliament (Stevenson-Hamilton, 1937, 214).

The proclamation of the Kruger National Park in 1926 was fortuitous for politicians as it soon became a powerful and unifying icon which served a useful political purpose. Conservation was presented as a moral crusade, and the park became a powerful, "feel good" symbol which unified Afrikaners and English settlers in a country where deep divisions and animosity existed after the South African War of 1899 – 1901 (Carruthers, 1995, 59, 62, 65, 80, 89; Büscher, 2016, 116). However, in accordance with the political philosophy of the time, no consideration was given to indigenous Africans as potential visitors (Carruthers, 1995, 99, 100).

The Kruger National Park soon began to provide affordable and subsidised holidays for urban whites. As many urban residents had only recently moved to South Africa's cities, and had cultural memories deeply embedded in the African wilderness, the concept of a national park was readily accepted and a sub-culture, complete with norms and behaviours, developed around a visit to the Kruger National Park (Carruthers, 1995, 86, 87; Carruthers, 1997, 129). As the park met a number of symbolic and psychological needs amongst urban whites, its popularity grew rapidly and South African tourists far out-numbered foreign tourists.

6. Self-drive as the dominant mode for tourist entry

The proclamation of the Kruger National Park in the 1920s coincided with the beginning of the industrialisation of South Africa and the advent of the private automobile amongst a recently urbanised white minority. In contrast to many African countries, where national parks were positioned to mainly attract foreign tourists, for the Kruger National Park the private automobile and not guided safaris became the dominant mode of tourist transportation. This was in contrast to the establishment of national parks in East African countries, where the existence of an urbanised white middle class was less of a demographic. East African national parks in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, as well as national parks in Zambia, Malawi and Botswana, were not crisscrossed with roads accessible by means of private sedan cars. National park authorities in these countries did not establish tourist accommodation at the scale that it was provided in the Kruger National Park, and tourist accommodation became the domain of the private sector (Curry-Lindahl and Harroy, 1972, 48, 53, 59, 64, 68, 70, 79, 81, 87). In sharp contrast to the dominant pattern in East African tourist destinations, the tourist infrastructure in the Kruger National Park catered for self-drive tourists and the road network was systematically extended to cover the entire national park.

7. Development of tourist infrastructure

The first tourists visited the Kruger National Park in 1927 when a total of 27 were recorded for the year. In 1928 tourists increased to 650 and by 1929 tourists had increased to 2500, from the initial 27 only two years previously (SANParks, 2020). By 1930 a total of 5000 tourists were recorded.

A limited budget of £10,000 for 1927 left no surplus to construct tourist accommodation, although government did provide a grant for road construction (Stevenson-Hamilton, 1937, 223, 224). The first three "rest huts" were constructed in 1928 in three ranger posts, and in 1929 an additional 14 huts were completed (Joubert, 1990, 2). Tourist roads were constructed by staff to follow the straightest routes between ranger posts, and by the end of 1929 a total of 617 km of roads had been constructed (Joubert, 1990,12). In 1948 it was possible to travel from Malelane on the southern border to Pafuri on the far northern border.

Since the 1920s there has been a significant increase both in the number of rest camps and the number of tourists beds. In 1961 the park had 10 rest camps and 4 small camps. At present there are 27 accommodation nodes consisting of 12 large rest camps, two small rest camps, five bushveld camps, two bush lodges, two camping camps, two overnight hides, a former ranger's house and one tented camp. Oher tourist infrastructure includes 17 picnic sites, 11 game-viewing hides, 9 entrance gates and 2 border posts. The total number of tourist beds is high for an African national park at 4,483 and camping sites can accommodate an additional 1,896 visitors.

Since 2002, a total of 24 concession lodges, which are aimed at the top-end of the tourist market, have added an additional 1,047 beds. The Kruger National Park can therefore accommodate approximately 7,400 overnight tourists. Despite the high number of tourist beds, 78% of the 1.8 million tourists are still day visitors.

8. Growth in tourist numbers since 1927

Tourist numbers have continued to grow since 1927, and between 1927 and 2019 there has been a 67,879-fold increase in tourists. In the years for which detailed visitor statistics are available, visitor numbers have exhibited a sustained increase. In only 21 years from 1927 to 2020 did tourist numbers decrease on the previous year's figures. These declines usually coincided with economic recession (SANParks, 2020). Tourists doubled between 1934 and 1947, between 1947 and 1954, between 1954 and 1963 and again from 1963 to 1973. The park's staff often could not keep up with the increase in tourists and had to adopt temporary solutions such as erecting rows of army tents. In 1963 a total of 200,000 tourists were recorded and in 1984 tourists had more than doubled to 500,000. In 2002 tourists exceeded one million for the first time.

Tourist arrivals could double from the current 1.8 million within 12 years. In four of the last eight pre-pandemic years, the annual rate of increase exceeded 6% per annum. At a 6% rate of increase, tourist numbers will double to 3.65 million by 2034. There are national parks in Africa which receive more tourists, but these national parks do not offer wildlife-viewing as the primary attraction. Although the Kruger National Park receives approximately four times as many tourists as any equivalent African national park, within the park there is a concentration in the southern region. This is due to the elongated shape of the park (Figure 1), and tourist perceptions that the northern half is further from the main South African cities.

9. Unequal geographic spread of tourists

The southern region, which offers easy access to two of the largest cities in South Africa, receives a disproportionate percentage of tourists (Figure 2). The 6 entrance gates in the southern region, which comprises 21.9% of the park land area, receive 73.9% of the 1.8 million annual tourists. This region also has 32.9% of the 2,562-kilometre road network and 49.8% of tourist beds.

When day visitors and Open Safari Vehicle (OSV) entrants are added to the concentration of tourist accommodation, this results in high visitor densities in the southern region which exceed those of most other African national parks. The Kruger National Park is currently the only savanna national park in Africa, and which offers a visitor experience based primarily on wildlife viewing, which receives more than 500,000 visitors per annum. The Serengeti National Park in Tanzania received 472,705 tourists in 2019 (Statista, 2020). Recent statistics are not available, but by contrast Tsavo National Park in Kenya received 367,000 visitors in 2011 of which 221,000 were foreign tourists. However, total tourists declined to 108,000 tourists by 2015 (Nyaga, 2016; Institute of Economic Affairs, 2016).

Overtourism is considered to be incompatible with the ecotourism brand and increasing tourist numbers require a suite of services (Ferreira & Harmse, 2014, 20). Ferreira and Van Zyl have termed the sourcing out of the park's restaurants to South African fast-food chains as the "McDonaldization of casual dining in the park" (Ferreira & Van Zyl, 2016, 39).

Taking the increasing numbers of tourists and tourist facilities into account, for park managers and researchers a key question is whether the majority of tourists consider the Kruger National Park to be over developed. From photographic records of the roads in the southern region, it is apparent that wildlife species such as lions have been causing traffic congestion since the 1940s (Figures 3 and 4). Although tourist numbers have doubled since

2001/2002, there has not been the same doubling of tourist roads. During peak holiday times, the roads are carrying a high volume of tourist traffic.

10. Continuing pressure for additional tourist infrastructure

Despite the fact that the southern region, which is 21.9% of the park area and already contains 49.8% of tourist beds, SANParks is developing two lodges and a luxury train in Skukuza, which will add 550 to SANParks' beds, or 26%, to a region that is already carrying considerable tourist volumes (Ferreira & Harmse, 2014, 26). The 32-bed Kruger Shalati "Train on a Bridge" was recently opened on the old railway bridge at Skukuza (Caldeira, 2019).

In 2017 at the officiating ceremony of the 256-bed Skukuza Safari Lodge, which is the first of this type of accommodation in the park, the responsible minister quoted figures which suggested that the Kruger National Park does not have a visitor crowding problem. At the launch of a R269 million ($17.2 million) hotel development, the Minister of Environmental Affairs stated, "the current development footprint in the Kruger National Park, comprising of tourist facilities, staff housing, tourist roads, support infrastructure and management roads, currently constitutes 6,285 ha or 0.3% to the total of 2,000,00" (Steyn, 2017).

The minister stated that the concentration of 1.8 million tourists is confined to only 0.327% of the park. If the IUCN standard of 10% was adopted, this would equate to 55 million tourists per year. As a comparison, the most visited national park in the United States of America, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, received 12.5 million tourists in 2019 (Hetter, 2020).

Is there a danger in the Kruger National Park of the "Mallorca syndrome," where concentrations of tourists destroy the very attributes which attracted them to the tourist destination in the first instance? Crowding during peak holiday periods is not a new trend in the Kruger National Park, but increasing visitor numbers are resulting in considerable pressure, particularly in the southern region.

To ascertain whether overtourism is a concern amongst tourists, or is just academic- and park manager- angst, a survey of a social media group supports the view that tourist numbers, at least during school holidays, have reached levels where they constitute a definite management problem (Ferreira & Harmse, 2014, 30).

A survey was conducted amongst the 37,100 members, at the time of writing, of a social media group. Members all share common interests, and the site discusses recent developments in the Kruger National Park and also provides advice to members. Permission to conduct the survey was obtained from the site administrator. A total of 255 members responded (Brett, 2018, 17, 18). A total of 51.7% respondents felt that there are too many tourists during school holidays, while a further 38.8% felt that the park receives too many visitors. Only 5% were of the opinion that the park does not receive too many tourists. A total of 308 respondents replied to questions about tourist overcrowding in the southern region and 90.9% believed that the region is carrying too many tourists. Only 5.5% of respondents did not see overtourism as a problem (Brett, 2018, 17).

11. Open Safari Vehicles (OSVs) as a component of an Alternative Transportation Programme (ATP)

There are more than 200 lodges adjoining the park and many of these lodges conduct guided visits to the park as it is the tourism cornerstone of the region. The majority of these tourists have been transported for the past 20 years on OSVs. This form of transport is increasing in importance. In the 2019/2020 financial year, OSVs accounted for 16.7% of the 1,829,316 tourists, or 306,430 tourists. This represents an increase from 2017 when OSVs accounted for 13.5% of tourists. It represents a doubling in 6 years since the 2013/2014 year when 148,732 tourists were carried by OSVs. The number of OSV-borne tourists is therefore increasing at twice the normal annual rate of tourist increase.

As a mode of tourist transportation, OSVs offer certain advantages over private automobiles and could form an important component of an ATP. Statistics for the past 20 years indicate that the average OSV carries 5.9 tourists and a driver, compared to the average of 2.4 tourists in a private automobile. The average occupancy for OSVs is therefore twice as high as for private automobiles and could be used to reduce traffic volumes.

A survey of attitudes towards OSVs was conducted amongst the members of the same social media group and a total of 1,320 responses were recorded (Table 1), as the poll design allowed for more than one response per respondent. Considerable comment was elicited by the survey and respondents were able to add questions to the survey form. Although previously there has been considerable opposition to OSVs on the site, in this survey many respondents also recorded positive aspects. Opposition to OSVs from other visitors was mainly due to the behaviour of certain drivers at sightings of predators and Big Five species, and the fact that many OSVs are in radio contact and soon congregate at a sighting. Although there have been previous complaints, only 1.2% of responses opposed OSVs. However, it is significant that 29% of responses believed that OSV drivers do not consider the rights of other park users. This view was balanced by nearly 20% of responses who believed that OSV drivers are similar to private automobile owners, as some are good and some are bad.

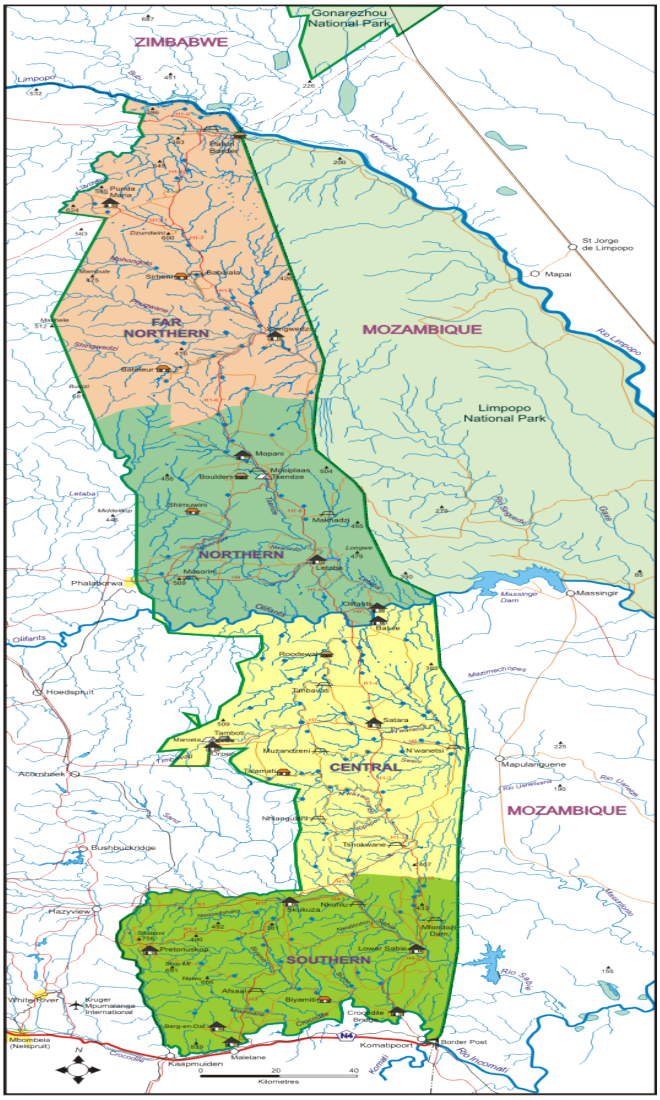


Figure 1: Map indicating the 4 management regions of the Kruger National Park

As OSVs offer a viable option for park managers as part of an ATP, as the average vehicle carries 5.9 passengers, it is important to note that only 0.83% of responses stated that there should be enforcement of a minimum number of passengers carried by OSVs. Statistics indicate that 86.2% of OSV entrants are entering the park through only six entrance gates in the southern region, and it is significant that only 1.29% of responses commented on the need to enforce OSV quotas at the entrance gates. During peak holiday periods, when there is traffic congestion on many of the main roads, a management option would be to close certain roads to all traffic apart from OSVs. SANParks operates 20-seat trucks for conducted drives and this is a future option as part of an ATP. However, only 0.38% of responses agreed with this proposal.

Table 1: Opinions on OSV entrants surveyed on a social media platform dedicated to the Kruger National Park

Poll statement	No. of responses	% of total
Negative statements		
OSV drivers have no regard for other park users and only want to please their customers	386	29.24
I am opposed to OSVs	16	1.21
Absolutely no two-way radios allowed between OSVs	43	3.26
There should be a limit on how many are allowed in at each gate per day and the limit shouldn't be too high	17	1.29
There should be a minimum number of passengers in an OSV. I have seen Qui quite a few with only 2 passengers	11	0.83
OSV drivers are trying to make a living, they are not on holiday. However, as visitors they should abide by rules and regulations too	49	3.71
Good sightings improve OSV gratuities. Would you pay a minimum set gratuity per person over and above the fees asked?	10	0.76
This poll will only cause division. We are all there because we love Kruger and the animals	20	1.52
Positive statements		
It is not OSVs that are the problem, but ineffective enforcement of park rules and regulations	156	11.82
1/6 of all Kruger visitors are transported on OSVs. This is good park planning as it keeps lodge development outside of the park	70	5.30
OSVs are an important management option as they carry twice as many visitors on average compared to private cars	71	5.38
OSVs are important to Kruger and conservation	43	3.26
I am in favour of OSVs	28	2.12
OSVs are like private cars. Some are good and some are bad.	261	19.77
Have you ever gone on a OSV for a morning or evening drive	87	6.59
Do you feel there is a sense of entitlement felt by self-drive vehicles	28	2.12
OSVs are good for the park and especially in the south. More people on an OSV and less cars on the road	19	1.44
During peak periods, such as Easter, busy roads such as the Lower Sabie Road should be closed to all traffic except for OSVs	5	0.38
	1320	**100.00**

12. The limits to growth

There are geographic constraints which prevent the even spread of tourists throughout the Kruger National Park. Although the northern camps are located between 26 and 87 kilometres further away from the cities of Johannesburg and Pretoria than the most popular southern entrance gates are, there is a perception amongst the visiting public that the northern region is remote. As it receives a lower rainfall and is covered by mopane scrubveld, there is also the widespread perception that wildlife concentrations are lower in the northern half of the Kruger National Park. An analysis of camp occupancy rates shows a definite decline from the unit occupancy rates between the southern region and the far northern region. The rest camps in the southern region have a unit occupancy rate of from 77.5% to 94% compared to 55.9% to 71% in the far north.

Given the distances from Gauteng cities, and visitor perceptions that there is less wildlife to be seen in the northern and far northern regions, it is impractical to develop the northern half of the park as an alternative destination to the southern and central regions. This is acknowledged in the latest management plan, which states, “Kruger North does not have a potential to generate income comparable with that of the South” (SANParks, 2018, 39).

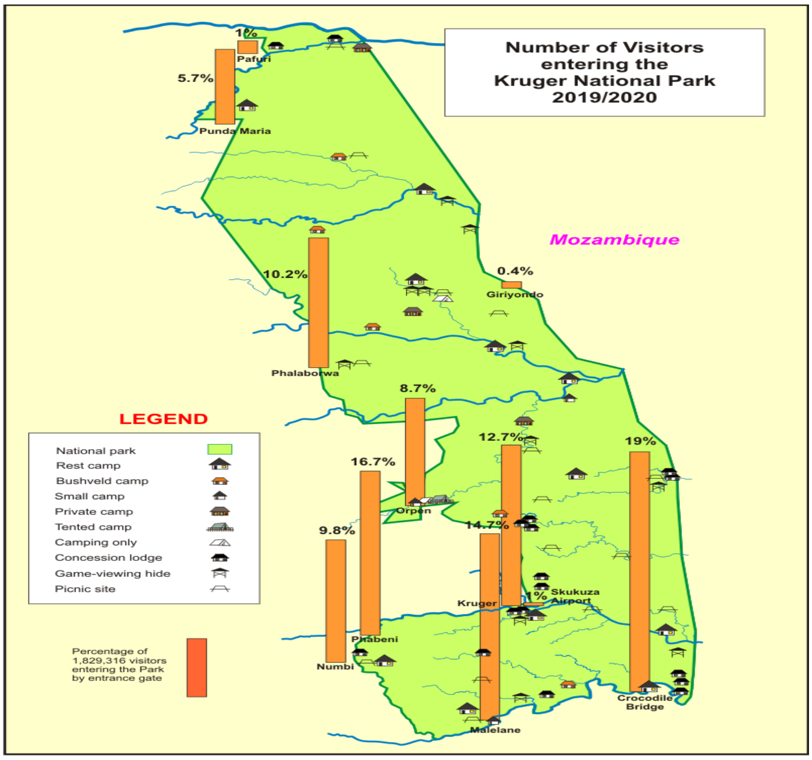
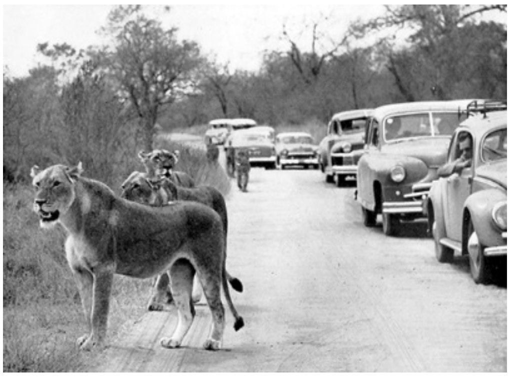


Figure 2: Numbers of tourists arriving at entrance gates in the Kruger National Park for the 2019/2020 year



Source: South African Railways calendar, www.flickr.com/photos/hilton-t/4001704864

Figure 3: Traffic congestion on the road between Skukuza and Lower Sabie in the 1940s

Figure 4: Traffic congestion on the road between Skukuza and Lower Sabie in 2021

Increasing concentrations of tourists in a semi-arid environment will have water and electricity requirements, as well as the need to construct additional tourist infrastructure.

Another factor is increasing negative publicity on social media platforms from leading stakeholders and damage to the park's brand. Recent changes, such as out-sourcing restaurants to South African fast-food chains, received widespread negative responses from key stakeholders (Ferreira and Van Zyl, 2016).

Apart from the growth in tourists, there is political pressure to increase the numbers of black local tourists, who currently account for 35.7% of the South African total, but account for only 8.5% of South African overnight tourists. SANParks, as the organisation which manages national parks, has to generate additional revenue and lessen its reliance on government. The organisation is already able to generate 76% of its budget from tourism and other revenue, which is an impressive achievement.

In the revised 2018 management plan, there was a refinement of proposed future developments and the list has been altered to include one wilderness camp, two platforms, two overnight hides, two picnics sites, two tented camps and two large lodges. The proposed peripheral development at Phalaborwa was not included in the 2011 plan. From the development plan it would appear that SANParks does not plan to continue increasing the number of tourist beds in tandem with increasing tourist numbers.

13. Implication for Kruger National Park management

Although the current number of tourists entering the Kruger National Park is not high compared to certain American national parks, the number is very high for the standards set by nature-based tourism in Africa (World Bank, 2015; Institute of Economic Affairs, 2016). The sub-culture which has developed since 1927, where visitors are at liberty to traverse the park on their own and without a guide, results in a high number of vehicles.

Although it is going to be unpopular amongst key stakeholders, traffic management needs to be implemented along key road during popular holiday periods as part of an integrated ATP. This may require replacing private automobiles with guided drives, and such a management intervention is already in place in American national parks such as Yosemite in California.

Given the mode of tourist visitation which has developed since 1927, as part of an ATP there is a need to educate the public about the advantages of other forms of tourist transportation and the negative environmental impacts produced by the current mode of transport (Daigle, 2008, 62). SANParks could upgrade many management tracks to tourist roads as part of meeting the objectives set in an ATP. This has cost implications, but if roads were kept narrow the environmental impact of upgrading existing tracks would not be considerable.

Another option would be the "game lodge" concept, which is common in East Africa. New tourist accommodation could be sited at waterholes on the periphery of the park and the emphasis would be on observing wildlife that is attracted to the lodge's waterhole.

Electronic word-of-mouth has become increasingly important in the tourism industry, and the Kruger brand is being damaged by negative word-of-mouth in social media sites (Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan, 2008, 461). Apart from environmental degradation, water provision problems and visual pollution, increasing volumes of poorly-managed tourists will damage the reputation of the Kruger National Park.

14. Conclusion

There has to be a finite limit to the number of rest camps and length of roads that a national park can sustain and innovative solutions are needed for managing increasing numbers of tourists. A possible solution would be to re-examine transport options, and further research is needed. Experimentation with different transport models will assist park managers in reducing some of the more adverse impacts of overtourism.

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Adventure Sports and Nature-Based Tourism: Assessment of Canyoning Spots in the Northern Region of Portugal

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Abstract: The growing demand for natural areas and outdoor activities in the last decade, even more noticeable in the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic situation, has led to the intensification and diversification of nature-based tourism supply in many regions, including the provision of adventure recreation activities, such as canyoning. However, and despite the increasing interest of companies, destinations, and academia in this specific type of activity, there is limited information on resources, practice conditions, and assessments based on specific, objective criteria. This information is critical for a more competitive development and positioning of regions for this activity, and to meet tourists' increasingly demanding expectations. Therefore, this paper aims at building upon the identified research gap, by characterizing and evaluating the existing conditions for canyoning activity in the North Region of Portugal, This evaluation of twenty-seven canyoning spots. was done based on an assessment matrix, comprised of specific criteria, grounded on the literature review and semi-structured interviews with companies' owners/managers and experts. The study concludes that the activity is evolving in the region and there is still potential for development, due to morphological, favourable conditions. Moreover, the region offers different spots, often inserted in protected areas, with unique landscapes and natural diversity, which is attractive for tourism. The presentation of an assessment matrix (that allows the characterization and evaluation of canyoning spots on a systematic approach in different geographic contexts) makes this study a contribution to the literature on nature-based, adventure tourism and recreation activities.

Keywords: assessment matrix, adventure tourism, nature tourism, canyoning, Portugal

1. Introduction

Active and sports tourism-related activities, particularly those associated with the natural environment are increasingly valued by tourists, which contributed to the growth of supply and has led to the expansion and diversification of nature and adventure tourism (Martins et al., 2021; Silva & Almeida, 2013). Canyoning, a water and mountain sport is one of the activities that has seen such a growing interest (Brandão, Marques, Pereira, Coelho, & Quaresma, 2018). It consists in descending steep the descent of steeply sloping watercourses, using abseiling, jumps rappelling, jumps, dexterity or toboggans to overcome the obstacles. While it allows the discovery of landscapes, it combines some techniques associated with mountaineering, speleology mountaineering, speleology and also wild water, with a recreational component, which can be practised can be practised by highly qualified and experienced sportspeople, as well as by beginners (Silva & Almeida, 2013).

An effective planning based on a systematic identifcation and assessment of natural resources is critical for the potential development of this type of nature-based activities, namely at a regional level (Alaeddinoglu & Can, 2011; Priskin, 2001). In this context, diagnosis matrices are useful to organise and structure information in multiple settings and represent methodologies that can be applied to a diversity of territories. This information is critical for a more competitive development of this kind of activity,as well as for regions' positioning, and to meet tourists' increasingly demanding expectations (Silva, Rachão, & Correia, 2021).

However, and despite this recognition, research on specific assessment tools is limited (Priskin, 2001), including in the specific context of Portugal (Turismo de Portugal, 2017), where outdoor tourism is a strategical asset of the Portuguese economy (Travel BI, 2018). Therefore, this paper aims at building upon the identified research gap, by characterizing and evaluating canyoning activity in the North Region of Portugal, based on an assessment matrix aiming at evaluating the conditions offered by canyoning spots, developped within a broader research project, which presents an overall outdoor tourism assessment matrix (OTAM).

After this introductory section, the paper follows with the literature review section discussing canyoning as an outdoor activity, the necessary conditions for its practice and the relevance of assessing the quality of identified spots, for the acknowledgement and positionong of territories as tourism destinations. The characteristics of the region for the practice of canyoning and the methodology employed to collect and analyse the data are presented in the third section. Results will be presented in the fourth section and discussed in the final part of the paper. The paper ends with the main conclusions and discussion of practical implications.

2. Literature review

The adventure recreational sport of 'canyoning', practised in a natural environment, is also seen as multidisciplinary escapist sport (Moreira & Santos, 2010). It has received increasd attention in the last years from academics and practicioners (Brandão, et al., 2018), including by canyoning associations and also tourism-related companies (Hardiman & Burgin, 2011). Canyoning, which can be practised both at high technical dlevel, as well as by beginners (Silva & Almeida, 2013), involves a combination of hiking, rappelling, swimming and rock climbing, with participants following the course of rivers,waterfalls, water-filled slots between sheer rock walls and other natural obstacles through deep, narrow gorges (often <1 m wide) (Hardiman & Burgin, 2010a, 2011). The natural environment where canyoning takes place offers a unique experience of natural beauty and excitement (Hardiman & Burgin, 2010a). Moreover, people are increasingly choosing leisure, recreation and tourism-related activities on rivers and on their banks (Moreira & Santos, 2010). As a result, this type of recreation activities is increasingly being promoted for different reasons, including health, nature appreciation, educational, and remote locations exploration. Psychological, sociological, and physical well-being benefits are often aknowledged as associated to its practice, particularly relevant for groups with special needs, such as the youth or people with disabilities (Hardiman & Burgin, 2010b).

Beyond the recognised benefits, there is also an increasing concern regarding environmental and social impacts of canyoning, which may occur as a result of soil erosion, rock damage, littering, destruction of vegetation, water and air pollution, and crowding or disturbance of other visitors, impactng on local residents wellbeing but also on the quality of visitors' experience (Hardiman & Burgin, 2010b, 2010a). Moreover, this adventure sport involves an increased risk resulting essentially from human factors (Sarmento et al., 2021) and also from the fact that this is a sport that takes place in striking natural environments, with a diversity of obstacles and risks, some of which related to sudden changes in the flow of rivers, or falls resulting from the very irregular and slippery terrain (Silva & Almeida, 2013). These specific geomorphological conditions of canyons reveal steepest and deepest slopes, made up of hard rocks like granite, quartz; schist and basalt that are usually cliffs, relatively abundant waterfalls and fairly deep natural pools, all of which form natural obstacles (Moreira & Santos, 2010). The combination of environmental and human factors (the latter being the result of operational, physical, emotional and cognitive Man's actions) reinforces potential situations for accidents (Brandão, et al., 2018).These risks can be minimized by a preventive approach to risk management, critical to the identification of appropriate procedures to ensure the safety of practitioners (Silva & Almeida, 2013).

The practice of canyoning in remote areas influnces the lack of information in terms of quantification of the scale and growth of the activity, for example, regarding the number of practicioners and trends (Hardiman & Burgin, 2011). Thus, for an effective planning, a systematic identifcation and assessment of natural resources is critical for the potential development of this type of nature-based activities, namely at a regional scale (Alaeddinoglu & Can, 2011; Priskin, 2001). In this context, resource inventories including assessment according to clearly defined criteria are important (Silva & Almeida, 2020), and so diagnosis matrices are useful to organise and structure information in multiple settings and represent methodologies that can be applied to a diversity of territories. This knowledge is critical for a more competitive development of this activity, for regions' positioning, and to meet tourists' increasingly demanding expectations (Silva, Rachão, & Correia, 2021; Silva et al.,2021).

The valorisation of natural heritage is one of the Portuguese government priorities because it is one of the country's main assets in terms of tourism. It creates wealth and enhances the unique attributes of each region, namely for the practice of outdoor activities, increasingky popular by several tourism markets (Turismo de Portugal, 2017). Portugal has great potential for outdoor activities, namely canyoning, particularly in its northwest region, Madeira, and in the Azores islands, due to the combination of geology and geomorphology, diversity of wildlife and flora, and grainfall that produce distinctive conditions for its practice. Thus, and along with these regions' unique conditions, canyoning is growing in popularity because it is an adventure and recreation sport that involves risks and allows visitors to get to know some isolated, hard-to-get-to places (Moreira & Santos, 2010). However, and despite this recognition, information regarding resource inventories including assessment with well defined criteria is scarce. Few studies have been identified, and no study for the North of Portugal. As such, the assessment of the conditions offered in this region is vital for the promotion of competitive cayoning tourism destination.

3. Methodology

3.1 Study area

Northern Portugal, NUT II, includes five Protected (classified) Areas (Peneda-Gerês National Park; Northern Coast Natural Park; Montesinho Natural Park; Douro International Natural Park; Alvão Natural Park) (Fig. 1). The Institute for Nature Conservation and Forests (ICNF) is the national authority that manages these classified areas providing licenses for the practice of nature and adventure activities. In these classified areas, the majority of activities consist of hiking trails, particularly, trail running competitions involving thousands of participants promoted by associations, sports clubs and tourism recreation firms (ICNF, 2020). Nature tourism demand rapidly growths in this region with mountaineering, hiking, and cycling activities being popular activities. Dedicated spots are available, in general, both for experienced and independent practitioners, and for beginners (Travel BI, 2018).

Source: https://www.mapsland.com/europe/portugal/large-regions-map-of-portugal

Figure 1: North region of Portugal

According to the Tourism Strategy 2027 (Turismo de Portugal, 2017), 23% of the Portuguese territory integrates Natura 2000, and/or is under a classification status aiming at protecting biodiversity and outstanding natural values and environmental quality. In total, 27 canyoning spots were identified in the North of Portugal and assessed as described below.

3.2 Research design

3.2.1 Assessment matrix measurements

For obtaining an overview of the conditions for canyoning within Northern Portugal, an assessment matrix was employed, developed within a broader project. The OTAM resulted from a multistage and multimethod process, implemented by a multidisciplinary team (academics, public institutions, tourism recreation firms, and sports clubs) (Silva et al., 2021). For the purpose of this paper only a sub-section will be described. In its full length, the OTAM aims to assess the conditions for practicing ten different outdoor activities (including), identifying specific attributes to each activity. In the case of canyoning, a first set of attributes was identified in the literature, e.g. nature resources (Clius & Patroescu, 2014), accessibility, facilities available in place, and infrastructure quality (Alaeddinoglu & Can, 2011; Priskin, 2001). Additionally, international strategic documents from sports associations, federations and sustainability guidelines for protected areas were also analysed, originating another set of attributes. In order to improve the robustness of the matrix eighteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, experienced in outdoor tourism, including representatives of nature-based and adventure tourism businesses, and sports-related organisations, as well as development associations, local government authorities, municipalities and Nature and Forest Conservation Institute (ICNF). Of these, two semi-structured interviews were conducted with canyoning experts. Based on the literature review and supported by academics and experienced professionals in outdoor tourism, seventeen attributes were identified as being relevant for the analysis of the conditions for canyoning (Table 1).

Table 1: Canyoning assessment matrix model adopted from Silva et al. (2021)

Attributes	Rating scores
Protected area	No Yes
Accessibility	This attribute measures the travel time from the place where the equipment is collected to the place where the activity takes place; 1 – 21 minutes or more; 2 – between 16 and 20 minutes; 3 – between 11 and 15 minutes; 4 – between 6 and 10 minutes; 5 – less than 5 minutes;
Infrastructure	1 – It does not have any type of built infrastructure; 2 – It has access infrastructure to the canyon (if necessary); 3 – It has access infrastructure to the canyon (if necessary) and parking; 4 – It has access infrastructure to the canyon (if necessary), parking and public showers; 5 – It has infrastructure for accessing the canyon (if necessary), parking, public showers and changing rooms.
Safety	1 – The escape is not safe; 3 – In the event of flooding or rising water, the escape from the affected area can be completed quickly; 5 – The escape is safe along the route;
Universal accessibility	1 – It is not accessible to people with reduced mobility (RM); 2 – Easy access, with an accessible route that allows access to people with RM; 3 – Easy access, with an accessible route and parking vehicles for people with RM; 4 – Easy access, with an accessible route, parking of vehicles and easy access to support structures for people with RM; 5 – Easy access, with an accessible route, parking of vehicles and easy access to support structures and school/club/organisation capable of providing adapted service for people with RM;
Period recommended for the practice	1 – up to 2 months; 2 – 3 to 4 months; 3 – 5 to 6 months; 4 – 7 to 9 months; 5 – all year.
Practioner level of experience	1 – Very experienced; 2 – Experienced; 3 – Intermediate; 4 – Initiated; 5 – Recreational use.
Risks	Open question
Canyon difficulty	1 – Extremely difficult; 2 – Very difficult; 3 – Difficult; 4 – Moderately difficult; 5 – Easy; 6 – Very easy; 7 – Extremely easy;

Source: Authors' elaboration adapted from Silva et al. (2021)

Whereas other studies maintain a considerable degree of subjectivity (e.g. Eagles, 1984, Priskin 2001; Clius & Patroescu, 2014), the proposed instrument (assessment matrix), adds value as an innovative and more concrete tool. As displayed in Table 1, and concerning the specific conditions of each spot (Alaeddinoglu & Can, 2011; Priskin, 2001), several attributes were scored on an ordinal scale, ranging from 1 to 5 reflecting the positive progression concerning the inherent aspects of each attribute (Alaeddinoglu & Can, 2011; Priskin, 2001). Other attributes are represented as categorical variables, such as protected area, infrastructure facilities, hazards, interpretative centre, period recommended for the practice of the activity, trail type, floor type and key values to observe. The level of experience of the hiker and the difficulty of the trail were considered as categorical variables, as they do not reflect the quality of the trail. However, its variance may be important for the attractiveness of the tourist destination (for hikers more or less experienced). The trail length and duration are represented as ratio variables. The assessment matrix was administered to academics and to tourism recreation professionals for further refinement of wording and consistency, and some editing was made to improve its readability.

3.3 Data collection

The research instrument employed to collect data was the assessment matrix (OTAM) developed by Silva et al. (2021), in specific attributes for canyoning as illustrated in Table 1. In order to select the tour operators/businesses offering canyoning activities, a search in the Portuguese National Tourism database (Registo Nacional de Turismo) was performed. In total, thirty-five (35) emails were sent in April, 2021 to the tour operators offering this recreational activity in northern Portugal requesting for an online interview. From these, 7 agreed to be interviewed. Semi-strucured interviews were scheduled and carried out online through Zoom, between April and May 2021. Each online interview lasted about 60 minutes.

3.4 Data analysis

Descriptive statistics was performed to gain an overall understanding of attributes in ordinal variables (e.g. accessibility; infrastructure; security; universal accessibility; period recommended for the practice; practionier level of experience and canyon difficulty. Regarding open questions, particularly respecting to the main risks in the canyons, a content analysis of the interviews was carried out.

4. Results

Reflecting on the canyons identified and the attributes classified by the interviewees, Table 2 demonstrates the mean scores for each attribute. It is possible to note that the “accessibility” attribute shows that in average, it takes between eleven (11) up to fifteen (15) minutes to go from the place where the equipment is collected to the location where the activity takes place.

In general, it is observed that a significant part of the canyons do not have any “infrastructure” built to support the canyoning activity, which is common in northern Portugal, as it is practiced in isolated areas.Being remote and difficult to access is often an attraction for handicapped practioniers. However, two (2) canyons, namely, the canyon of Castro Laboreiro (Melgaço) and Aguieiras (Arouca) have access infrastructure, parking and public showers.

Table 2: Canyoning assssment attributes

Attributes	Mean scores
Accessibility	2.59
Infrastructure	1.61
Safety	2.83
Universal accessibility	1.02
Period recommended for the practice	3.02
Practiconer level of experience	3.22
Canyon difficulty	3.74

Source: authors’ elaboration (rating scores described in Table 1)

When analysing the ‘safety’ attribute among the twenty-seven (27) canyons, nine (9) of them are considered more dangerous in case of an accident as they do not facilitate the rescue of the practitioners. In case of increased stream flow, eight (8) canyons can become more dangerous for the practitioners, yet, the rescue can be rapidly concluded given the geomorphological features of the spots. The remaining ten (10) canyons were classified as no dangerous in the need of a quick escape. As illustrated in Table 3, the various risks factors identified in canyons located in NUT II North of Portugal are mainly related to geomorphological features.

Table 3: Risks reported by respondents in the identified canyons

Protected area (PA)	**Code**	**Location of the canyons**	**Municipality**	**Risk factors identified by the interviewees and coded accordingly to the authors Brandão et al. (2018)**				
				Environmental		**Human**		
				Geomorphological	**Biotic**	**Emotional**	**Operational**	**Physiological**
X	1	Rio Âncora – Montaria	Caminha	sudden increases in the stream flow; slippery	X	X	X	X
Peneda-Gerês National Park (PGNP)	2	Rio Laboreiro	Melgaço	rock fall	X	X	X	X
PGNP	3	Rio Laboreiro Inferior		isolated canyon	X	X	X	X
PGNP	4	Ribeira de Varziela		sudden stream flow	X	X	X	X
PGNP	5	Ribeira de Carcerelha	Ponte da Barca	physical obstacles (amounts of rocks)	X	X	X	physical capacity
PGNP	6	Rio de Germil		X	X	X	Technical competences	physical capacity
X	7	Cascata da Candosa	Vieira do Minho	high falls; isolated canyon	X	X	X	X
Protected area (PA)	Code	Location of the canyons	Municipality	Risk factors identified by the interviewees and coded accordingly to the authors Brandão et al. (2018)				
X	8	Rio Saltadouro (Cabreira)		river/stream flow; sudden increases in the flow; high falls	X	X	X	X
Rede Natura 2000 **	9	Rio Poio	Ribeira de Pena	isolated canyon; falls	X	Emotional	X	physical capacity
; Arouca Geopark*	10	Rio de Frades Inferior	Arouca	falls; slippery	vipers	X	X	X
; *	11	Rio de Frades Superior		falls; slippery	vipers	X	Technical competences	X
; *	12	Aguieiras, Alvarenga		falls; isolated;sudden increases in the stream flow	X	X	X	X
; *	13	Frecha da Mizarela (Rio Caima)		falls; slippery	vipers	X	Technical competences	X
; *	14	Ribeira da Castanheira		slippery;	X	X	X	X
; *	15	Rio Pequenino		slippery;	X	X	Technical competences	X

Protected area (PA)	Code	Location of the canyons	Municipality	Risk factors identified by the interviewees and coded accordingly to the authors Brandão et al. (2018)				
				Environmental		Human		
				Geomorphological	Biotic	Emotional	Operational	Physiological
; *	16	Ribeira da Pena Amarela Superior		falls; slippery	X	X	Technical competences	X
; *	17	Ribeira da Pena Amarela Inferior		slippery;	X	X	Technical competences	X
; *	18	Ribeira do Fontão		slippery;	X	X	X	X
; *	19	Ribeira Côto do Boi Superior		slippery;	X	X	X	X
; *	20	Ribeira Côto do Boi Inferior		slippery;	X	X	Technical competences	X
Rede Natura 2000	21	Rio Ardena, Nespereira	Cinfães	slippery; sudden increases in the flow	X	X	X	X
PGNP	22	Rio Arado Superior	Terras de Bouro	isolated canyon	X	X	Technical competences	X
PGNP	23	Rio Arado Inferior		X	X	X	Technical competences	X
PGNP	24	Rio Conho		slippery;	X	X	Technical competences	X
Alvão Natural Park	25	Rio Olo, Mondim de Basto	Vila Real	physical obstacles	X	X	Technical competences	X
Alvão Natural Park	26	Rio Cabrão, Mondim de Basto		slippery;	X	X	X	X
X	27	Ponte de Queimadela, Fafe	Vizela	falls	X	X	X	X

*Weather and climate and Psychological: no risks identified by interviewees fall under this dimension

Although, some of the interviewees claimed that some canyons may provide an experience for people with reduced mobility if the tour operator has trained monitors and supporting equipament, most spots are not accessible to all (mean= 1.02).

Concerning the 'period recommended for the practice, this attribute demonstrates that it is possible to perform canyoning from three up to six months (mean= 3.02) of. The most suitable months are mainly between April and September due to the better water temperature and weather conditions, making it more comfortable to the recreational practice, and also due to the flow of the rivers.

With the exception of seven (7) canyons that were rated by respondents as very experienced from a recreational practitioner's point of view, the remaining twenty-one (21) were considered suitable for practitioners with lower levels of experience. This attribute is strongly related to the canyon difficulty which rates the canyons accordingly its environmental and human factors. The interviewees rated the twenty-seven (27) canyons identified as moderately difficult (mean= 3.74).

5. Discussion and conclusions

The present study is in line with the literature (e.g. Alaeddinoglu & Can, 2011; Hardiman & Burgin, 2011) by highlighting the importance and the need to assess the conditions offered for the practice of cayoning, supported by the scarcity of information regarding resource inventories and assessment criteria, namely for the North region of Portugal.

The results allow an overall perspective of the conditions of the canyoning spots in the region based on the analysis of the supply, which differs from other studies that have focused on specific elements or attributes, and mostly from the practitioners' point of view (Brandão et al., 2018). In relation to risk, one the criteria that comprises the assessment matrix, the current study confirms that geomorphological factors are critical, as they determine the access to the canyoning spots (Brandão et al., 2018; Silva & Almeida, 2020). These results can explain the assessment of the difficulty level, which was considered moderately difficult. In the sense of the region's recognition as a tourist destination, the existence of spots requiring expertise is interesting in that it attracts specialised target groups, namely at the level of international competitions and championships. On the other hand, the existence of spots with different levels of difficulty is also favourable, allowing a response to be given to publics with different levels of experience and aptitude. Furthermore, the study results demonstrate that there is the need to improve conditions concerning infrastructures, which could improve also the perception of safety-related conditions, contributing to this latest aspect, of being "accessible" both in the sense of offering opportunities for people with low skill level. Also, efforts should be undertaken to improve the conditions to allow adapted canyoning practice (under the premise of sports for all and tourism for all), whenever that is possible.

This study, not only has theoretical contributions as it identifies the attributes that need to be taken into account when analysing cinditions for canyoning, but also the rating scores and assessment criteria, enabling the generalised use of the assessment tool. Moreover, it also has practical implications as its results assist local and regional authorities in communicating, and in the planning and development of outdoor tourism, particularly canyoning activities. The proposed assessment matrix (OTAM) allows a systematic comparison of different spots in different locations. The matrix can be applied in other regions, with different characteristics, which could be studied in the future.

This study is not without limitations, in particular, the number of interviews. A larger sample could be important to complement or reinforce the identified elements and assessment criteria. Nevertheless, as an assessment tool, the OTAM can already be used to identify and prioritise strategies for outdoor tourism sustainable development.

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Circular Economy in the Portuguese Hotel Industry: An Empirical Overview

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Abstract: The implementation of Circular Economy (CE) in the tourism industry, and more specifically in the hotel industry, is still in its early stages, as the debate on it has focused on the manufacturing sector, undervaluing the service area, namely the travel and tourism one, and their input to the transition to a CE paradigm. Although the hotel industry is one of the essential branches of the travel and tourism sector, there is little relevant scientific and empirical research available on the potential of such an implementation. The Circular Economy construct has recently been gaining prominence as it has the potential to enhance the use of natural resources, in which the tourism and the hotel industry rely, to mitigate the emission of greenhouse gases, and to offer economic, environmental, and social business advantages and opportunities. Making use of the results of a survey applied to the Portuguese hotel industry, this paper offers an analysis of this business's awareness, attitude, enablers, benefits, challenges, and organisational performance with respect to the implementation of a Circular Economy approach. The results indicate that there is awareness regarding CE and its R-Principles and that some measures that may enhance the implementation of this concept are already being put into practice. There is also evidence that this economic approach is beneficial to companies, but support from all the actors (companies, government, stakeholders) is mandatory. The lack of investment in the CE implementation, policies focused in waste treatment, and the lack of promotion of circular design were identified as challenges. Acquiring new competencies as well as the reduction of the hotels' carbon footprint were identified as the major predictive positive impacts of CE in the organisational performance of companies. This research is a contribution to the existing literature on Circular Economy and to the conceptualization of CE within the hotel industry. In addition, to the theoretical contribution, the results of this study may also have empirical inputs for all the actors, and may also lead them to question the goals of their businesses and to examine thoroughly the environmental, social, and economic impact of their activities and operations, and ultimately act as catalysts to circularity.

Keywords: circular economy, Portuguese hotel industry, awareness, benefits, enablers, attitude, organizational performance

1. Introduction

In the last decades the services sector has been expanding at a remarkable pace alongside industry, accounting for a substantial part of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in numerous countries and in line with productivity outcomes within the industry sector. Similarly, the participation of the travel and tourism industry, as one of the biggest service industries, and one that contributes to the countries' economic growth and global trade has been growing until 2019 (United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 2021), however, this growth pattern was suddenly interrupted, displaying a strong deceleration of economic growth, mainly due to the prevailing health crisis.

Even though this industry has proven to actively impact economies as it is strongly associated with all the other major services, from agriculture to finance, construction, and retail (Sorin and Einarsson, 2020), it is also unmistakably that it negatively impacts the environment, contributing not only to its degradation but also to the increase of Green House Gases (GHG) (Lenzen et al., 2018). Consequently, it is imperative to rethink the values of the travel and tourism sector, its purpose, business models, and value chains so that it can operate within the planetary boundaries, guaranteeing contemporary generations and those to come welfare and proper living standards. Therefore, the transition to a new travel and tourism paradigm is mandatory and Circular Economy (CE) stands out as an attractive concept, offering a range of instruments that may allow the industry's long-term viability and sustainability.

However, there is a shortage of research on Circular Economy and its adoption by the travel and tourism industry in general and by the hotel industry in particular, although this is an industry dominantly based on a linear economy. This industry has not yet demonstrated a manifest desire to transition to a circular model (Rodriguez et al., 2020), and scientific research on the adoption of CE practices and principles continues to be considerably unexplored.

The purpose of this study is to examine awareness, the attitude, the benefits, the enablers and the challenges and their impact on the organisational performance of the participant companies when transitioning to a CE paradigm. The research questions answered in this study are:

- 1. Is the hotel industry aware of CE?
- 2. Is the hotel industry implementing circular economy?
- 3. What are the challenges that the hotel industry addresses to implement CE?
- 4. What are the benefits of the hotel industry to implement CE?
- 5. Which initiatives (enablers) would encourage CE implementation?
- 6. Is there a relationship between the implementation of CE (attitude) and the organizational performance of this industry (overall performance)?
- 7. Is there a relationship between the hotel industry profile and the organizational performance?

Answering these research questions provides future insights to the development of CE and its implementation by the hotel industry.

2. Circular Economy concept

The report *Our Common Future* (1987) established that one of the world's most important challenge is to sustain generations to come without endangering their future. Nevertheless, the scale of environmental and social emergencies has reached unparallel levels. Global environmental depletion, climate change, biodiversity loss, along with population growth and its demand for resources, and countless other environmental constrains have altered many of the planet's ecosystems (Crutzen and Stoermer, 2000). The prevailing economic model which follows a linear paradigm is exhausting Earth's natural biological capacity with economies 'living on borrowed time for the past 250 years' (Lacy and Rutqvist, 2015:3), and is generating social and environmental constrains. Nonetheless, the Circular Economy concept proposes an alternative, standing out as a holistic approach to the three R-Principle (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle) in the production and consumption processes. It enables the reduction of energy consumption and as a result the decrease of waste generation. It also demands a paradigm redefinition when addressing environmental changes, one that considers sustainability and circular value loops.

According to Hirsch and Levin (1999:199), the concept of Circular Economy stands out as an umbrella construct, with roots that go back relatively further, and is supported by a plurality of approaches displayed by Table 1.

Table 1: Plurality of approaches that are on the basis of the Circular Economy concept

Quesnay, 1758	'circular flow of income'
Simmonds, 1862	'industrial metabolism'
Boulding, 1966	the 'spaceman economy'
Meadows et al., 1972	'limits to growth'
Stahel and Ready-Mulvey, 1981; McDonough and Braungart, 2002	'cradle-to-cradle'
Frosh and Gallopoulos, 1989; Graedel and Allenby, 1995	'industrial ecology'
Lyle, 1996	'regenerative design'
Steinhilper, 1998	'remanufacturing'
Hawken, Lovins and Lovins, 1999	'natural capitalism'
Benyus, 2002	biomimicry
McDonough and Braungart, 2002; Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2012	'eco-effectiveness' and 'eco-efficiency'
Daly, 2005	'steady state economy'
Stahel, 2010	'performance economy'

This concept was introduced to the academia by Pearce and Turner (1990) to further debate on natural resources strategic use (Su et al., 2013; Ghisellini et al., 2016; Geissdoerfer et al., 2017), and also as a way to boost circularity, reducing energy and natural resources consumption, fundamental principles for sustainable natural resource conservation (Hilsop and Hill, 2011).

It is also presented by Feng et al. (2007), Yang and Feng (2008), Geng and Doberstein (2008), Hu et al., (2011) as an economic paradigm that mirrors natural closed materials systems (Yang and Feng, 2008) and their efficient use to attain management strengthening and economic development. It is also described as 'an industrial system that is restorative or regenerative by intention [that] replaces the end-of-life concept with restoration' (EMF and McKinsey, 2012:7), presupposes the transition to the use of renewable energy, along with 'green technologies, eliminating the utilization of toxic substances, which commonly reduce the potential of the Reuse R-Principle and waste elimination. These together with the improved design of materials systems, as well as products and production processes, could have an impact on product and energy recovery.

So, CE is an economic model that allows value creation processes, based on closed loop patterns, which maintain value retention for the longest time possible, or are ultimately cascaded to a distinct loop in order to retain value. In accordance with Pheifer (2017), EMF (2012), and Braungart et al., (2002), economic systems ought to follow a circular pattern, mimicking natural ecosystems, as circularity is the fundamental principle of nature, i.e. the product of a certain process can be the raw material of another. The concept of 'eco-effectiveness', as a design oriented approach, is also considered as a technique to mitigate and dematerialize products flow systems, facilitating a continuous and reciprocal exchange between environment and economy. Traditionally, business prioritise the efficiency of their production operations, so as to optimise value creation whilst minimizing costs, which, environmentally speaking, may refer to energy or other resources use and even to the constrains inflicted on the environment by the referred production operations. Thus, 'eco-efficiency', the predominant production and consumption paradigm ought to be optimised and addressed in all levels in industrial production, down a greener path employing more resource-efficient materials.

De Angelis (2018) proposes the implementation of three principles that, when associated, can enhance prosperity and at the same time be restorative and regenerative (EMF et al., 2015). The first principle would be to '*preserve and enhance natural capital*' (De Angelis, 2018:20), which considers that in production processes only renewable energy and materials are used as far as possible, and after-life these materials should be restituted to nature so as to enhance natural capital. Principle number two to '*optimise resource yields*' (De Angelis, 2018:21), demands that a maximisation of resources value in the course of time is accomplished in technical and biological cycles. According to EMF and McKinsey (2012) and Lacy and Rutqvist (2015), in a CE model, materials are used in two different patterns, they are biological or are renewable materials lacking toxic components, which can be returned to nature without any risk if reuse is by no means effective. Industrial materials are designed to be reintroduced in manufacturing processes by means of maintenance, repairing, refurbishing, remanufacturing, and also through recycling, as long as quality is preserved. This strategy should be stratified given that recycling is considered the R-Principle that brings lower value-added, whereas the other options retain not only the product integrity but also 'embedded energy and labour' (De Angelis, 2018:21). The third principle to *'foster system effectiveness'* enhances the mitigation of factors that negatively impact the environment (pollution).

Following this same line of thought, Stahel (2019) also considers that to promote the implementation of CE is imperative to foster the efficient utilization of environmental resources, keeping their value and effectiveness for as long as possible. Such a proceeding will enable the deceleration of resource consumption which will ultimately impact production performance and consequently waste emissions, which can be reduced to half if products durability is enlarged.

A CE approach distinguishes itself as an efficient and practical model that can stimulate businesses to pursue corporate policies which enable sustainable economic growth within ecological boundaries. This transition creates new business opportunities, the possibility to access new markets with a range of new goods and services. In addition, it is also the occasion for businesses to reconsider and reassess their use of natural resources throughout their manufacturing processes, as well as supply chains. To conclude, significant challenges ought to be exceeded and implemented in pursuing a circular strategy and the time to transition has come.

2.1 The Portuguese hotel industry

During the past few decades, the travel and tourism sector has played an important role in the Portuguese economy mainly due to its economic and employment possibilities in addition to its social and environmental benefits. With 10.1 million inhabitants, the country captivated around 27.1 million tourists and allowed 70.2 million nights stays in 2019 (Costa, 2021). It stands out as the biggest economic activity in Portugal, accountable for 52.3% of service exports and for 19.7% of the overall exports, with tourism revenues reporting 8.7% of direct contribution to the national GDP (Turismo de Portugal et al., 2020). According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the travel and tourism sector contributed directly and indirectly with 19.8% to the Portuguese GDP. In the last few years Portugal has been considered a leader in the tourism sector worldwide and growth expectations have been encouraging, with Portugal receiving 24 prizes, in 2020, in the tourism area.

Additionally, in January and February 2020, the growth rate was 15% higher than the ones in previous years, which demonstrates that this sector could have grown even more and have attained exceptional success if it wasn't for the Covid-19 pandemic (Costa, 2021). However, the pandemic outset strongly impacted the Portuguese economy, putting tourism arrivals at a standstill and leading the hotel industry to reduce its businesses quite significantly due to the lockdowns imposed by the government. Many companies suspended their operations or reduced them significantly. Although, the travel and tourism sector positively impacts the country's economy, it adversely affects the environment as tourists commonly demand luxurious accommodation and facilities, resource-intensive activities combined with the CO_2 emissions of the transportation sector (Lenzen et al., 2018). However, the major responsible for tourism related CO_2 emissions are the accommodation sector and diverse tourism activities, representing 21% and 4% of the overall figures, respectively (UNTWTO & UNEP, 2008).

The travel and tourism is an economic activity based on the linear model of production and consumption that involves a 'take-make-dispose' pattern, in which energy, assets and labour are applicated in the manufacture of goods and on the production of services obtained from natural resources and with a unique life-cycle, i.e. following a 'cradle-to-grave' principle (McDonough and Braungart, 2010). The travel and tourism industry commonly relies on inexpensive and easily obtained resources, generates solid waste and other environmental challenges (Manniche et al., 2017). The Circular Economy construct is generally employed to business' products and related services, and so this means that it should also be applied to tourism in general and to the hotel industry in particular.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research methodology

The research methodology adopted to perform this study relied on a quantitative approach through the use of an online questionnaire. Its goal was to study the concept of Circular Economy along with awareness regarding its existence, the attitude, the enablers and benefits, the challenges, and the organisational performance of the participant companies. It was implemented by applying the questionnaire to the Portuguese hotel industry, specifically to the target group classified as 'Hotels', among several classifications provided by the *Turismo de Portugal*, on the visitportugal.com site, and made available online between the 16th April 2021 and the 7th July 2021. It was disclosed, by means of an online link disseminated by email, to 1558 hotels located in the different Portuguese regions considered by that entity, displayed by Table 2. However, the hotels successfully contacted ended up being 1407, resulting in 103 questionnaires received, but only 78 were considered valid. As Portugal was in lockdown during this period, and with hotels and borders closed to tourism, the sample collected ended up being a convenience sample.

Table 2: Localisation and number of Portuguese hotels considered in this study.

Region	Number of Hotels
Porto and North region	383
Centre of Portugal	361
Lisbon region	293
Alentejo	114
Algarve	235
Madeira	125
Azores	47

3.2 Instruments and measures

The questionnaire comprises 20 questions, spread across seven sections: i) *Accommodation Profile*; ii) CE *Awareness*; iii) CE *Challenges*; iv) CE *Enablers*; v) CE *Attitude; vi)* CE *Benefits*; vii) CE and the *Organizational Performance*.

The application and relevance of the concept of Circular Economy, within the group of respondents, was measured by a single-item as well as a multiple-item scale, with the negative pole on the left and the positive one on the right (Hartley, 2013), by using a Likert scale in the majority of questions as well as two open-ended questions (questions 14 and 17), which were analysed by means of a content analysis.

4. Main results analysis

This section presents the main results of the quantitative analysis obtained from the 78 valid questionnaires, regarding the methodology formerly delineated.

4.1 Respondents' profile

The questionnaire respondents comprised hotel managers, general managers, hotel CEOs, hotel directors and hotel owners, or a person designated by the hotel supervisor. Table 3 displays the percentage of respondents per region, considering the total number of valid questionnaires.

Table 3: Percentage of questionnaire respondents per Portuguese region.

Region	% of questionnaire respondents per region
Centre of Portugal	30.1%
Lisbon region	25.2%
Porto and North region	16.5%
Alentejo	9.7%
Algarve	8.7%
Madeira	5.8%
Azores	3.9%

Regarding the hotels number of stars, 1.1% referred to one star hotels, 11.5% were two star hotels, 29.9% corresponded to three stars hotel, 51.7% to four stars hotel, and 5.7% were five stars hotel. Considering the hotel scope, 96.7% of the hotels were national companies, and 3.3% correspond to international companies. Concerning the hotels type, 66.3% were independent accommodations, and 33.7% were part of a hotel chain.

4.2 CE awareness

Regarding this dimension, the participants were asked to specify the CE R-Principles (Recycle, Reuse, Reduce, Repair, Re-educate, Repurpose, Recover, Refuse, Rethink, Redesign, Return, Remanufacture, Refurbish) they were aware of, using the Likert scale, from 1- Not at all aware, to 5- Extremely aware. Respondents ranked Recycle (98.72%), Reuse, and Reduce (97.44%), and Repair (96.15%) with the highest means scores.

Participants were also asked to rank their awareness level regarding the measures that would promote the use of environmentally responsible materials, waste and water management, as well as measures that reduce carbon footprint/ CO_2 emissions/ greenhouse gas emissions, and those which assist the implementation of Circular Economy that are not financed by the government, using a Likert scale, from 1- Not at all aware, to 5- Extremely aware. The results demonstrate that they are aware of those measures, namely those that concern the use of environmentally responsible materials (97.44%), and waste and water management (97.44).

4.3 CE attitude

In this section participants had to rank the R-Principles their hotels are implementing, using a Likert scale, from 1- Without implementation, to 5- Fully implemented. Repair (100%), Recycle (98.65%), Reduce (97.30%), and Reuse (90.50%) stand out as the further implemented R-Principles, while Remanufacture (50%), Return (51.35%), and Refuse (52.70%) are detached as the ones with less implementation. However, it is also noticeable that Remanufacture (31.1%), Refuse and Return (29.7%), and Redesign (28.4%) were ranked with the lowest means scores regarding a CE implementation.

By means of an open-ended question, participants were asked to indicate how CE R-Principles are being implemented in their companies. 58.6% of the respondents ranked recycling and water management as the more relevant measures embraced; followed up by energy management (55.1%); cleaning management (37.9%); towel and bed linen programmes (17.2%); staff education and training (17.2%); sustainable environmental practices (13.7%). However, green products usage (6.8%); certifications (6.8%); renewable energies (3.4%); products design (3.4%); products refurbish (3.4%); products reuse (3.4%); greenhouses (3.4%); and water reusing systems (3.4%) were ranked with the lowest mean scores.

Additionally, the respondents rated the CE initiatives their companies are considering, using a Likert scale from 1-Strongly disagree, to 5-Strongly agree. 97.22% of the companies are implementing water management policies; 94.44% energy efficiency improvements; and 72.22% waste management procedures. Nevertheless, 31.94% considered the purchase of products designed according to CE principles as an initiative to consider.

4.4 CE enablers

At this point, respondents were asked to rank the measures that would enable a CE implementation in their companies, using a Likert scale, ranging from 1 – Not at all important, to 5 – Extremely important. 98.68% of the participants ranked stronger support from supply chain agents to implement CE principles; specialized CE consultancy at disposal; national awareness strategy in wide dissemination of the CE concept and its practices; tax reduction to support companies that implement CE principles; governmental training courses support; governmental financial support. However, 96.05% of the participants regarded intense collaboration practices between companies the measure with the lowest mean score.

4.5 CE benefits

In this dimension, the participants were invited to classify the measures/ actions that a CE implementation in their companies would encourage, using a Likert scale, ranging from 1- Never, to 5- Always. The results indicate that a circular economic model would assist companies in establishing their brands and reputation on environmental preservation (100%); it would promote a sustainable environment (98.63%); it would also allow hotels to save costs in the long term (97.26%); it would stimulate innovation (97.26%); and it would encourage the creation of new jobs.

4.6 CE challenges

The CE challenges were ranked using a Likert scale, ranging from 1 – Strongly disagree, to 5 – Strongly agree. 88% point out the lack of investment in CE approaches as the most significative challenge, followed by the lack of governmental support (85.33%); policies focused on waste treatment instead of focusing on CE R-Principles (84%); and the lack of incentive to design circular products (81.33%).

The respondents (25.6%) show a certain low level of awareness regarding the CE constructs, while only 3.8% consider that it is visible a lack of interest to implement CE. The time spent putting into practice a CE model is not ranked as a major challenge, as only 7.7% of participants regarded it as an obstacle.

By means of an open-ended question, the participants specified the challenges that companies may face when implementing CE if the ones considered in the previous question did not stand out as impediments to the CE transition. 35.7% of the participants considered the lack of knowledge on the concept of CE as the major challenge; 21.6% pointed out the mindset of the organisation; 21.4% referred to the lack of knowledge on how to implement it; 21.4% indicated that the investment is costly, and finally, 14.2% identified the lack of governmental support.

4.7 Organisational performance

To determine the predictive positive impact of a CE transition on the companies organisational performance, respondents ranked that impact, using a Likert scale, from 1- Strongly disagree, to 5-Strongly agree. The findings show that acquiring new competencies (96.61%) and the reduction of carbon footprint/ greenhouse gas effects (90.28%) are the most significant positive impacts on the performance of companies, followed up by an improvement on their overall performance (84.72%); growth in customer satisfaction (84.72%); and access to new markets and consumers (84.72%).

5. Discussion and conclusion

Despite of the low level of participation in this exploratory study which does not allow to generalise the findings to the Portuguese hotel industry, it adds additional evidence to the pre-existing literature on CE and the hotel industry, and may be of assistance to stakeholders, researchers and policymakers who operate in the travel and tourism industry and who are focused on sustainability and on implementing a more circular approach regarding companies' economic, social and environmental performance.

This research results indicate the participants are aware of the CE construct and of its R-Principles, with emphasis to Recycle, Reuse, Reduce and Repair. They also demonstrate some degree of awareness regarding Rethink, Redesign, Refurbish, Remanufacture, and Recover, which might be explained by the fact that in recent decades the concept of CE has mainly been examined from a conceptual or theoretical perspective, lacking corroboration on its effectiveness (Linder & Williander, 2017; Ormazabal et al., 2018). This results also show that the 3 R-Principle (Recycle, Reuse, and Reduce) strategy along with Repair stand out as the CE R-Principles that these companies are implementing as an approach to preserve environment and natural resources and promote sustainability. These outcomes indicate that awareness relatively to the CE concept has gradually been flourishing, however, a considerable amount of work still needs to be accomplished.

The findings also indicate that the participants are considering and putting into practice measures that may enhance the transition to a circular model, mainly the promotion of the use of environmentally friendly products, and measures that stimulate waste, water, and energy management policies, recycling, cleaning practices, staff education and training, and bed linen programmes.

Moreover, the participant hoteliers regarded an approach based on circularity as particularly beneficial once it could establish their brand as one in line with environmental sustainability principles, and one that would allow them save costs in the long term and at the same time stimulate innovation, and subsequently enhance job creation.

In order to transition to a CE model, the respondents also considered that a stronger support from the supply chain agents, specialised consultancy at their disposal, and the assembly of a strategy at a national level to enhance awareness regarding CE, along with dissemination of established practices, stand out as the main enablers in this transition. The respondents also pointed out that tax reduction to support companies that are willing to make the transition, training granted by governmental authorities and governmental support would also be an advantage and beneficial.

Regarding the challenges, the respondents identified the lack of investment in the implementation of CE strategies, policies focused on waste treatment in detriment of waste prevention and on strategies centered on the R-Principles, and the lack of incentives to design circular products as the major constrains to a CE implementation.

From the organisational performance point of view, the respondents consider that acquiring new competencies and the reduction of carbon footprint/ greenhouse gas effects stand out as the major positive predictive effects of the implementation of Circular Economy in their companies.

Based on the analysis performed, it is possible to conclude that the participant companies are aware of the concept of Circular Economy and are already putting some of its principles into practice, nevertheless, further research in this area ought to be carried out as there are a number of challenges that need to be overcome to enhance a broader adoption.

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Impact of Covid-19 in the VAIC™ in the Hospitality Industry: the Portuguese Case

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Abstract: This work aims to identify the efficiency of intellectual capital in companies in the hospitality sector and to analyse the impact that the Covid pandemic has on the efficiency of intellectual capital in Portuguese regions. This study applies the Value Added Intellectual Coefficient (VAICTM) method according to Pulic (1998). The economic and financial data come from the Iberian Balance sheet Analysis System (SABI). The study was conducted with a selection of active companies with turnover in the years 2019 and 2020, resulting in a sample of 4.383 hotels in Portugal in the pre-pandemic period (the year 2019) and in the pandemic period (the year 2020). This study identifies the value added that contributes to value creation in organizations and analyses this value between Portuguese tourism regions because of the impact of the Pandemic Crisis in the sector. The average results for the total sample show that tourism businesses had a significant decrease in VAICTM from 2019 to 2020. The results show that the Lisboa e Vale do Tejo, Açores, and Algarve regions have the largest decrease in the value of VAICTM in the year 2020. The Alentejo region was the region that felt the least the impact of the pandemic crisis. These results reveal that the more mature tourist areas lost the most intellectual added value.

Keywords: intellectual capital, coefficient of intellectual value added (VAICTM), tourism sector, Portuguese tourism regions, Covid-19 crisis

1. Introduction

The world has been experiencing an unprecedented health crisis since the beginning of 2020. Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) emerged in China in late 2019 and quickly spread around the world. The ease of movement of people was a determining factor in the rapid spread of the disease. The most severe measures to contain this spread were the limitation of contacts between people and, with this, the cancellation of flights, the closure of hotel spaces, and almost all economic activity. Tourism almost came to a standstill, causing irreparable losses. According to the National Statistics Institute (2020), tourist accommodation establishments in Portugal recorded losses of around 95% in some months of 2020, compared to the same period in 2019.

The physical distancing measures had an immediate impact on demand in the tourism sector. It was estimated that uncertainty, fear, and lack of confidence could lead to a prolonged crisis in the sector, constituting a major concern for a country where tourism-related activities represent a good share of Gross Value Added (Mamede, Pereira & Simões, 2020). According to the authors, the crisis in the tourism sector, of uncertain duration, is a challenge and simultaneously an opportunity for a country like Portugal. The search for solutions to the limited tourism demand invites consideration of a stronger positioning of the sector in niche markets, focusing on sustainability and security.

The model VAIC™ by Pulic (1998) focused the research on the perspective of intellectual capital to explicitly focus on the relationship between Intellectual capital and economic performance. The model VAIC™ based its analyses only on the company's financial data. For the design of this model, Pulic (1998) part of the goal to find a way of measuring the knowledge-based economy that can indicate the amount of value created and how productive is at all levels of business activity, business processes, or into segments of society (Flores, García & Adame, 2017).

This paper seeks to analyse the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis on the added value of intellectual capital in the years 2019 and 2020 in the tourism sector in Portugal, considering the tourism regions of this country. In this way, the work is structured as follows: initially, an analysis is made of the impact of COVID-19 on tourism, followed by an explanation of the main fundamentals of the VAIC[TM] model combined with the presentation of the study results. The paper ends with the main conclusions, limitations, and suggestions for future work.

2. The impact of Covid-19 on tourism

Disease outbreaks and pandemics have long played a significant role in social and economic changes. However, the nature of such change is selective, is sometimes minimal, and at other times can be unexpected, enhancing its effects and even altering contemporary paradigms (Hall, Scott & Gössling, 2020). Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) disease is a challenging global problem (Gössling, Scott & Hall, 2020; Liang, Leng, Yuang & Yuang, 2021), has led to profound changes worldwide. The health crisis emerged and developed so suddenly and unexpectedly that it has affected the lives of all citizens, and the consensus is that nothing will ever be the same again (Romagosa, 2020; Niewiadomski, 2020). The level of economic and social unrest is unprecedented (Romagosa, 2020), with global travel restrictions and stay-at-home orders being the cause of the most serious disruption to the global economy since World War II (Gössling et al. 2020).

Indeed, the emergence of COVID-19 has shaken the global tourism industry (hospitality, travel, catering) is among the most sensitive and vulnerable to natural hazards, and therefore this sector may have changed forever because of COVID-19 (Luković & Stojković, 2020; Dube, Nhamo & Chikodzi, 2021; van der Merwe, Saayman & Jacobs, 2021). The democratisation of travel and the continued increase in international connectivity has succeeded in raising living standards in many cities and destinations around the world, but these rights were immediately suspended as a strategy to combat a global pandemic (Sanabria-Díaz, Aguiar-Quintana & Araujo-Cabrera, 2021). With this attempt to contain the spread of the virus, the tourism industry experienced calamitous effects and suffered unprecedented financial and job losses (van der Merwe et al. 2021; Dube et al., 2021).

Globalisation has become one of the determinants of the spread of the disease (Sheresheva, 2020) and therefore social behaviour has changed significantly with the limitations in mobility, changing work, consumption, and leisure patterns, among others (Romagosa, 2020). Tourism is especially susceptible to the consequences of the health crisis due to imposed restrictions, limited mobility, and social distancing (Gössling et al. 2020). The persistent public health crisis has led to interdictions or constraints to travel outside one's own country and has simultaneously promoted recovery marketing strategies in national tourism markets, through measures to implement and develop proximity tourism and domestic tourism, especially in outdoor spaces less prone to the spread of the virus (Lebrun, Su & Bouchet, 2021; Romagosa, 2020; Volgger, Taplin & Aebli, 2021).

Tourism is recognized as having a great capacity to recover from crises, which leads one to think that the same will happen with the current pandemic crisis (Hall et al. 2020). Thus, the future of travel and tourism, in a world where outbreaks of diseases and pandemics will become increasingly frequent, due to increased travel and ease of access to destinations around the world, should be the subject of reflection.

In the 21st century, two immense drivers of change for the tourism industry are climate change and global health emergencies (Jamal & Budke, 2020).

Despite the unprecedented impacts that the health crisis brought to tourism worldwide, it may translate into an opportunity to rethink tourism (Ioannides & Gyimóthy, 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020; Soliku, Kyiire, Mahama & Kubio, 2021), although the emergence or worsening of tourism phobia cannot be ruled out (Yu, Yu, He & Zhou, 2021).

One of the post-COVID challenges may be a greater concern for environmental sustainability (Cabello, Navarro-Jurado, Thiel-Ellul, Rodríguez-Díaz & Ruiz, 2021), not from the point of view of ecological recovery, but of minimising the impacts on global climate change that the proliferation of tourism has caused (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

Several studies refer to government intervention as the main solution to recover from the crisis (Bouarar, Mouloudj & Mouloudj, 2020; Rogerson & Baum, 2020; Ioannides & Gyimóthy, 2020; Elgin, Basbug and Yalaman, 2020; Fotiadis, Polyzos & Huan, 2020; Anderson, Heesterbeek, Klinkenberg & Hollingsworth, 2020, Santos & Moreira, 2021; Volgger et al., 2021; Soliku et al., 2021; Touat & Tebani, 2020; Sheresheva, 2020). However, there are still few studies on the impact of the crisis in the financial and economic sphere. Touat and Tebani (2020) assessed heavy losses in revenues in the aviation sector in Algeria. Van der Merwe et al. (2021) analysed the impact of the pandemic on actual and potential losses in the wildlife tourism industry in South Africa.

In Portugal, Marques, Guedes, and Bento (2021) analysed the impact of the easing of traffic restrictions, in the summer of 2020, according to the regions that offer more rural tourism and those that present mass tourism. They found that tourism in rural areas increased in the period of tourism relief, more than in mass tourism regions. Also in Portugal, Santos and Moreira (2021) state that Portugal has established itself as one of the most competitive tourist destinations in the world, which comprises the continental territory and two archipelagos. The study sought to analyse the impact of the pandemic crisis by region. The results of the tourist accommodation show that after the first phase of the pandemic there was a slight recovery of some indicators of tourist activity, mainly in more consolidated destinations such as the Algarve and Madeira. The territories more focused on nature tourism (Alentejo and Centro) suffered a less severe impact on tourism demand, with domestic tourism managing to mitigate some negative effects.

3. Method

For the research objectives that are consistent with the methodology, a quantitative study was conducted using secondary data. The dataset is based on the Portuguese hospitality and tourism industry; therefore, this study relies on Portuguese companies collected from the database by SABI. Therefore, the economic and financial information was collected from balance sheets and financial reports of 4.383 hotels in Portugal in the pre-pandemic period (the year 2019) and in the pandemic period (the year 2020). Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS statistical software) was used to perform this analysis.

The VAIC^{TM} method aims to measure the efficiency of intellectual capital, in this sense, to evaluate the information about the efficiency of processes and people related to value creation by measuring the efficiency coefficients in the use of financial and intellectual capital (Martins, Morais & Isidro, 2012).

Viewed in this way, the VAIC^{TM} method is intended to measure the efficiency of resources in value creation, i.e., measure resource efficiency for any company despite the region and/or county (Pulic, 2000). This method aims to determine the extent to which a company produces value based on the use of tangible and intangible assets of the company, as measured by the sum of the metrics that incorporate the components of the model. Based on these definitions and assumptions, the VAIC^{TM} is calculated as the direct sum of the main indices of efficiency, calculated as the ratio of the capital employed efficiency coefficient (CEE) and the intellectual capital efficiency coefficient (ICE).

Several studies evaluate the level of value creation efficiency of intellectual capital, capital employed efficiency, and VAIC^{TM} (Muhammad & Ismail, 2009; Laing, Dunn & Hughes-Lucas, 2010; Chang & Hsieh, 2011; Paknezhad & Ahmadkhani, 2012; Shaban & Kavida, 2013; FitzPatrick, Davey, Muller & Davey, 2013; Sumedrea, 2013; Bontis, Janoševic & Dženopoljac, 2015; Maji & Goswami, 2016; Flores et al., 2017; Kamath, 2017; Pradana, Nidar & Aripin, 2018; Yilmaz & Acar, 2018). Based on that framework, this study identifies the value added that contributes to value creation in organizations and analyses this value between Portuguese tourism regions because of the impact of the Pandemic Crisis in the sector.

4. Results

The sample considered in this study were the companies in the tourism sector in Portugal, specifically a sample of 4.383 hotels in Portugal in the years 2019 and 2020, analyzed by tourism regions. Portugal has five regional tourism areas in Mainland Portugal, which reflect the areas covered by the territorial units used for statistical purposes NUTS II – Norte, Centro, Lisboa e Vale do Tejo, Alentejo, and Algarve (Law No. 33/2013). We add the autonomous regions of the Açores and Madeira.

Table 1 shows the number of companies in the tourism sector by region in 2020.

The analysis of the data in Table 1 allows us to verify that it is in the region of Lisboa e Vale do Tejo that is concentrated the largest number of tourism companies, with about 32.1% of the companies in the sample, followed by the Norte region, with 25.4% of the companies.

Table 1: Number of companies by region 2020

Region	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Alentejo	307	7.0%	7.0%
Algarve	640	14.6%	21.6%
Centro	519	11.8%	33.5%
Lisboa e Vale do Tejo	1.407	32.1%	65.6%
Norte	1.113	25.4%	90.9%
Madeira	192	4.4%	95.3%
Açores	205	4.7%	100.0%
Total	4.385	100	

Source: Own elaboration

Table 2 shows the number of employees in tourism enterprises in Portuguese tourism regions in 2019 and 2020.

Table 2: Several employees in tourism businesses by region and change between 2019 and 2020

	Alentejo	Algarve	Centro	Lisboa e Vale do Tejo	Norte	Madeira	Açores	Total
Year	Sum	Sum	Sum	Sum	Sum	Sum	Sum	Sum
2019	2.459	12.199	4.177	21.270	10.780	7.176	2.601	60.662
2020	2.190	9.986	3.747	18.340	9.728	6.525	2.519	53.035
Δ	-10,94%	-18,14%	-10,29%	-13,78%	-9,76%	-9,07%	-3,15%	-12,57%

Source: Own elaboration

Between 2019 and 2020 the Portuguese hotel sector lost 7.627 workers (12.57%). The Algarve was the region with the largest loss in proportional terms (-18.14%), followed by the Lisbon e Vale do Tejo region (-13.78%), Alentejo (-10.94%), and Centro region (-10.29%). The table below shows the percentage of employees in tourism enterprises in Portuguese tourist regions. Based on this information we can conclude that the Lisboa e Vale do Tejo region concentrates, in all the years analysed, the highest proportion of employment in this sector in Portugal, followed by the Algarve region and, in third place, the Norte region (table 4).

Table 3: Percentage of employees in tourism companies by region

	Alentejo	Algarve	Centro	Lisboa e Vale do Tejo	Norte	Madeira	Açores	Total
Year	Row Sum %	Row Sum %	Row Sum %	Row Sum %	Row Sum %	Row Sum %	Row Sum %	Row Sum %
2019	4,10%	20,10%	6,90%	35,10%	17,80%	11,80%	4,30%	100,00%
2020	4,10%	18,80%	7,10%	34,60%	18,30%	12,30%	4,70%	100,00%
Δ	-	-1,30pp	0,20pp	-0,50pp	0,50pp	0,50pp	0,40pp	

Source: Own elaboration

Table 4: Wage expenditures in the tourism sector by region

	Alentejo	Algarve	Centro	Lisboa e Vale do Tejo	Norte	Madeira	Açores	Total	
Year	Row Sum %	Row Sum %	Row Sum %	Row Sum %	Row Sum %	Row Sum %	Row Sum %	Row Sum %	Sum (M€)
2019	3,49%	21,68%	5,43%	36,80%	16,36%	12,81%	3,44%	100,00%	1 052,51 M€
2020	3,89%	20,91%	6,04%	35,78%	17,34%	12,20%	3,85%	100,00%	821,79 M€

Source: Own elaboration

From the analysis to the results presented in tables 3 and 4 it is possible to validate that it is the region of Lisboa e Vale do Tejo that concentrates the chief percentage of employment in the tourism sector in all years analysed (with percentages around 35%), and the one with the highest levels of spending on employees (around 36%). The Norte region, with about 18.3% employment in the tourism sector in 2020 (the second largest in the country), concentrates only about 17.34% of wage costs. This could mean that tourism companies in the Norte pay lower wages when compared to tourism companies in other regions. It is in the Norte that there is the greatest difference between the percentage of employment in tourism and the percentage representing the value of staff costs.

We analysed in detail the indicators VAIC^{TM}, the intellectual capital efficiency coefficient (ICE), the capital employed efficiency coefficient (CEE), in the years under study (2019 and 2020), for each of the seven regions considered.

Table 5: Average of VAIC^{TM} and its components in the tourism industry in Portugal

	CEE	**ICE**	**VAIC^{TM}**
2019	.3771	16.7953	17.3312
2020	.1644	.2096	.7402

Source: Own elaboration

The capital employed efficiency coefficient (CEE) demonstrates that the average used between 2019 (.3771) and 2020 (.1644) reflects a decrease. The intellectual capital efficiency coefficient (ICE) was around the average value of 16.7953 in 2019 and .2096 in 2020 decreasing dramatically. Finally, analysing the VAIC^{TM}, it reaches a value of 17.3312 in 2019 and decreases to .7402 in 2020. In 2019, the tourism sector created €17.3312 for every €1.00 used. In 2020, the tourism sector created €.7402 for every €1.00 invested.

The sharp decrease in the intellectual capital efficiency coefficient is due to the variable salary expenses that are considered in the calculation of the value of human capital (intellectual capital component). Therefore, the large drop in wage costs is a consequence of dismissals and lay-offs caused by the stoppage of tourism. This fact led to a sharp drop in the value of human capital and contributed to a decrease in the intellectual capital efficiency coefficient from 16.7953 (year 2019) to .2096 (year 2020). This decrease was expected given the number of employees in the tourism sector, presented in table 2. It is also confirmed that the decrease in employee costs, verified in the year 2020, is more incident in the regions with the largest number of tourism companies and in the regions where personnel costs are higher (Lisbon e Vale do Tejo and the Algarve), as presented in tables 3 and 4.

Table 6 shows the results of VAIC^{TM} and its components for the regions of Alentejo, Algarve, Centro, and Lisboa e Vale do Tejo.

Table 6: Indicators by Alentejo, Algarve, Centro and Lisboa e Vale do Tejo regions in the years 2019 and 2020

	Region											
	Alentejo			Algarve			Centro			Lisboa e Vale do Tejo		
	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Maximum	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
VAIC^{TM}2019	2.46	2.34	5.02	**91.46**	2.64	2189.27	7.27	2.39	73.56	**4.00**	2.57	17.29
VAIC^{TM}2020	2.50	1.92	10.17	**0.58**	1.40	13.54	**4.40**	1.66	37.29	**-1.52**	1.38	173.06
ICE2019	2.23	1.91	5.88	90.91	2.00	2189.12	6.87	1.91	73.57	3.48	1.98	17.17
ICE2020	2.10	1.58	10.11	0.28	1.12	13.43	2.22	1.29	15.61	-1.70	1.09	173.01
CEE2019	0.35	0.20	0.85	0.43	0.28	0.94	0.31	0.18	0.39	0.41	0.25	1.13
CEE2020	0.22	0.15	0.29	0.18	0.10	0.35	0.17	0.11	0.44	0.14	0.06	0.87

Source: Own elaboration

The table below shows data for the Norte, Madeira, and the Açores regions.

Table 7: Indicators by Norte, Madeira, and Açores regions in the years 2019 and 2020

	Region											
	Norte			Madeira			Açores			Total		
	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
VAIC^{TM}2019	3.89	2.65	11.84	2.35	2.46	7.18	**10.88**	2.83	83.59	3.89	2.65	11.84
VAIC^{TM}2020	1.35	1.48	24.65	1.13	0.94	14.47	**1.19**	1.39	7.92	1.35	1.48	24.65
ICE2019	3.12	2.04	10.27	1.98	1.96	7.14	10.52	2.51	83.39	3.12	2.04	10.27
ICE2020	0.93	1.17	24.28	0.93	0.64	14.46	0.57	1.14	5.62	0.93	1.17	24.28
CEE2019	0.37	0.23	0.61	0.32	0.19	0.39	0.26	0.18	0.31	0.37	0.23	0.61
CEE2020	0.18	0.07	1.37	0.12	0.06	0.22	0.11	0.07	0.18	0.18	0.07	1.37

Source: Own elaboration

The results presented in tables 6 and 7 show that the VAIC^{TM} indicates a decrease in all regions in 2020 compared to 2019 (except for the Alentejo region). The value of the VAIC^{TM} in the Alentejo region remained stable in 2020 compared to 2019 because rural regions and where there is less mass tourism, were the most sought after when the restrictions were eased in the summer of 2020 (Marques et al., 2021, Santos and Moreira, 2021).

The Algarve region was the one that felt the impact of the crisis the most on the VAIC^{TM}, followed by the Açores and Lisboa e Vale do Tejo.

A detailed analysis of the averages of each of the variables studied in each tourism region allows us to verify that the VAIC^{TM} is higher in the Centro region in the year 2020.

The results presented allow confirming that the hotel sector suffered a sharp decline in 2020, and it is expected that the impacts of this crisis in the sector will have prolonged effects (van der Merwe et al. 2021; Dube et al., 2021). However, as confirmed by Santos and Moreira (2021), it can be expected that the more consolidated tourism regions, such as the Algarve and Madeira, will show a strong recovery once the restrictions are eased or eliminated.

We now try to statistically confirm the values presented. To this end, we proceeded to statistical inference to compare the means of VAIC^{TM} and its components in the period from 2019 to 2020, depending on the Portuguese tourism region. To go ahead with the choice of the test to be applied, we started by testing the normality of the variables (Kolmogorov-Smirnov test), which revealed, for all variables, a p-value > 0.05, which led us to reject the hypothesis of normality of the results. Thus, the non-normality of the data leads to the application of the Kruskal-Wallis test to analyse the existence of significant changes between the values of the VAIC^{TM} indicator in the different tourism regions.

Table 8: Kruskal Wallis Test - Group teste Region in the tourism industry in Portugal

		2019	2020
VAIC^{TM}	Chi-Square	.481	.433
	Sig	.000	.000
ICE	Chi-Square	.482	.435
	Sig	.000	.000
CEE	Chi-Square	.270	.288
	Sig	.000	.000

Source: Own elaboration

The results allow us to verify that there are statistically significant differences in the value of the variable VAIC™, depending on the region of tourism. Besides, the components of the VAIC™ coefficient (intellectual capital efficiency coefficient and capital employed efficiency coefficient) follow the same trend. We also compared the values of the capital employed efficiency coefficient between pairs of regions in 2019 and 2020 (Figure 1 and 2).

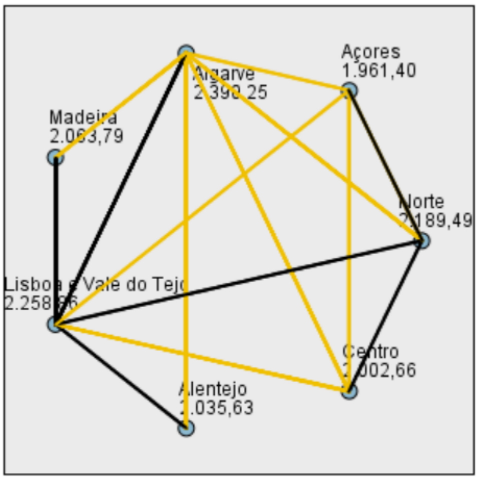

Figure 1: Capital employed efficiency coefficient-CEE, by pairs of regions, in 2019

Source: Own elaboration

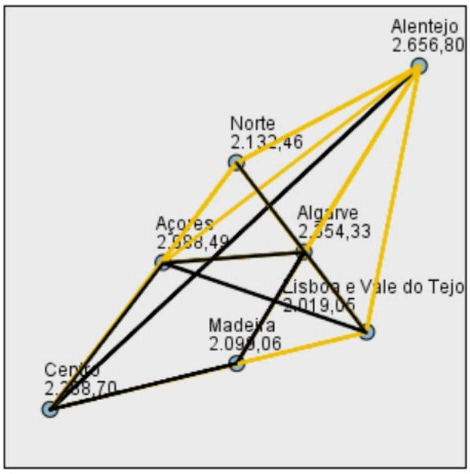

Figure 2: Capital employed efficiency coefficient-CEE, by pairs of regions, in 2020

Source: Own Elaboration

It is verified that, in general, there are differences between the different regions. In 2019, the regions that did not present statistically significant differences between them, concerning the capital employed efficiency coefficient, were the regions of Lisboa e Vale do Tejo-Madeira, Lisboa e Vale do Tejo-Alentejo, Lisboa e Vale do Tejo-Norte, Lisboa e Vale do Tejo-Algarve, Açores-Norte, and Norte-Centro. This means that in terms of capital employed efficiency coefficient there are, among most regions, statistically significant differences, except those indicated. In 2020, the regions that do not register statistically significant differences among themselves are Centro-Madeira, Centro-Açores, Centro-Alentejo, Açores-Alentejo, Açores-Lisboa e Vale do Tejo, Açores-Algarve, and Algarve-Madeira. Thus, we can see that the capital employed efficiency coefficient shows fewer differences between the regions of Portugal, confirming that the pandemic had, in general, impacts across all regions (with less impact in the Alentejo), resembling the regions in what concerns the component of VAIC™, which represents the physical and financial capital of tourism sector companies in Portugal. The results of the change between regions in the intellectual capital efficiency coefficient are presented in figures 3 and 4.

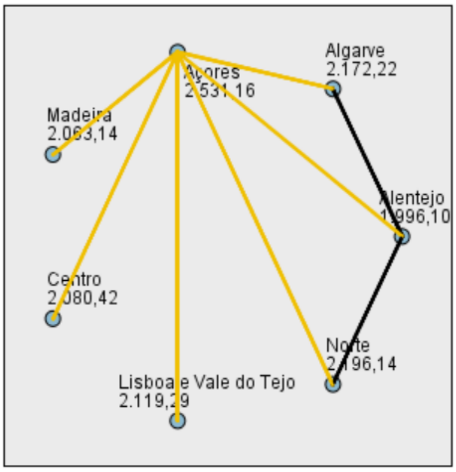

Figure 3: Intellectual capital efficiency coefficient-ICE, by pairs of regions, in 2019

Source: Own elaboration

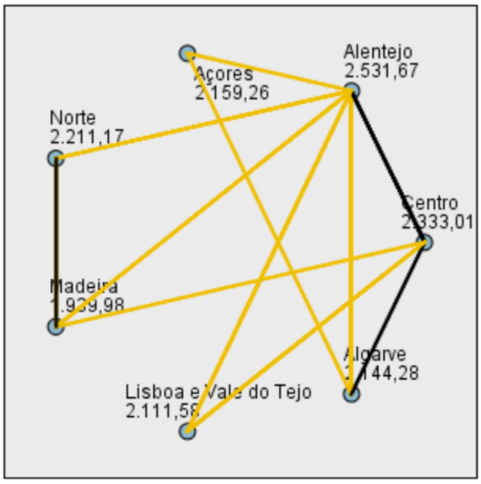

Figure 4: Intellectual capital efficiency coefficient-ICE, by pairs of regions, in 2020

Source: Own elaboration

As regards the intellectual capital efficiency coefficient, there are differences between regions than in the capital employed efficiency coefficient (figures 3 and 4). Thus, it is not so evident a difference between the mean ranks, in 2019, between the regions of Norte-Alentejo and the regions of the Algarve-Alentejo. Among all other regions there is a difference concerning the intellectual capital efficiency coefficient, confirming that in 2019, in the hospitality sector in Portugal, the intellectual capital efficiency coefficient differs significantly among the regions.

In 2020 there are no changes in this coefficient mainly from the Norte-Madeira regions, Alentejo-Centro and Algarve-Centro. We conclude, therefore, that there is a greater variation in 2019 and 2020 between regions when we regard the intellectual capital efficiency coefficient. This result confirms the large difference, not only between the number of tourism enterprises (Table 1) and employees in this sector by regions in Portugal (tables 2 and 3) but also the large difference between the wage expenditures that are practiced between the different tourism regions in Portugal (Table 4). From 2019 to 2020 the regions that showed large differences between each other in the values of the intellectual capital efficiency coefficient changed because of the impact they suffered from the pandemic crisis.

We also compared the values of the VAIC™ between groups of regions in 2019 and 2020 (Figure 5 and 6).

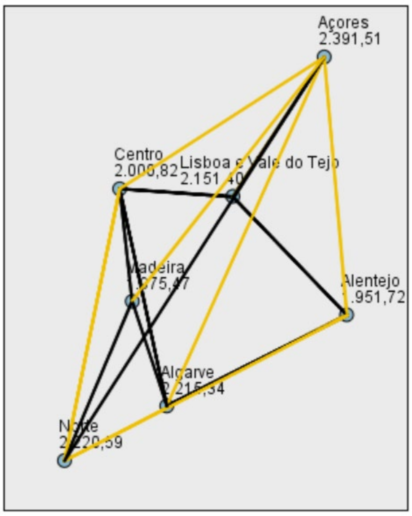

Figure 5: VAIC™, by pairs of regions, in 2019

Source: Own elaboration

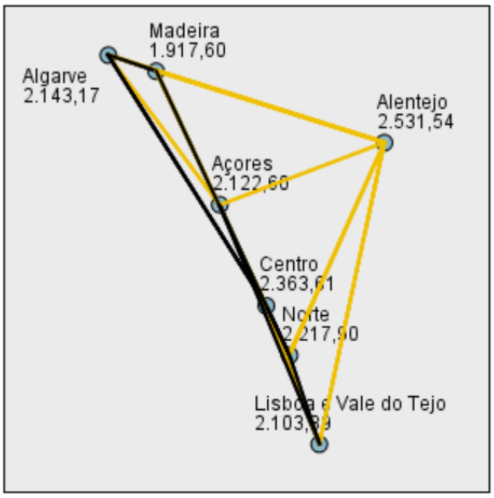

Figure 6: VAIC™, by pairs of regions, in 2020

Source: Own elaboration

Thus, it is not so evident a difference between the mean ranks, in 2019, between the regions of Norte-Algarve, Norte-Madeira, Norte-Açores, Centro-Lisboa e Vale do Tejo, Centro-Madeira and Centro-Algarve. As the VAIC™ is the sum of the capital employed efficiency coefficient (CEE) and the intellectual capital efficiency coefficient (ICE), the VAIC™ reflects the differences between its components.

In 2020 it is confirmed that the Alentejo is farther away from the other regions, being the only region where the VAIC™ did not decrease because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. Conclusion

In Portugal, the tourism sector, after almost doubling its weight in the economy between 2014 and 2019, continued to break records with revenues in hotels growing 9.9 percent year-on-year in the first two months of 2020 (Mamede et al., 2020). However, the pandemic crisis caused by Coronavirus has made the collapse of the tourism sector eminent.

Pulic (1998) sought, through the VAIC™ model, to measure business performance in the knowledge-based economy through the quantification of the intellectual efficiency in the value creation context.

It was found pertinent to study the VAIC™ in a context of crisis and in a sector in which the crisis has been more severe. To this purpose, the financial data of tourism companies in 2019 and 2020 were collected and based on

Pulic's model (1998) analysis was made of whether the added value of intellectual capital was altered by the context of the health crisis that affected the tourism regions.

The results show a significant decrease in VAIC^{TM} from 2019 to 2020 for all tourism regions. In turn, Lisboa e Vale do Tejo, Açores, and Algarve regions had the largest decrease in the value of VAIC^{TM} in the period considered. The Alentejo was the region that felt the least the impact of the pandemic crisis, having maintained the approximate average values because of its greater rurality, in line with the conclusions of Marques et al. (2021). These results reveal that the more mature tourist areas lost the most intellectual added value and the more rural or isolated regions managed to maintain the same levels of VAIC^{TM}, due to the high demand, essentially in the summer of 2020, for less populated tourism areas.

This paper has contributed to understanding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic crise on efficiency and value addition in the tourism sector. Is current with a very recent study topic and with results of extreme importance for strategic planning of the tourism sector at a national and regional level and represents a pioneering attempt to evaluate and compare intellectual capital efficiency within the Portuguese tourism sector in a Pandemic crisis context, by applying the VAIC^{TM} method (Pulic, 1998).

The few studies on the subject did not allow for the comparison and confrontation of results, which made the literature review and data analysis exercise less rich. In the future, it would be interesting to study the medium and long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the value creation of intellectual capital, as well as on the reconversion of some strategic choices of tourism regions in Portugal that seemed to be underway but that may be accelerated by the pandemic crisis.

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Promotion of Destinations Through Interactive Digital Marketing: Collaborative Model for Smart Cities

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Abstract: Smart cities are, by nature, spaces with a richness and diversity of technologies incorporated in their physical spaces, in such a way that they can be seen as a single intelligent and collaborative space. As technological pillars, two important layers arise – the sensory layer and the actuator layer, both of which are strongly interconnected with each other, emerging as a large Internet of Things network. This scenario reveals an enormous potential for marketing science and for the creation of innovative strategies to promote territories as touristic destinations. Within the multiple opportunities, there is space for the development of an interactive marketing experience, revolutionizing, through creative rethink, the way destinations interact with their visitors, and make known all their potential. Although in the context of tourism, there are three main moments in the visit process – the before, the during and the after, this work focuses on the moment of the destination visit – the during. In order to understand how creative rethink can be carried out to create innovative strategies to promote touristic destinations, an introduction is carried out, substantiating the concepts of digital marketing, smart cities and Internet of Things. Then, the methodology that governed the creation of a collaborative model for smart cities is clearly defined, being contextualized the importance of destinations-communication, the concept of a smart city and some of the major technology that support this concept. After contextualization and methodological aspects, this article presents a conceptual model where its components are described and where it is discussed how the model can take advantage of the variety of technologies that exist in a smart city, in order to allow innovative digital marketing strategies and innovating in the interaction between the city and the visitant, and vice versa – the vision of interactive digital marketing. In the model discussion, some interaction-scenarios and their main benefits are highlighted, which serve as examples for validating the proposed model. Finally, we present the work limitations and mains conclusions.

Keywords: digital marketing, smart cities, model, collaboration, tourism

1. Introduction

The tourism industry has experienced tremendous growth in recent years, which is largely due to the rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICT) across the world, as well as the widespread use of the internet (Hassannia, Barenji, Li, & Alipour, 2019).

A territory without communication doesn´t exist. This principle is structuring for any tourist destination, but it must be looked through new forms of tourism and communication. In an increasingly digitized world, the tourist has also become more demanding and that quickly led him to a smart tourism destination.

New ICT are the thread that guides tourists on their visit, allowing access to information in real time and the relationship in social networks, while allowing the interaction and integration of the visitor with the environment (Corrêa, de Sevilha Gosling, & Gonçalves, 2019).

In this new paradigm, focus must be on the tourist, considering their needs, preferences, requirements, trying to improve their experience and make them get the most satisfaction during their trip. The use of ICT in the context of smart cities allows access to databases that intelligently monitor the preferences of tourists, helping to improve experiences, local businesses, and public resources, adjusting them around tourism. Through Near Field Communication (NFC) technologies, for example, tourists can choose every detail of their destination (Beck, da Silva Neto, & de Melo Conti, 2020).

Being aware of these changes, tourist agents are increasingly betting on communication and marketing campaigns for smart cities, which implies linking the tourist experience to smart technologies, while becoming more sustainable places to visit. The aim is to offer tools that allow the visitor to make their own planning and design their own itinerary, according to their profile (Pascoal, 2019).

The emergence of ICT has given users a new positioning, who are no longer mere receivers and are now also content transmitters and communication agents in public space (Sánchez Martínez, Barceló Ugarte, & Cabezuelo Lorenzo, 2017).

In the current context, in which efforts and investments have been made to develop smart cities, it is opportune to create synergies between the technological infrastructure inherent to smart cities and the different economic sectors of these cities, in particular the tourism sector. This will allow the tourism industry to evolve towards a new paradigm called Smart Tourism.

This article, after this brief introduction, it provides a context of exploring a tourist destination and reflects how smart cities can enable smart tourism, highlighting the role of ICTs and the need to evolve the way tourist destinations are promoted. After review of the state of the art, a conceptual model is proposed, and some applicability scenarios are also discussed. Finally, a conclusion of the research work carried out is made.

2. Exploring a tourism destination

Tourists' behaviors always take place in time and space and consequently, understanding their space and time behavior like tourist activities, places visited, the time they spend and the facilities and services they use, can give several contributions to build a smarter destination.

In investigations on spatial and temporal behavior of tourists at visited destinations, a set of modern methods and techniques have been used, as Global Positioning System (GPS) devices, telephone tracking system, business cards/passes, hybrid solutions, smartphone applications, Bluetooth tracking, georeferenced information shared on social networks, among others. All these techniques are efficient, accurate and allow high-resolution spatiotemporal information to be produced that can be used to influencing destination planning and management (Ferrante, De Cantis, & Shoval, 2016), namely controlling tourist flows, promoting their dispersal (Le-Klähn, Roosen, Gerike, & Hall, 2015), locating new attractions or new accommodation (Lew & McKercher, 2006) and identifying which routes are most used (Xia, Zeephongsekul, & Packer, 2011).

In an urban destination, travelers try to visit several attractions and engage in several activities according to the space-time budget available (Caldeira & Kastenholz, 2019).

According to Lew & McKercher (2006) is important to understanding tourist intra-destination movement patterns and to identify the major influences on such movement. Caldeira & Kastenholz (2019) gave a relevant theoretical contribution on the study of tourist's space-time behavior at the urban intra-destination level with a two-dimensional structure based on movement and multi-attraction visitation making possible to describe and analyze tourist's movements, contributing for a smarter destination. It is important to note that tourism destinations serve different roles for tourists and, consequently, tourists consume destinations differently (McKercher et al., 2006, p.647). It is possible to consider the existence of three main moments in the visit process to a destination – the before, the during and the after. All these phases have a different effect on the way destinations are consumed.

Before the trip, the sources of information consulted or the fact that the destination is being visited for the first time will have an impact on the extent of the movements that will be made and on the type of attractions to visit, spending different amounts of time at the same attractions (McKercher, Shoval, Ng, & Birenboim, 2012). In the case of repeat visitors there will be a tendency to perform activities such as shopping, visiting friends or family, among others (Lew & McKercher, 2006).

The literature on tourist destinations refers not only to the territory where tourism activity is developed, but also to a set of other elements such as support services, accommodation, attractions, tourism products, among others, which provide the needs of visitors and residents (Inskeep, 1991; Leiper, 1979). A smart destination should provide the interconnection of all those elements, and among them, transports are a critical element. According to Lew & McKercher (2006), the zones and trip generator points are in areas where there is a greater concentration of accommodation, consequently, visitors will select the mode of transport taking in consideration the perceived costs and benefits of traveling on it. In some urban destinations and for those using transport networks for the first time, could be a very complex and difficult task.

For a more efficient exploration of the destination and for a more rewarding visiting experience it is crucial that tourist be aware of the attraction's location, accommodation and how transports network connect all those elements. A smart destination should provide the visitors with all the necessary information to support and simplify the exploration of the destination according to their profile.

As "the tourist's ability to understand a destination and choose what activities to pursue is highly individualistic, though subject to considerable external influence" (Lew & McKercher, 2006, p.411) all these variables contribute to explain how destinations are explored and consumed in time and space giving significant contributions to their marketing and promotion strategy.

3. Smart cities enable smart tourism

Currently, most of the world's population resides in urban areas, and the forecast is that this urbanization movement will continue. The projected proportion urban in 2050 is expected to reach close to 87% in the more developed regions and 66% in the less developed regions (United Nations, 2019).

This transformation creates several challenges in urban areas, and the smart city concept emerges as a strategy to mitigate the problems that arise from this rapid urbanization. Thus, Smart Cities can be seen as one of the ways to improve the quality of life of people and services in urban environments (Kong et al., 2019).

3.1 Smart cities

The smart city concept, in addition to being seen as a strategy to respond to the challenges that cities face, such as: increasing urbanization and demographic changes, also intends to respond to climate and environmental changes, economic reforms, and digital technology disruptions (Zhao, Fashola, Olarewaju, & Onwumere, 2021).

Smart cities, are urban areas that, with ICT resources, collect data from devices, assets and citizens, to improve the management of available resources more efficiently (Habeeb & Weli, 2020), and provide an intelligent, connected infrastructure.

A smart city is a structure composed largely of ICT, to develop, implement and promote sustainable development practices to respond to the growing challenges of territories urbanization.

ICTs such as big data mining, Internet of Things (IoT), mobile internet and cloud technologies, embedded in urban development, largely leverage the construction of smart cities (Kong et al., 2019), being that, distinct combinations of technological infrastructure interact to form the set of smart city technologies, and may present different levels of interaction between human and technological systems – ICT represents the essential backbone to connect main systems of smart cities.

The growing development of smart city initiatives has been driven by both the omnipresent use of ubiquitous computing and mobile solutions allowing a constant exchange (send and receive) of data between citizens and the smart city system (Quijano-sánchez, Cantador, Cortés-cediel, & Gil, 2020).

3.2 Smart tourism

The fourth industrial revolution has provided the development of the economy in general and the tourism industry in particular. In this context, many cities have made efforts to develop a smart tourism ecosystem based on existing smart city technological infrastructures to leverage their tourism competitiveness (Lee, Hunter, & Chung, 2020).

The concept of smart tourism destination is the result of two converging trends: on the one hand the unstoppable dissemination of "e-Tourism", on the other hand the opportunities generated by the adoption of the smart city paradigm to optimize the use of tourist resources, enhance tourist experiences, increase the competitiveness of destinations, and improve the quality of life of citizens (Baggio, Micera, & Chiappa, 2020). In the same sense, according Lee et al. (2020), smart tourism represents the convergence of ICT and tourism, driving the transformation of tourism through technology, resulting in a new paradigm of sustainable tourism based on the collection and analysis of data extracted from diverse sources, and combining diverse and advanced information technologies to transform travel experiences to make them more enriched (Lee et al., 2020).

The IoT presents a set of new opportunities for the tourism sector by facilitating the access and integration of a wide set of information, with the possibility of integrating social media, content marketing, big data and wearables. As such, the interaction of tourists with these technologies will make it possible to transform the visitor's experience, from the production of knowledge to the exchange of knowledge (Wise & Heidari, 2019).

The authors Lee et al. (2020) propose a framework, figure 1, that provides an abstract view that summarizes the components of a smart tourism city. This framework allows information and service transactions can be seen as a result of data sharing between the public and private sectors, with visitors and residents playing a significant role in providing and receiving that information.

A smart tourism city provides intelligent services to visitors in terms of transportation, gastronomy, accommodation, ancillary services, and attractions throughout three phases: the pre-travel (planning) phase, the travel (onsite) phase and the post-travel phase (evaluation) and embrace the components of the smart city.

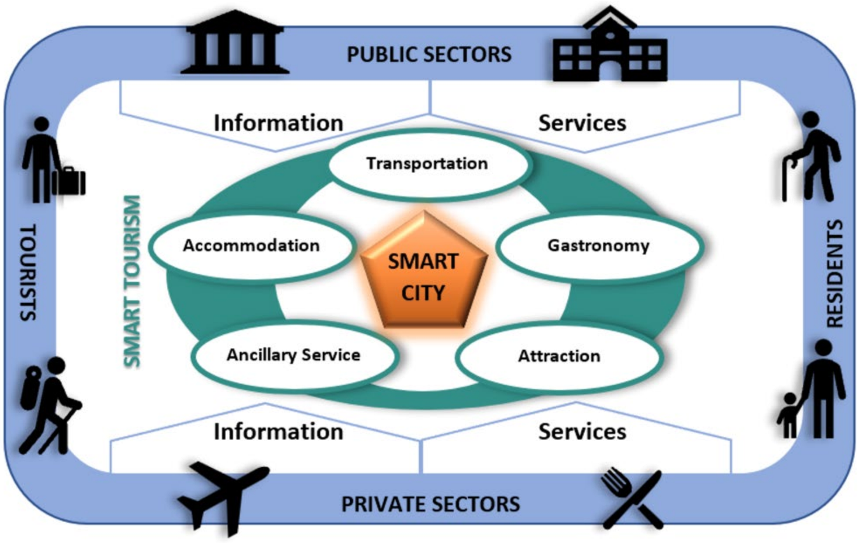

Figure 1: Components of a smart tourism city. Adapted from: (Lee et al., 2020)

Tourism, in the context of Industry 4.0, as the new tourism value eco-system based on the high-tech service, embraces a set of principles such as, interoperability, virtualization, decentralization, real-time data gathering and analysis capability, service orientation, and modularity (Pencarelli, 2020).

3.3 Interactive digital marketing to promote smart tourism

The new technologies transform data into valuable marketing information that can profile tourists' consumer behavior and expectations. In this way, fine segmentation processes are put into action and personalized value proposals are offered, so as to improve travel experiences, make them unique and truly memorable, and foster traveler loyalty (Pencarelli, 2020). Technological advances have also led to the evolution of marketing and fomented marketing to act based on big data and AI to make a difference (Chintalapati & Pandey, 2022).

Considering the three main moments of a tourist travel (Lee et al., 2020), tourist agents act essentially in 3 moments: before-trip, when the internet and social networks attract the tourist to a certain destination, during-trip, when the trip is fed through mobile devices and their applications powered by the technology, and post-trip, when positive reactions on social networks and sharing experiences end up stimulating the interest of other visitors (Wichels, 2018).

IoT and IoS (Internet of Services) allow objects and services to be connected with sensors and cellular telephones in a common network, that enables the service vendors to offer value proposals to clients via the Internet and the ability of AI to continually learn and interpret/predict customer purchase intentions and emotions, could facilitate the automation and personalization of marketing (Chintalapati & Pandey, 2022).

At the same time, new dissemination platforms have become new databases, which allow measuring the behavior of tourists, such as social networks (e.g. Instagram, Facebook, Twitter), or online consumer assessment services (e.g. TripAdvisor), being important sources of information due to the high levels of participation and the amount of information generated (Encalada, Rocha, & Ferreira, 2018). Increasingly, the tourist is a generator of information, taking advantage of the digital trail they leave when using social networks.

Tourism promotion thus also passes to the side of the visitor, who gains visibility as an influencer, by sharing their experiences through photographs, opinions, recommendations, and evaluations on different digital platforms.

Nowadays, marketing is ever more data-driven, automated, in real time and intelligent, in order to offer value-added products and services that meet consumers' needs and expectations. Thus, Marketing in the context of smart tourism should initially focus on attracting visitors, then, during the stay, it should understand the tourist's behavior in real time and make suggestions appropriate to their profile, and finally, it should make efforts to loyalty and encourage new visits.

4. Proposed conceptual model

Smart cities contribute to the development of tourism as, according to Eichelberger, Peters, Pikkemaat, & Chan (2020), they tend to attract more visitors. Smart cities/destinations bring together physical and technological infrastructure to create seamless experiences for tourists; however, the roles and functions of Destination Marketing Organizations remain meanly understood (Sorokina et al., 2022).

As the concept of a smart city is very comprehensive, we are focused on understanding a smart city as a large network of cooperation with different layers (e.g. technological, business). In this context, we propose, in figure 2, a conceptual model that materializes our focus, and that explores the potential of using marketing mechanisms to increase the degree of visitor satisfaction, while generating business opportunities and improving the response efficiency of that same business – a destination that understands the visitor and adapts to their needs.

The proposed model, figure 2, is based on four main dimensions: (a) the visitor, (b) the technological infrastructure of a smart city, (c) information and, finally, (d) business.

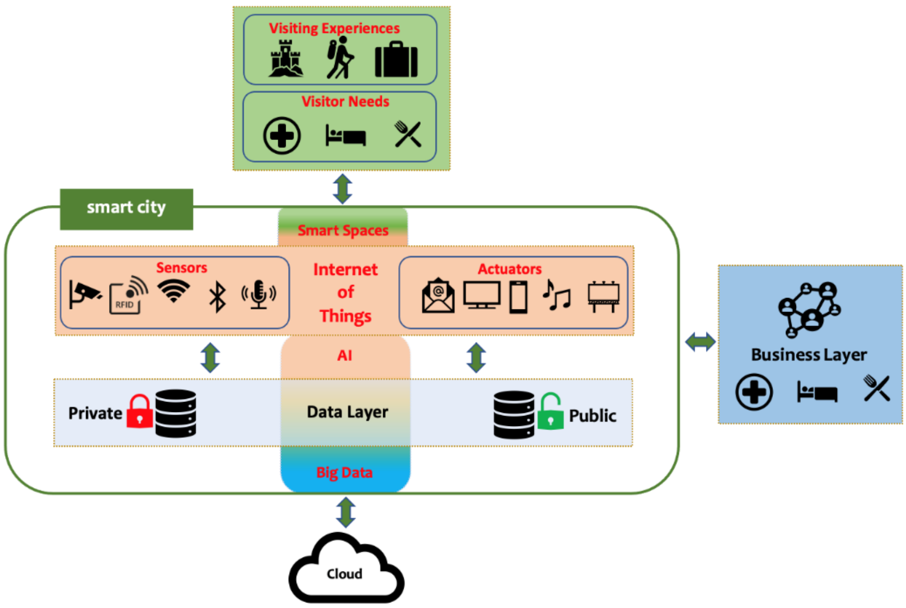

Figure 2: Conceptual model components

- a) The dimension of the visitor materializes the needs that a visitor has during the process of visiting, a city, as a tourist. In this context, the visitor seeks a set of vast experiences in the field of understanding and fruition of all touristic and cultural aspects of the city. This experience must be compatible with their (pre-formed) expectations, where the technological element must be increasingly present - the visitor is thirsty for information and wants it to be easy to access, as well as access to services to be easy, convenient, and contextualized. Contextualization plays a major role in the tourist satisfaction – contextualized experiences lead tourists to feel embraced and welcomed by the city.
- b) The creation of smart cities implies embedding technology in physical spaces, thus enabling a virtual dimension - the creation of smart spaces. In a succinct view, smart cities have two major hardware layers: a sensor network and a network of actuators interconnected by a wired and wireless communication infrastructure. The sensory layer is responsible for identifying and perceiving objects (e.g. a visitor, a given scenario), the actuator layer is responsible for distributing information and/or allowing access to services. In a reductive way it can be said that the sensors allow the input of data and the actuators the output of data. However, it is in the process that intermediates this cycle that a key differentiating element is found - an intelligence unit supported by AI. This dense network is commonly accommodated on the IoT concept. It is important to point out that this layer is really successful thanks to the visitor having technology (e.g. smartphones, tablets, smart watches). We call it true success because this reality allows the visitor (through the technology he carries) to be, like the space, an intelligent visitor – the visitor himself has a layer of sensors and actuators.
- c) The information layer is the lifeblood of a smart city. Note that all embedded technology and all AI processes are powered by information. The existence of information is in this sense the great primary success factor. In the model presented, the information must be divided into public information and private information. In our opinion, public information translates the information that circulates symbiotically among all the actors of a smart city. As for private information, this translates the proprietary information of a given actor (or cooperative set of actors) and which typically serves the purpose of generating differentiating factors of competitive advantage. This view of information divided into public and private is the support of the environment of cooperation and competition that exists in the dynamics of business. In the model, the information inside and outside the smart city is differentiated. Note that this is a logical and not a physical distinction - that is, it does not matter where the information is physically stored, but we distinguish between the information held by the smart city (e.g. recording of interactions between the visitor and the smart city) and the information that is owned by elements outside the smart city (e.g. a visitor's Facebook profile). In this context, the smart city cannot be an island of information but a node of information that is part of a wider distributed system, and in this scenario, the true concept of Big Data can be glimpsed. All this information is continuously worked on by AI processes that generate knowledge and allow the optimization of the sensing and action cycle towards the visitor, the city's infrastructures, and the business layer.
- d) The business layer, presented in our model, in the context of a smart city, in our opinion, must necessarily be a cooperative network vision. The sharing of information, interconnection of the layers of sensing and actuators, and the performance of each business player must be a reality, otherwise we would be undermining the potential of a smart city to leverage the generation of business opportunities and for each business to maximize the relationship with the clients. The city's ability to communicate to its business actors the visitors who are in the city and, step by step, what their activities are going to be, allowed the business actors to anticipate needs, as well as to promote, among visitors, their offer.

After describing the different layers of the proposed conceptual model, the following chapter presents some scenarios that take advantage of the model in the pursuit of a contextualized interactive marketing approach and the way in which both visitors and business actors can take advantage of the model – an exercise of realization of the concept into the real world.

5. Discussion and scenarios of application

In order to highlight some of the gains of the proposed conceptual model, two scenarios are presented below to demonstrate some use cases that make proof of concept.

5.1 Scenario 1 - customize, to the visitor, the access to information or services:

The IoT network makes it possible to detect the visitor and various aspects, both in terms of their profile and even in terms of various biological parameters in real time. In this context, we give the following example: A visitor who is in a queue to enter a theater will be detected by the IoT system (i.e. sensor component), if his profile reveal that he is a visitor with priority (e.g. elderly person, pregnant, or in another context, a VIP) then the same IoT (i.e. component of actuators) will trigger an action in order to alert the visitor so that he can immediately enter the said theater and lead that visitor to a place more suited to his condition. This will generate satisfaction in the visitor who will feel cherished and respected.

5.2 Scenario 2 - generating business opportunities and personalized marketing:

The IoT layer allows the identification of a visitor and the AI applied to Big Data will allow to obtain information about the visitor. In this way, it will be possible to understand the visitor's profile, as soon as the sensory system detects that same visitor. Accordingly, we show (a possible example) how two possible visitor profiles can be obtained - backpacker and luxury visitor; and how this differentiation can generate personalized business opportunities. If we detect a visitor, we can check if there is an accommodation reservation for that visitor. If the reservation is in a cheap hostel or if, on the other hand, it is in a five-star hotel, the characterization of the visitor profile will tend, in the first case, to be closer to a backpacker and, in the second case, it will tend to be that of an affluent visitor luxurious. The first profile will lead to the contact of several business actors aimed at backpackers, while the second case will trigger the contact of business actors with a range of luxury services. It is, in our opinion, sensible to estimate that the second profile will advertise luxury recreational opportunities (e.g. a tour of the city in a limousine) and for the first profile low-cost recreational opportunities (a walking tour through the city with a tour guide for tourist groups). This segmentation will favor marketing processes adjusted to the visitor's profile, by the various business actors. Once again, each visitor profile will feel a maximization of the satisfaction with which the system interacts with him – only offer me the right service not what I don't want.

Many more scenarios could be considered and would be correctly supported by the proposed conceptual model. There is actually a set of opportunities only limited by the imagination to innovate in the way we approach visitors, offer them services and accompany them during their visit. Our scenarios and model are aligned to the results and trends showed in (Kontogianni & Alepis, 2020), where a smart tourism state of the art and literature review between 2013 and 2019 was made.

6. Conclusion

Tourism is a global phenomenon and one of the sectors that currently has a significant weight in the economy of the territories, having gained more and more importance for the generation of wealth. However, this sector is information intensive and depends on a great diversity of ICT, as well as the way they are implemented and interconnected – in this context, smart cities come to materialize these necessary technological resources.

As such, smart cities have technology capable of collecting and processing data massively and in real time, to support intelligent and contextualized action mechanisms, in the context of different scenarios.

Based on a smart city, the opportunity arises for business reengineering, allowing companies from the most diverse sectors of activity to create collaborative networks that, taking advantage of the generated synergies, can thus compete and cooperate in a more favorable and symbiotic environment. Among the multiple sectors, in particular, the tourism sector will be able to take advantage of this reality to reinvent the way it is able to proactively understand, welcome and meet the needs of the visitor – smart tourism.

Accordingly, a model is proposed that, taking advantage of the ability to gather and intelligently process visitor information, obtained from their digital footprint and their real-time behavior during the visit, achieving gains in competitiveness, through the cooperative vision between the smart city and the business layer (also this cooperative), maximizing visitor satisfaction, as well as generating new business opportunities.

Some applicability scenarios were presented that illustrate some use cases, with the purpose of proof of concept.

Finally, it is important to mention that the model's vision has some limitations, of which we highlight the degree of difficulty that sometimes exists in the creation of cooperation networks between business actors; obviously, the dimension of data security and privacy is also essential, however, this was not considered in this work, being the subject of future work.

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Demand for Domestic Marine and Coastal Tourism

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Abstract: Domestic marine and costal tourism has increased in importance over the last number of years due to the impacts of international travel, environmental concerns, associated health benefits and COVID-19 related travel restrictions. Consequently, this paper conceptualizes domestic marine and coastal tourism within an economic framework. Two logit models examine the factors that influence participation in the coastal day trips and overnight stays markets, respectively. Two truncated travel cost models are employed to explore trip duration, one analyzing the number of day trips taken and the other examining the number of nights spent in marine and coastal areas. Although a range of variables predict participation, no one variable had a significant and consistent affect in every model. A division in access to domestic marine and coastal tourism is also observed based on variation in household income. The results also indicate a vibrant day trip market and large consumer surpluses. The decision to use logit participation models and travel cost models applied to day trips and overnight stays is a direct result of the audiences this paper aims to inform. Firstly, by presenting the decision making process for domestic marine and coastal tourism in this depth, evidence based decision makers can gather a better understanding of how domestic tourist decided to participate in marine and coastal tourism, who the larger beneficiary are of the different types of marine and coastal tourism and how policy focused solely on overnight stays can adversely affect particular segment of society, often those less well off financially. Secondly, the academic literature has presented a dearth of information comparing day trip participation to overnight stays in marine and coastal tourism, as such, this paper provides a valuable source of information.

Keywords: domestic, marine and coastal, day tripper, overnight stay, participation models, truncated travel cost model

1. Introduction

In many senses, domestic tourism is an often-overlooked aspect of the tourism market. From the individual's perspective, overseas travel is frequently seen as more desirable than holidaying at home (Xin et al., 2019; Athanasopoulos and Hyndman, 2008). Tourism policy often focuses on attracting overseas tourists paying little attention to the domestic tourist. Even in the academic literature, papers on domestic tourism are published much less frequently than those on international tourism (Athanasopoulos et al., 2014; Canavan 2013). This outlook undervalues the contribution, importance, and potential of domestic tourism. However, recent social, political and economic factors are contributing to the re-evaluation of the demand for domestic tourism.

Restrictions on international travel during the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in increased demand for local recreational facilities and domestic holidays (Arbulú et al., 2021; Foo et al., 2020; Moreno-Luna et al., 2021; Vaishar and Šťastná, 2020). As a consequence, domestic tourists developed an increased knowledge of local environments which may continue to exert further demand for domestic holidays in the future (Jeon and Yang, 2021). Further to this, a better understanding of the impact of air travel on climate change and anticipated increases in carbon taxes are likely to lead to reductions in international travel (Gössling et al., 2020; Hendrik et al., 2017). As such, many countries and economies are looking to increase revenue through domestic tourism as it is a potential driver of coastal economic activity in the short term and is predicted to have sustained long-term growth.

This paper is designed to contribute to the literature by conceptualizing domestic marine and coastal tourism within an economic framework. The attributes influencing participation and length of stay are examined for the two main components of the market; namely, day-trippers and overnight tourists. The analysis employs two sets of econometric models applied to Irish national level data; the logit model to analyze the socio-demographic factors influencing the decision to take a day trip or an overnight stay and the truncated Travel Cost Models (TCM) to analyze the factors associated with the number of days or nights spent in a marine or coastal location. Although some of the economic impacts of day-trips (Downward et al., 2020; Prayaga 2017) and longer stays

(Canavan, 2013; Canavan, 2016) in marine and coastal areas have been studied, comparative research is less common (Hynes et al., 2017; Yang and Zhang 2015) By providing a comparative analysis of day-trippers and overnight tourists, valuable insight into how to best grow and service the market can be obtained. Further to this, a comparative analysis allows for a better understanding of the relative importance of day trips and overnight stays in relation to the marine tourism economy and the benefits derived by users from both types of trips.

2. Methodology

2.1 Data collection

Data collection was then conducted during February and March of 2019 using household face-to-face interviews across Ireland. To ensure a nationally representative sample respondents were screened with respect to area of residence, gender, social class and age. Data was collected on a variety of topics including, the number of day trips and overnight trips over the 12-month period prior to being surveyed, expenditure per trip, the composition of the travelling party, the types of marine and coastal activities undertaken on these trips, which counties they undertook these activities in, and demographic questions; including income, social class, employment status and questions related to the respondent's household.

2.2 Econometric approach

Two sets of models are presented in this analysis. The first set of two logit models are used to examine the socio-demographic factors influencing the decision of Irish residents to take a day trip or spend a night in Irish marine and coastal areas. The second set of two truncated TCMs are used to examine the total number of days/nights spent as a marine and coastal tourist.

The decision to separate the models, as opposed to jointly estimating participation and length of stay, is a consequence of the common data related issue of respondents not having participated in the market of interest (Bilgic and Florkowski, 2007). In the present study, some respondents in the data set did not participate in the domestic marine and coastal tourism market during the period of analysis. For non-participating individuals, there is no reported expenditure and none that can be reasonably calculated. Consequently, from the perspective of applying a TCM, individuals with zero cost will have taken zero trips running contrary to economic theory. As a result, participation and length of stay are modelled separately. In the logit model, we include those variables that are expected to impact the decision to spend at least one day/night on the Irish coast, excluding cost. In the truncated TCM, we include the variables that may impact the length of the stay such as travel cost, activities undertaken and travelling companions.

The logit model, is a logistic regression used to predict the probability of an event occurring. In the case of the day trip model, the event is taking at least one day trip and for the overnight stay model, the event is taking at least one overnight trip. The logit model can be depicted as:

$$P(Y = 1) = \frac{e^{\beta_0} + \beta_{1x1} + \cdots + \beta_{kxk}}{1 + e^{\beta_0} + \beta_{1x1} + \cdots + \beta_{kxk}}$$

where x_i are independent variables that impact the decision to spend at least one day or night in a coastal area. β_i are coefficients to be estimated using maximum likelihood.

To model the number of days or nights in a coastal area, a form of the TCM is employed. A TCM is a count model used to predict the probability of the dependent variable, usually trips taken, equally some non-negative integer. To elaborate on the type of TCM used here we start with the most commonly used form of the TCM with a demand function that can be written as (Parsons, 2011):

$$Y_i = f(Z_i)$$

Y_i is the revealed trip frequency and Z_i is a vector of variables that impact an individual's length of stay e.g. price, site attributes and personal characteristics. By definition, trip frequency is a non-negative integer. Consequently, count data approaches are appropriate. Count data models estimate the probability of the number of trips taken equaling a certain integer value. The most commonly used of these count models are the Poisson and Negative Binomial models. Assuming a Poisson distribution, the probability function can be written as (Hellerstein, 1991):

$$P\ (Y_i = j; j = 0,1,2, \dots) = \frac{\lambda^n e^{-\lambda}}{n!}$$

Where Y_i remains the number of trips taken, $j = 0,1,2, \dots$ are the possible values of Y_i and λ is the Poisson parameter to be estimated. In the case of the Poisson model, λ is assumed to be equal to the mean and variance of the number of trips. When overdispersion occurs, where the conditional mean is less than the conditional variance of the number of trips taken, the Negative Binomial model is more appropriate. Accounting for overdispersion the probability function can be rewritten as (Grogger and Carson, 1991):

$$P\ (Y_i = j) = Fnb\ (j) = \frac{\Gamma\left(j + \frac{1}{\alpha}\right)}{\Gamma(j+1)\Gamma\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}\right)} (\alpha\lambda_i)^j [1 + \ \alpha\lambda_i]^{-(j+\frac{1}{\alpha})}$$

where α and β are parameters to be estimated.

Since we do not observe the expected costs for the individuals who make zero trips, the observations used to model trip frequency are truncated at one. Consequently, truncated negative binomials are required. Following Grogger and Carson (1991), the amended negative binomial can be expressed as:

$$\text{P}\ (Y_i = j \mid Y_i > 0) = \frac{\Gamma\left(j+\frac{1}{\alpha}\right)}{\Gamma(j+1)\Gamma\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}\right)} (\alpha\lambda_i)^j [1 + \ \alpha\lambda_i]^{-\left(j+\frac{1}{\alpha}\right)} \left[1 - Fnb(0)\right]^{-1}$$

As demonstrated by Hellerstein and Mendelsohn (1993), the consumer surplus (CS) associated with, in this case, a trip to a marine or coastal area can be estimated as:

$$CS = -1/\beta_{tc}$$

where β_{tc} is the estimated travel cost parameter from the TCM.

3. Domestic marine and coastal tourism data and summary statistics

The original data set contains 1,014 observations; 49 observations were removed due to illogical responses such as stating they undertook a marine or coastal activity in Ireland without visiting a marine or coastal area. The logit participation models were applied to the remaining 965 observations. The summary statistics for these 965 observations can be found in Table 1 column 2 under the heading "Complete Sample". Outliers were also removed from the data set used for the TCM models. In the day trips model, individuals whose expenditure was more than 2.6 standard deviations[1] from the mean were removed. These individuals who spent more than €300 per day each account for approximately 2.5% of day-trippers. In the overnight model data set, two sets of outliers were removed. The first set of outliers was individuals who spent €500 per night or more. This accounts for approximately the top 1% of spenders and, like in the day trip model data set, are individuals whose expenditure was more than 2.6 standard deviations from the mean. The second set of outliers excluded was those who spent no money per night. Although it may be true that these respondents spent nothing per night it is unlikely that no money was spent on their behalf. Some monies were likely spent by an individual other than the respondent and it is likely that this cost informed the trip duration. Approximately 3% of the sample spent nothing per night.

Table 1: Summary statistics

Variable	Complete Sample	Day Tripper	Overnight tourist
Day Trips	5.10 (8.84)	6.91 (9.78)	5.28 (7.97)
Average Expenditure on Day Trips	€71.76 (€78.87)	€85.80 (€54.66)	€95.73 (€88.88)
Night Trips	1.29 (2.13)	1.19 (1.87)	2.65 (1.79)
Nights Per Trip	1.52 (2.32)	1.42 (2.09)	3.23 (1.98)
Average Expenditure Per night	€77.93 (€117.18)	€79.47 (€114.98)	€179.03 (€91.48)
Social Classes A, B	0.15 (0.36)	0.16 (0.36)	0.22 (0.41)
Social Classes C1, C2, D	0.73 (0.44)	0.76 (0.43)	0.72 (0.49)
Social Classes E, F	0.12 (0.32)	0.08 (0.28)	0.06 (0.24)
Income €0 - €30,000	0.38 (0.48)	0.34 (0.47)	0.28 (0.45)
Income €30,001 – €60,000	0.23 (0.42)	0.24 (0.43)	0.27 (0.44)
Income €60,001 Plus	0.04 (0.21)	0.04 (0.20)	0.07 (0.25)

[1] Mean and standard deviations are calculated from those who took at least one day trip or spent one night respectively. These are not the same values as presented in Table 1. Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviations after the removal of outliers.

Variable	Complete Sample	Day Tripper	Overnight tourist
Income refused	0.35 (0.48)	0.39 (0.49)	0.38 (0.49)
Coastal Participation	0.69 (0.46)	0.83 (0.38)	0.82 (0.39)
Marine Participation	0.39 (0.49)	0.45 (0.50)	0.54 (0.50)
Aware of Wild Atlantic Way	0.91 (0.29)	0.92 (0.27)	0.95 (0.22)
Visited Wild Atlantic Way	0.39 (0.49)	0.43 (0.49)	0.59 (0.49)
Irish	0.92 (0.27)	0.93 (0.26)	0.94 (0.23)
Age	45.98 (16.30)	43.72 (15.25)	42.84 (14.23)
Living with Partner	0.67 (0.47)	0.68 (0.47)	0.75 (0.43)
Female	0.50 (0.50)	0.52 (0.50)	0.52 (0.50)
Children Under 16	0.72 (1.07)	0.75 (1.08)	0.86 (1.12)
Employed	0.63 (0.48)	0.68 (0.47)	0.73 (0.44)
Retired	0.17 (0.38)	0.13 (0.34)	0.10 (0.30)
Third level or higher education	0.43 (0.50)	0.45 (0.50)	0.56 (0.50)
Sample size	965	697	388

Standard deviation is given in parenthesis.

Comparatively, the demographics from the complete sample (column 2) are similar to those of the "day-trippers" segment (column 3). Generally, there are only a few percentage points between the two groups. In part, this is due to the fact that nearly three-quarters of the complete sample (72%) took a day trip. However, there are some obvious exceptions in relation to expenditure, number of trips and marine and coastal activity participation. In contrast, there are several differences between the complete sample, day trippers' segment and overnight tourist segment with respect to several demographic variables. Those who spent at least one night in a coastal area were more likely to be employed, younger, on average, higher educated, more likely to live with a partner and less likely to be retired.

4. Results

Table 2 presents two logit participation models, one for day trips (column two) and another for overnight trips (column three). In the case of the day trip model, the dependent variable is spending at least one day in a coastal area or not. The dependent variable in the overnight model is spent at least one night in a coastal area.

Table 2: Logit participation models for domestic coastal and marine tourists

Variable	**Day Trip Participation Model** Coefficient (Standard Error)	**Overnight Participation Model** Coefficient (Standard Error)
Social Classes C1, C2, D	-0.075 (0.264)	-0.462 (0.215) **
Social Classes E, F	-0.506 (0.360)	-0.778 (0.353) ***
Income €30,001 – 60,000	0.043 (0.241)	0.396 (0.208) *
Income €60,001 plus	-0.235 (0.423)	0.783 (0.400) *
Income refused	0.401 (0.203) **	0.353 (0.177) **
Part Time	0.334 (0.358)	0.071 (0.287)
Unemployed/ Unable	-0.506 (0.381)	-0.131 (0.403)
Other Work	-0.079 (0.604)	-0.216 (0.594)
Retired	0.172 (0.315)	0.091 (0.322)
Homemaker	-0.372 (0.348)	0.481 (0.335)
Student	0.246 (0.440)	-0.738 (0.361) **
Third Level Education	0.100 (0.195)	0.597 (0.160) ***
Age	0.092 (0.040) **	0.008 (0.040)
Age^2	-0.001 (0.000) ***	-0.000 (0.000)
Living with Partner	0.382 (0.208) *	0.808 (0.200) ***
Dependents Under the Age of Four	-0.365 (0.218) *	-0.810 (0.202) ***
Dependents Age Five to Fifteen	0.048 (0.105)	0.179 (0.088) *
Distance to coast	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.003)
Dublin	0.762 (0.228) ***	0.101 (0.184)
Female	0.143 (0.175)	-0.002 (0.151)
Aware Wild Atlantic Way	0.524 (0.278) *	0.599 (0.275) **
Went on Overnight Trips	-0.121 (0.180)	-
Went on Day Trips	-	-0.105 (0.179)

Variable	**Day Trip Participation Model** Coefficient (Standard Error)	**Overnight Participation Model** Coefficient (Standard Error)
Constant	-0.829 (0.985)	-0.342 (0.924)
Observations	965	965
Pseudo R2	0.125	0.129
Log-likelihood	-477	-577
AIC	999	1199
BIC	1111	1311

*** indicates significant at 1% ** indicates significant at 5% * indicates significant at 10%

Social class played a significant role in the overnight participation model. In comparison to those living in a household where the chief income earner was in either social class A or social class B, those that were in classes C1, C2, D and those that were in social classes E and F were less likely to take at least one overnight trip during the survey period. The income of the respondent was also significant in the overnight participation model for all categories of income. In comparison to those who earned €30,000 or less a year, those who earned more than €30,001 or those who refused to declare their income were more likely to go on at least one overnight trip.

In the day trip participation model results, only one income variable was significant, the income refused category. Those who refused to declare their income had a higher likelihood of taking a day trip in comparison to those who earned €0 to €30,000. Unlike income and social class, the results indicate that work status of the respondent only played a minor role in the decision to participate in marine and coastal tourism. In comparison to those working full time, none of the other work statuses presented in Table 2 impacted the decision to take a day trip. In the overnight participation model, the only work status that had significant predictive power is being a student which was negatively associated with participation. Conversely, respondents with a third level education were significantly more likely to go on an overnight trip than those with less academic education. The respondent's age did not play a significant role in the overnight participation model. However, the respondent's age did play a significant role in the day trip participation model. On average, as a respondent grows older the probability of taking a day trip increases until the respondent reaches 53 years old after which point it begins to fall. Gender played no significant role in either model.

Household composition and location played an important role in both models. Living with a partner was positively associated with both the decision to take a day trip and an overnight stay. However, as the number of dependents under the age of four living in the household increased the likelihood of going to the coast either for a day or overnight decreased. Conversely, for the overnight participation model, the number of dependents aged five or older was positively associated with participation. No significant effect was found in the day trip model for this variable. The distance from the electoral district of the respondent's household to the coastline played no significant role in either logit participation model. However, respondents who lived in Dublin, Ireland's capital city, were more likely to take a marine or coastal day trip. The same effect was not found in the overnight trip model.

Awareness of the Wild Atlantic Way, a coastal route along the west coast of Ireland, increased the probability of taking a day trip and an overnight trip. Unexpectedly, if a respondent went on at least one overnight stay, they were no more likely to go on a day trip and if a respondent went on a day trip, they were no more likely to go on an overnight stay.

Presented in Table 3 are the results of the two truncated negative binomial (NB) travel cost models. The middle column presents the predictors of the number of day trips taken. The results presented in column 3 are in relation to the number of total nights spent in a marine or coastal area throughout the study year.

Table 3: Travel cost models for domestic coastal day-trippers and domestic coastal and marine tourists

Variable	Day Trips Coefficient (Standard Error)	Overnights Coefficient (Standard Error)
Travel Cost	-0.004 (0.001) ***	-0.003 (0.001) ***
Social Class C1, C2, D	-0.609 (0.118) ***	-0.039 (0.118)
Social Class E, F	-0.624 (0.210) ***	0.278 (0.253)

Variable	Day Trips Coefficient (Standard Error)	Overnights Coefficient (Standard Error)
Income €30,001 – €60,000	0.065 (0.120)	0.043 (0.137)
Income €60,001 plus	-0.147 (0.221)	0.407 (0.196) **
Income refused	0.416 (0.104) ***	0.071 (0.125)
Part Time	0.123 (0.153)	-0.303 (0.192)
Unemployed/ Unable	-0.113 (0.256)	-0.470 (0.281) *
Other Work	0.894 (0.328) ***	0.516 (0.376)
Retired	0.207 (0.200)	0.359 (0.211) *
Homemaker	-0.613 (0.197) ***	-0.328 (0.228)
Student	-0.236 (0.202)	0.265 (0.234)
Third Level Education	-0.078 (0.091)	0.065 (0.101)
Female	0.134 (0.086)	0.017 (0.090)
Age	0.006 (0.026)	0.016 (0.026)
Age^2	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Living With Partner	0.156 (0.116) **	0.210 (0.131)
Dependents Under the Age of Four	-0.183 (0.108) *	-0.084 (0.136)
Dependent Age Five to Fifteen	0.120 (0.050) **	-0.009 (0.056)
Distance to coast	-0.008 (0.002) ***	-0.002 (0.002)
Dublin	-0.359 (0.103) ***	0.749 (0.107) ***
Aware Wild Atlantic Way	-0.297 (0.158) *	0.897 (0.229) ***
Went on Overnight Trips	0.156 (0.088) *	-
Went on Day Trips	-	-0.579 (0.116) ***
Party Size	-	0.060 (0.036)
Travel Alone	-0.456 (0.549)	-0.736 (0.406) *
Boating	-0.072 (0.127)	0.193 (0.117) *
Walk or Cycle Coast Line	0.155 (0.093) *	0.353 (0.104) ***
Angling	0.385 (0.136) ***	0.075 (0.125)
Water Activities (jet-skiing, diving, surfing, other sea sports excluding swimming)	0.348 (0.128) ***	0.151 (0.129)
Swimming	0.140 (0.099)	0.500 (0.108) ***
Constant	2.429 (0.576) ***	0.600 (0.591)
Observations	697	388
Log-likelihood	-1892	-1133
AIC	3845	2331

*** indicates significant at 1% ** indicates significant at 5% * indicates significant at 10%

In both cases, the travel cost variable is negative and statistically significant indicating that as the cost of the trip rises the total number of days or nights decline. In comparison to the traditionally highest paying social class of A and B, being in social classes C1, C2 or D, or being in social class E or F predict fewer day trips in a marine or coastal area. However, no such correlation was found between these variables and the number of nights spent in a coastal area. Age did not play a significant role in either the number of day trips or nights a respondent took.

Household composition and location played an important role in the marine and coastal day trip model but less so in the overnight model. If a respondent lived with a partner, they tended to take more day trips than individuals who did not live with a partner. No significant relationship was found between living with a partner and the total number of nights spent in a marine and coastal area. The number of dependents aged between zero to four had a negative and significant impact on days spent in a coastal area but did not affect the number of nights. However, the number of dependents aged five to fifteen was associated with more day trips.

The proximity of a respondent's home to the coast had an impact on the number of day trips a respondent took. Following a priori expectation, the further a respondent lived from the coast the fewer day trips they took. No such relationship was found for the number of nights spent in a coastal area. Living in Dublin impacted both day trips and the number of nights. Respondents who lived in Dublin took fewer day trips but spent more nights by the coast.

The variables denoting that someone went on at least one day trip or one overnight trip present opposing results. If a respondent went on at least one coastal overnight trip during the year they tended to take more day trips but if a respondent went on a day trip, they spent fewer nights by the coast. Likewise, being aware of the Wild Atlantic Way had significant but opposing effects on the number of coastal day trips taken as opposed to the number of nights spent in a coastal and marine area over the previous 12 months. In the coastal day trips model, being aware of the Wild Atlantic Way had a negative effect but for the number of nights, it had a positive effect.

The number of day trips taken was not impacted by whether someone travelled alone but was negatively associated with the number of nights one spent on the coast, suggesting, that overnight trips are more often taken by couples or groups. However, party size (the number of individuals in the travelling party) was not a significant predictor of the number of nights spent in a coastal area. The activities that a respondent undertook in the year of surveying also impacted both the number of day trips and the number of nights an individual took. Individuals participating in angling and water activities were positively and significantly associated with the number of days spent in a marine or coastal area, as was walking or cycling along the coast. Individuals participating in boating, walking or cycling along the coast and swimming were all more likely to have spent a greater number of nights by the coast.

Table 4 presents the consumer surplus welfare estimates for a day trip and an overnight stay. These estimates represent the welfare value an individual receives from a good above what they have actually paid. The per-person per day consumer surplus is presented in the center column and the per-person per night consumer surplus is presented in the right-hand column.

Table 4: Consumer surplus estimates for a day trip and per night for overnight trips

	Day trip	Per night on overnight trips
Consumer Surplus	€226.45	€367.51
95% Confidence Intervals	€143.40 - €309.50	€232.36 - €502.65
Expenditure	€85.80	€179.03

The consumer surplus associated with a day trip to a marine or coastal area was estimated at €226, with a confidence interval of €143 to €309. The per-night consumer surplus estimated for the average person was €368, with a confidence interval of €232 to €503. These results suggest a greater return in consumer surplus from each euro spent on day trips as opposed to overnight stays.

5. Discussion

Addressing this paper's core objective of conceptualizing domestic marine and coastal tourism, policy design and marketing strategies, the results, in concert with the previous literature, highlight several important facets of the market. Firstly, there seems to be an income/social class divide between those who participate in domestic marine and coastal tourism and those who do not. Secondly, marine and coastal tourism is undervalued as a tool for economic growth and may serve as a means to increase economic and environmental sustainability. Finally, the vibrant day trip market is almost entirely forgotten in policy creation.

The impact of social class and income can be seen, to some degree, in the results of every model. Social class, impacts both the decision to take an overnight stay and the number of day trips taken. Income impacts the decision to go on an overnight trip, the total number of nights spent in a coastal area and participation in the day-trip market. Previous studies have similarly found a positive relationship between income and demand for domestic tourism (Bernini and Cracolici 2016; Mayer and Woltering 2018).

Previous research highlights how domestic marine and coastal tourism has been undervalued as a means of dealing with issues within the industry. For example, the problem of a concentrated tourism season of a few months in the summer has been previously highlighted (ECORYS 2013). The authors also suggest that, across Europe, people have moved away from domestic tourism towards international tourism (ECORYS 2013). As a consequence, tourism activity has become highly concentrated around the summer months. The authors have noted this as a problem most heavily impacting the marine and coastal tourism market. The proposed solution of targeting nations with holiday months outside of the traditional European summer holiday season undervalues the potential of the domestic tourism market. If, for example, marine activities such as surfing, scuba diving, kayaking, cold water swimming, etc. were marketed to domestic tourists this could lead to an extension of the tourism period into the shoulder months.

Additionally, previous research (Hynes et al., 2020) indicates that marine active tourists spend more per trip than the average domestic tourist. This suggests that a revenue maximizing policy, particularly during a period like Covid-19 when only limited numbers are allowed on a business premises due to social distancing constraints, would be to encourage more marine and coastal tourism. Research by Ahearn and Hynes (2020), also indicates that marine and coastal tourism could be an "engine for recovery in the broader tourism sector" due to forced savings and a continued reluctance to travel abroad. Moreover, a recent report on the recovery from COVID-19 in the marine tourism sector (The Economist Group's World Ocean Initiative 2021) refers to air travel as an "albatross", suggesting that the emissions related to air travel may impede the sustainable development of this segment of the tourism industry. A heavier focus on domestic tourism may break the reliance on air travel, reducing carbon emissions. Further reductions in carbon emission could be made through better provisioning of public transport to coastal areas.

This study also demonstrates a vibrant day-trip market. This market, to an extent, has been ignored within tourism policy, in Ireland and internationally, partly because of definitional problems (Suriñach et al., 2019), a traditional lack of overlap between sports policy and tourism policy (Weed and Bull 2009) and more value placed on monies coming from other countries as domestic tourism is seen as a redistribution of wealth within a nation (Caust and Vecco, 2017). The aggregate value of domestic tourism being reported arguably undervalues domestic tourism as it often only counts overnight expenditure. Policy goals, concerning domestic tourism growth, are also frequently based on the growth of the overnight sector. By focusing on overnight stays as done in Ireland and by the EU, an opportunity to expand the lucrative day trip market may be missed.

6. Conclusion

The analysis presented within this paper illustrates the vitality of the domestic marine and coastal tourism market in Ireland. A large proportion of the sampled respondents can be considered marine and coastal tourists and many participate in both the day trip and overnight stay markets. However, in Ireland, like many other nations with coastal tourism, the domestic market has been overlooked. Further to this, the day trip market is often not included in national statistics related to tourism figures as only overseas and domestic overnight trips are considered tourist activity. Given the effects of COVID_19 on international travel, it may be fair to say that a greater emphasis should be placed on the benefits that a more concerted effort towards development of domestic tourism could bring.

However, in the present study, the analysis also suggests that Irish marine and coastal holidays have become a luxury for those better off. The results suggest this is particularly true of overnight stays. Consideration, therefore, needs to be given to policy that would ensure a reduction in the social class and income divide affecting participation in marine and coastal tourism. Reductions in the costs associated with marine and coastal tourism to those on lower incomes, tax rebates schemes and greater access to coastal amenities, including better provisioning of public transport to coastal areas, may help to reduce this inequality.

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Accessibility of National Cultural Heritage to Deaf Tourists

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Abstract: Individuals with hearing impairments face numerous obstacles when engaged in touristic activities or using infrastructure and services in touristic spots. When tourism is considered a social good of first necessity, new concerns arise and pressure for inclusion in the sector stimulates the advance of innovative solutions for inclusive tourism. There are also economic interests in inclusive tourism, an unexplored market niche that might compensate the expected drop on the tourism growth rate in comparison to recent years in Portugal. The ICHT project – Inclusive Cultural Heritage Tourism – aims to promote the accessibility of deaf tourists to cultural heritage by embedding new technology-aids, online and on-site, to raise awareness, to attract deaf tourists, to assist them while visiting us, and to exploit their experience as a new dissemination channel. ICHT is focused on creating digital tools and digital content in sign language to be available online, on mobile devices and on-site at cultural touristic attractions in the North of Portugal through innovative channels like games, holography, and collaborative platforms. ICHT advocates the integration of novel high-tech sign language user interfaces in tourism destinations and stimulates local operators to learn the basics of sign language communication to welcome deaf tourists in Portugal. ICHT brings in R&D world-class results in the field of automatic sign language translation qualifying Portugal to guide Inclusive Tourism worldwide and become a pioneer leading the Tourism of the Future. The full system includes an on-site application using holography, a game to play on a mobile device (before, during, and after visiting the attraction), an online collaborative platform to assist deaf and non-deaf tourists, and a set of International Sign training courses. The ICHT system will be available in five pilot installations at Torre dos Clérigos, Lello bookshop, Maia Zoo, Port wine cellars, and Viseu thermae. ICHT brings a new approach to teach sign language to the professionals in the touristic sector opening new opportunities for a more inclusive society. The sign language training together with the assistive technology tools developed by ICHT generate inclusive environments for the deaf. ICHT has the potential to become a PIN project in the Tourism sector.

Keywords: inclusive tourism, sign language translation, accessibility, user interfaces, holography

1. Introduction

Deaf individuals face several obstacles in the practice of touristic activities, access to information, and use of services and infrastructures. This is caused by a low diffusion of Portuguese Sign Language (LGP) among the hearing community, but also because communicating in spoken/written language is highly demanding for the deaf (Escudeiro, et al., 2015). Due to this shortage of knowledge of both LGP and Portuguese among these two communities, communication between the deaf and non-deaf is not always effective; it often fails and prevents the deaf community from fully communicating and accessing information (Escudeiro P., et al., 2013). This is also extended to other foreign deaf individuals. Contrary to what one might think, there are over 300 sign languages in the world, making it harder for deaf individuals from different origins to communicate between them too (Oliveira, et al., 2019).

Under such circumstances, and due to the growing number of tourists and the demand for globalization, there is a need to develop tools to promote inclusive tourism, by improving access to touristic information in everyone's first language. The touristic sector must hold appropriate conditions to assist and welcome every tourist, regardless of the language in which they communicate, so they can fully benefit from their visit and experience (Santa, 2020).

The main objective of the Inclusive Cultural Heritage Tourism project (ICHT) is to raise awareness of sign language and promote inclusive tourism, by encouraging the learning of the basis of the Portuguese sign language (LGP) and International Sign (IS) by local touristic operators. and by improving access to our cultural heritage in everyone's first language. The outcomes of ICHT will advance international mobility and social inclusion of the deaf in two core dimensions: (1) assure an interface to facilitate the bidirectional communication using sign and spoken languages in parallel and (2) stimulate the flexibility and preparedness of tourist operators to welcome deaf tourists. The bidirectional communication using sign and spoken languages simultaneously will be implemented through assistive technology tools grounded on an automatic bidirectional translator for tourism (ATT). Touristic operators and the local communities, we have access to training and an online community of practice to develop communication skills in sign language (LGP and IS).

The ICHT system will be installed in five different touristic venues in the North of Portugal as a proof of concept. The general ICHT model is prepared to be easily replicated in other installations; we expect to have several more ICHT installations during the next five years promoting Portugal as an inclusive tourism destination of excellence. Exporting the model to other countries will be the next stage. To prepare for this next step, ICHT involves partners from Switzerland, Italy, and Germany, European countries where our diaspora is well established.

The use of technology as a pillar of communication and integration of the deaf in cultural heritage tourism is an innovation at the national and international level that is expected to become a significant flagship of the Portuguese touristic sector.

2. Principles of inclusive tourism

Tourism is one of the most important engines of the Portuguese economy with the potential to promote socio-economic development and innovation. In accordance with the National Touristic Strategic Plan that guides the sector development until 2027, there are still a few aspects to consider for improvement, such as mobility conditions to support tourists visiting Portugal and dissemination of information about national touristic offers. These relate to developing inclusive tourism and to the importance of cultural heritage.

2.1 An accessible touristic sector

The tourism industry has proven to be non-inclusive and non-accessible on different occasions, highlighting its socially exclusive nature. Individuals with disabilities face barriers to their communication and full participation in cultural life, making social interaction an obstacle rather than a benefit or satisfaction. To improve accessibility and reduce this lack of integration, the touristic sector can be more inclusive by ensuring that every deaf individual can communicate autonomously, enabling access to information in their first language when visiting cultural sites (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2020).

Portugal has been advocating for a more inclusive and accessible touristic sector, in accordance with responsible policies. In 2019, Portugal was considered the world's first Accessible Tourist Destination by the World Tourism Organization, taking the first step towards becoming the world's most inclusive destination in the future. To achieve this, cultural sites must-have tools and information available to welcome sign language users, and tourist operators should have the minimum skills of sign language to communicate with them. By adapting our services and infrastructures and consequently expanding our offer, we develop competitive, responsible, and inclusive tourism (Calheiros, 2020).

Inclusive tourism is defined by the engagement of every individual, namely those whose mobility is impaired, in the consumption, production, and benefits of tourism (Biddulph & Scheyvens, 2018). It is also defined by its transformative nature and the possibility to better address inequality (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2017). Another way of transforming the touristic sector and making it more inclusive is to ensure that locals visit those cultural sites. Domestic tourism can increase social inclusion, economic benefits and foster local checking of touristic demands (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2017).

The ICHT project is not limited to helping deaf tourists that travel abroad; it is designed to help overcome overall communication barriers faced by national and international tourists and allow translation into a different sign and spoken languages. This mediation through assistive technology will boost inclusive cultural tourism, grasping the opportunities of this growing market (Santa, 2020).

2.2 An approach towards inclusive and responsible tourism

Responsible tourism relates to the concern with all forms of tourism and the interests of all parties. As such, responsible tourism is a tourism initiative, defined as "a behavioral trait … based on the basic principles of respect for others and their environment" and as a "tourism management strategy embracing planning, product development, management, and marketing to bring about positive economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts" (…), "enabling local communities to enjoy a better quality of life through increased socio-economic benefits and improved natural resource management" (Mathew & Sreejesh, 2017).

Thus, responsible tourism "builds on appropriate sustainability-based strategies and policies" and works "as a tool to minimize negative social, economic and environmental impacts whilst maximizing the positive effects of tourism development" (Mathew & Sreejesh, 2017).

Responsible tourism relates to the enhancement of everyday quality of life, inclusiveness, engagement, accessibility, and competitiveness (Mathew & Sreejesh, 2017), relying on practices of inclusive tourism. ICHT project embraces the concept of responsible tourism which enhances inclusiveness and culture.

3. Methodology

The ICHT project aims to promote accessibility to Portuguese cultural heritage attractions to the deaf community through the development of an innovative digitalization approach. The ICHT methodology and the outcomes of the project will enhance and value inclusiveness and culture, but it will also assist entrepreneurial ventures of the local touristic operators and advance the Portuguese tourism sector and economy.

3.1 Concept

This project addresses the priorities of the National Touristic Strategic Plan, including the promotion and deployment of contents and promotional information about cultural heritage; development of digital content and technological applications to extend the touristic experience in the territory; valorization and touristic activation of national intangible cultural heritage; support to the creation of new creative, technological businesses covering the smart specialization domains established by the national strategy for smart specialization; creation and promotion of clusters to develop goods and services for the tourism industry; internationalization of Portugal as an authority supplying goods and services for tourism; capacity building and training human resources in tourism; digitalization of the touristic offer; and promotion of inclusive tourism.

ICHT exploits the previous experience of the research team in automatic translation of sign languages to develop unique innovative tools that will boost and qualify the region as a worldwide reference in inclusive cultural tourism addressing the deafness in the North of Portugal. We will develop the ICHT system, an informatics system to support deaf tourists visiting cultural heritage spots, with two core outputs: (1) an online platform to engage with deaf tourists and promote our country's inclusive tourism and (2) an automatic bidirectional sign language translator for touristic activities.

The ICHT system is an application to be installed on-site at cultural heritage touristic destinations, providing information and ludic activities to deaf and non-deaf users through a bilingual interface (avatar and hologram) available in Portuguese, English, Portuguese Sign Language (LGP), and International Sign (IS), used as a lingua franca. The on-site installation is bundled with an online platform to assist the tourists visiting us and the local touristic operators in welcoming the tourists. The ICHT online platform will offer two sign language MOOCs, one on LGP, another on IS, addressed to tourists and touristic operators willing to learn the basics of each one of these sign languages. The purpose of these courses is to provide touristic operators and deaf foreign tourists with the basics of LGP and IS to enable communication between deaf and non-deaf in touristic activities. Through this online platform, it will be possible to inform and involve the visitor, sending invitations to events in the region during the visit, or suggesting participation in post-visit activities offering new destinations in the country. Besides the tourists, this platform will be at the service and to the benefit of the group of institutions with interest in inclusive tourism – the cluster for inclusive tourism (CIT). This cluster will transmit through a collaborative online platform enabling synergies and multiplying results, at the same time it provides guidance, assistance, and support to everyone in every time, in their language.

The automatic bidirectional sign language translator for touristic activities (ATT), a core component of the ICHT solution, will be integrated into the ICHT system to assure a user interface (avatar) in any sign language. The pilot installations in Portugal will offer instant communication with deaf tourists in Portuguese sign language as well as in IS but the system is based on artificial intelligence and is open to learning any other sign language. The innovative character of our proposal will bring the Portuguese tourist sector into the spotlight as a unique approach to inclusive tourism. This visibility will not only promote tourism but create conditions for an extended application of our technology for the access of deaf tourists to cultural heritage while raising awareness for sign language.

3.2 Objectives

The ICHT project aims to promote accessibility to our cultural heritage by deaf tourists by embedding new technology aids, online and on-site, to raise awareness, to attract deaf tourists, to assist them while visiting, and to exploit their experience as a new dissemination channel. This project is focused on creating digital tools and digital content in sign language to be available online, on mobile devices, and on-site at cultural touristic attractions in the North of Portugal through innovative channels (e.g., games, holography, and collaborative platforms).

For that purpose, ICHT will pursue a set of specific objectives, such as reducing the communicational gap between deaf and non-deaf people. By reducing communication barriers, it will contribute to promoting inclusive tourism, access to culture, and a better quality of life for the deaf. Another objective is to raise awareness for sign language and to overcome LGP low diffusion among the hearing community through the courses available for touristic operators. In concrete, ICHT will pursue the following specific objectives:

- Allow touristic operators to learn the basis of Portuguese Sign Language and International Sign, to welcome and assist every local and foreign tourist,
- Develop an automatic bidirectional sign language translator for tourism, to support communication,
- The possibility to translate to and from any sign or spoken/written languages,
- Easier access to information and in every user first language,
- Guidance through the overall of the touristic experience, from the moment they choose their destination,
- Provide an innovative sign language user interface based on computer vision, machine translation, holography, and 3D animations.

3.3 Characterization and technical foundation

The ICHT project delivers two core products: an automatic bidirectional sign language translator for touristic activities (ATT) and an informatics system to support deaf tourists visiting cultural heritage sites (ICHT System) Figure 1. The ICHT system will be set up in pilot installations as a proof of concept, at five destinations in the North of Portugal: Torre dos Clérigos and the Lello bookshop in Porto, the Zoo in Maia, the Port wine cellars in Gaia, and the thermae in Viseu. The touristic experience will be supported on-site, by the ICHT System, and online through the ICHT Collaborative Platform.

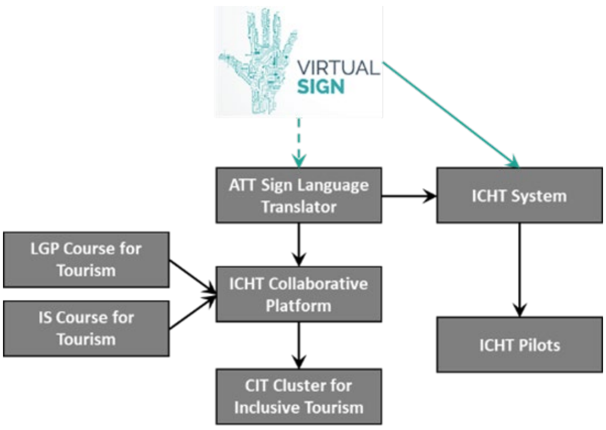

Figure 1: ICHT innovations

The ICHT system will implement a generic ICHT model to be developed to accommodate any cultural heritage touristic destination. This model will be wrapped by a methodology, illustrating the tasks, the resources, and the skills required to set up ICHT at a new touristic destination. This bundle, together with the ICHT system, the model, and the deployment methodology will be the backbone of a new service to be provided by the promotor assisting the rise of multiplier effects, synergies, and new opportunities in inclusive tourism. The ICHT application will include a serious game that will provide an engaging experience to tourists and promote the region.

The construction of our model was based on the theory proposed by Mayer (2005), as shown in Figure 2, which supports the development of Serious Games, further adapted to the characteristics of the deaf. We choose to use the principles based on serious games for the following reasons:

- This principle proposes the combined use of images and words, which allows the brain to process more information in working memory. In this way, people learn better from words and images, than just with words. In this context, words include written and spoken text, and images include videos, animations, and static graphics,
- In the process of deaf education, which has sign language/signs as a means of communication, images are essential for understanding educational concepts and, when they are used together with words, support students in the learning process. Due to the visual-gestural characteristic, the gestural languages can be presented together with the language of the country, respecting the physical structure of each of these languages, forming two informational processing channels necessary for bilingual education.

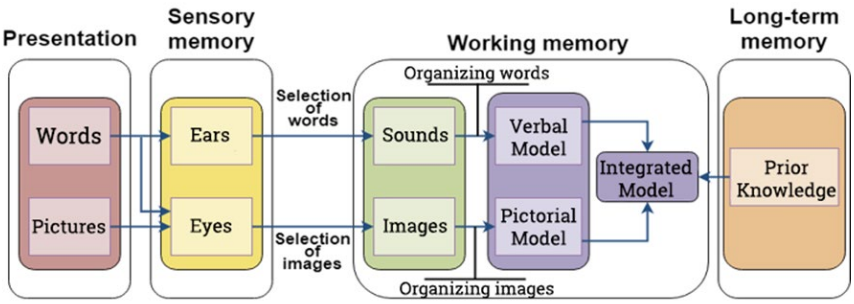

Figure 2: Mayer's (2005) multimedia information processing model adapted to a deaf person perspective

We will develop two courses on the basics of LGP and IS designed for communication in cultural heritage settings. These courses will be available through the ICHT collaborative platform for any user wishing to learn LGP and/or IS basics and be ready to communicate with everyone.

This platform will be connecting simultaneously all those developing, working, and using inclusive tourism offers. This platform will guide the tourists across all their touristic experiences from seeking destinations to giving feedback and assisting other tourists once back at home. The platform will be incorporated with the ICHT game. The game will start from the moment the tourist shows to be interested in the destination. Tourists may continue playing the game as long as they like. They will keep collecting points/rewards when interacting with others through the collaborative platform, which will also be a core element for the dissemination of the ICHT service. All the ICHT destinations will be promoted on the platform.

The ATT translator is the foundation of the ICHT System, and it will be integrated into the ICHT system to assure a user interface (avatar) in any sign language. By developing on top of the VirtualSign platform, the ATT will evolve to cope with all the specific features required for the ICHT system. The VirtualSign platform relies on artificial intelligence technologies, linguistics, and computer animation, being able to learn and support translation between any sign/spoken language pair. As such, the ATT translator will be an enhanced version of VirtualSign to handle all these features as required to deploy the ICHT system (Escudeiro, et al., 2013).

The ICHT system will offer an innovative sign language user interface based on computer vision, machine translation, holography, and 3D animations that, altogether, create an environment that can be explored by both deaf and non-deaf users using their first language. This will be a unique solution worldwide since there are no other solutions available on the market.

3.4 ICHT strategy

The ICHT implementation plan is based on a strategy comprising six activities:

- 1. Sign Language Automatic Bidirectional Translation-ATM Model (A&D of the model; Translation methodology; Resource gathering video samples for sign recognition in LGP, IS and GSL; Sign recognition from video, computer vision, AI);
- 2. User Interface Design (Design a novel UI for deaf tourists; Design UI architecture, op modes; Implement a prototype (wireframes/mock-ups); Validate the ICHT UI with end-users).;

- 3. Inclusive Cultural Heritage Tourism System (A&D of ICHT system; Enable VirtualSign for ICHT (computer vision, mobile); Q&A module; Holographic sign language UI; Develop the game; Develop the hologram UI; Develop beacons/game protocol; Geo-ref, beacons module; Deploy ICHT pilot venues);
- 4. Collaborative Cultural Heritage Tourism Platform (Develop collaborative platform; Develop content to promote inclusive cultural heritage tourism; Support deaf tourists; IS basics, short term MOOC; LGP basics, short term MOOC);
- 5. Inclusive Touristic Technology Assessment (Assessment plan, tool, resources; UX; Beta testing; Piloting);
- 6. Dissemination and Impact (Innovation and internationalization).

Activities that are related to the automatic translator development (1 and 2) are research-oriented and devoted to the development of the automatic sign language translation system and a novel user interface for tourist activities. The main task of activity 3 relates to the design of a creative and playful environment to communicate cultural heritage to deaf tourists, upgrading the VirtualSign platform to cope with the requirements of ICHT and ATT, implementing an interactive sign language holography interface, developing a geo-reference game to engage deaf tourists visiting cultural heritage venues, developing the content and deploying the pilot installations. ICHT supports the touristic experience of our end-users throughout all the experience, from the very first moment when they search for cultural touristic destinations, while their visit is undergoing and after the visit is concluded and they get back home. This round-trip support is available through our ICHT Collaborative Platform to be implemented at activity 4. Activity 5 has the responsibility to assess and validate the ICHT system and online collaborative platform. At activity 6 (Dissemination) we will promote the development of the Cluster for Inclusive Tourism.

4. Quality scenario control

The Quantitative Evaluation Framework (QEF) is a generic quantitative evaluation model that will support the assessment of the ICHT serious game development and quality control (Escudeiro & Escudeiro, 2012). The QEF framework evaluates the ICHT serious game quality (ISO 9126 is the standard of reference) Scalet et al. in a three-dimensional space. A dimension aggregates a set of factors, and a factor represents a set of requirements. The quality of the game represents the system's performance from a particular point of view. The dimensions of the ICHT game are represented on a Cartesian quality space which includes functionality, adaptability, and usability. The requirements identified for each factor of the dimension they belong at the game quality scenario are:

At the Functionality dimension, whichever is composed of five factors namely Game Play, User Interaction, Features, Account, and Game Engine, table 1 illustrates all the identified quality criteria.

Table 1: Functionality evaluation criteria

Functionality				
Game Play	**User Interaction**	**Features**	**Account**	**Game Engine**
Display Ranking	Player will have access to a main menu	The game uses georeferencing	The Player can customize his Nickname	The player can create/publish custom assets
The game should allow interaction between players				
Personal Score can be consulted	Game has quick access to main functions	The game uses dynamic difficulty adjustment (DDA	The Player can choose his Avatar	
During the game activate Augmented Reality			The Player can access account information	
Social Inclusion	The UI is intuitive		Impairment profile inference	
Send avatar to location	Provide input alternatives to mobility impaired user			
Move avatar accordingly to Player georeference				
Quiz to define if the player is deaf				

The adaptability of the game is defined by its quality of being able to adjust the interface to new conditions. This dimension aggregates four factors: Gameplay, Maintenance, Versatility, Accessibility. This game must be able to adapt to all platforms, technology, and all players (Table 2).

Table 2: Adaptability evaluation criteria

Adaptability			
Adjustment	**Maintenance**	**Versatility**	**Accessibility**
Game difficulty is adequately adjusted (DDA)	Application presents a set of interfaces and endpoints, adding the possibility of introducing new features	Application follows online store guidelines	Compatibility with the biometric sensor/beacons
The player feels the outcomes of their efforts/actions are fair		Application adjusts to screen resolution	Texts are converted to sign language to guide hearing impaired people
The player controls the game actions	The server must be scalable	Application is multiplatform	
The use of icons and sign language helps improves hearing impaired user playability			
Cooperative gameplay			
The use of colours scheme helps to improve the colour blind user playability			

The usability of a game is defined by the extent to which it can be used by its players to achieve the goals with effectiveness, efficiency, and satisfaction (ISO 9241). At ICHT serious game the quality criteria for the four factors identified at the quality scenario are Menu Navigation, Map Navigation, Content Quality, and Integrity (Table 3).

Table 3: Usability evaluation criteria

Usability			
Menu Navigation	**Map Navigation**	**Content Quality**	**Integrity**
Application user interface is simple and fast, without slowing down when the number of users is high	Easy access to real time map	All the messages are easy to understand	Consistency of server data and game data
	Easy to understand where avatar is located	Application is clear to colour blind users	Synchronization of users' location
		All content is related to the game	
Application runtime does not have errors, and unexpected errors should be handled		Texts are simple and concise	
		No messages should contain offensive content	
		Application is clear to hearing impaired users	
		The game provides sound and visual feedback for user action	
		A help button is provided	
		Game provides enough information to the players so that they can start playing	

The fulfilment level for each one of these requirements was discretized to pre-defined values that depend on the requirement. Some are simply assessed with either 0% or 100%, others rely on a 1-5 Likert scale, others are assigned to 3 (0%, 50%, 100%) to 5 percentage thresholds, such as 0, 25%, 50%, 75%, 100%. To reduce ambiguity when filling in the evaluation questionnaires all these levels are characterized for each requirement.

5. Conclusions

Communication for deaf individuals can be a challenge. Differences between sign and spoken languages are important barriers when accessing information, visiting cultural heritage venues, or using services and infrastructures. When coming across people who do not share the same language, deaf and non-deaf individuals strive to comprehend and be comprehended. These language barriers become more relevant every day as more and more information and services are being digitalized.

The ICHT project aims to promote inclusive tourism and raise awareness of sign language by developing an assistive technology that helps deaf individuals overcome communication barriers when accessing information. Enabling access to information in one's first language, either Portuguese or LGP, takes down the constraints due to the shortage of knowledge of LGP or Portuguese by the non-deaf or deaf. This will ensure a more inclusive society and will equip the Portuguese touristic sector to welcome and assist every deaf tourist.

It is expected that the ICHT project generates an innovative approach towards inclusive tourism. Within the Tourism 4.0 initiative by the Portuguese government, the ICHT project has the potential to be elected as a project of national interest in Tourism (PIN project) and to open doors to a significant part of worldwide tourism. By increasing the recognition of the Portuguese touristic sector worldwide, this project will support the national strategy for the touristic sector and the national ambition to guide the tourism of the future.

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Big Data, Social Media and Employer Branding: An Exploratory Study From the Hospitality Industry

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Abstract: Purpose: "Data Production" and its analysis are becoming increasingly important for the hospitality industry due to wide mobile technology and social media use. "Big Data" has become an important concept for businesses and requires significant management competences in its usage. Within this scope the purpose of this exploratory study is to exemplify best practices from the concept of Big Data and its relation with social media in understanding how employer branding issues are perceived by hospitality operations. Design/methodology: Both quantitative and qualitative methods have been used in the study. The study consisted of two parts and data were obtained from lodging operations in Ankara, Turkey. The first stage consisted of analyzing content of social media sharings from ten 5-star hotels in Ankara, Turkey. For the second stage, a survey was conducted among 149 employees from the same lodging operations to determine employee's employer branding perception levels. Findings: The first part of the study indicated that both international chains and local hotels mostly shared promotional message for employer brand enhancement. Sharings related to motivational messages, social responsibility activities, and events for customers and employees are mostly done by internationals chain hotels. Findings from the second part of the study revealed that international chain hotel employees' perception of the employer brand is at a higher rate. The study showed that social media usage level of the operations and employees' perceptions of employer brand concept are consistent. Originality: This is an innovative research project. The study integrates the concept of Big Data and social media relations with employer branding issues in hospitality operations. With its quantitative and qualitative nature, the current study shed light to further studies. The sample size and the fact that the study was carried out in 5-star hotels in Ankara are the main limitations of this study.

Keywords: big data, employer brand, social media, hospitality operations

1. Introduction

In recent years, a vast amount of "data production" has been taking place in the hospitality industry due to widespread utilization of information technologies through mobile devices and social media. This evolving technology allows collection and storage of large amounts of data. It is important to understand how processing and analysis of data provide various opportunities for process management in order to create competitive advantages (Mikalef *et al*., 2020). Those improvements bring Big Data as a prominent concept in business management processes. Big data is defined as "data sets, the analysis of which cannot be carried out by conventional data processing tools and that are too large to be managed" (Ohlhorst, 2012). The concept underlines importance of goal-oriented "data analyses" in service industries for the prediction of attitudes for individuals and outputs for businesses by emphasizing significance of the "quality" of big data, rather than its quantity. Data management and comprehending data has been gaining attention in hospitality management processes. The use of Big Data through people analytics has also introduced a new dimension into managing human resources (Galbraith, 2014) and hospitality managerial processes. In this novel dimension, the fact that employer-employee relations have come into prominent context while providing competitive advantages has resulted in an increased interest of researchers in employer branding concept (App *et al*., 2012). Research supports that social media plays an intermediary role in utilizing the employer brand, "best place to work" perception (Rosethorn, 2016; Carpentier, 2019). Previously, Big Data analysis of the hospitality at an international level has been discussed in subjects such as transportation and hotel reservations (Fuchs *et al*., 2014). Considering Big Data as the influence of online sharing posted via social media is an interesting topic and may be investigated in ways that have been not clearly studied in previous research. The purpose of this study is to exemplify the concept of Big Data and examine the relationship between social media usage and big data relations and how they serve hospitality operations employer branding issues. We commence with a brief introduction to conceptual framework of big data, followed by a brief discussion of the relationship between big data, social media and employer brand. The Method section describes the research questions that were posed. This is followed by a discussion of the results and implications for research and practice.

2. Conceptual framework of big data

The Big Data concept, discussed in a general sense, does not only refer to the capacity of data, but it also means the storing and processing capacity of the software used (Ohlhorst, 2012). Big Data is defined as data sets with great volumes which cannot be managed or be analyzed with conventional data processing tools (e.g. Ohlhorst, 2012). The term "big" included in this concept does not only refer to the volumetric size of the data, but also to its fundamental characteristics such as variety and velocity. The amount of data produced, stored and processed has been increasing rapidly with technological developments. Many components such as the Web, smartphones, TVs, satellites, social networks, cameras, banks, credit cards, aircrafts, hospitals, GPS (Global Positioning System) devices, radios and sensors are continuously producing data in various formats. In this context, "data flood" is being perceived and experienced in all spheres of our lives. With the amount and the variety of data increasing, new concepts have begun to be introduced into the literature. Relevant literature indicated that the concepts of "volume", "velocity" and "variety" are the fundamental features of Big Data. Recently, a fourth "V" for veracity has been added to the Big Data definition, in addition to these basic characteristics named in literature as the 3Vs (Volume, Velocity, Variety). "Veracity" is the proof of the accuracy of the data and closely affects the degree of giving credit to and using them in the strategical decision-making processes of businesses (Sharma *et al*., 2014; Zhang *et al.*, 2018). With the inclusion of veracity in the Big Data concept, the bulk of things that previously could not be measured, stored, analyzed or shared have begun to be transformed into data (Zhang *et al.*, 2018). In this direction, Big Data basically involves both the type of data processed and the technology utilized for processing them (Chen *et al*., 2012).

Examination of the data generated, stored and produced by everyone in daily life in various formats is important to show how significant the Big Data platform is. The variation of the data is due to the emergence of different technologies every day. The data structure is generally evaluated in 3 sections; structured, unstructured and semi-structured data (Azad *et al.*, 2019). These are values in a certain format generally described in relational database systems in structured data. For example, it is necessary to define beforehand in what form sections such as address, name, surname, number, date, and can be kept in database tables. Otherwise, incoming data in other forms will definitely not be registered to database systems. And therefore, they cannot be used for obtaining any information. Unstructured type of data is evaluated in two sections as human-generated and machine-generated data. Machine-generated data can be generalized as satellite images, scientific data, photographs and videos, radar and sonar data. Social media data (Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and LinkedIn), data obtained from mobile devices and content data of web sites can be presented as examples of human-generated data (Cukier & Schönberger, 2013; Zhang *et al*., 2018). Unstructured data is the greatest and the most rapidly growing part of data in time. As will be discussed in this study, analyzing the data obtained on social media enables having different achievements. For instance, the data obtained on Twitter, which is being frequently used today, are first converted into structured data, and then used to reveal behavior patterns of people (Opresnik & Taisch, 2015; Wamba *et.al*., 2015; Zadrozny & Kodali, 2013). On the other hand, semi-structured data is the type of data that lies between structured and unstructured data. It does not need to conform to the relational database table structure (Zhang *et al*., 2018).

Through effective analysis of Big Data, data can be transformed into information for companies. Although this is valid for all industries, implementation differs among sectors. It can be said that this is entirely about the needs of companies. In short, while it is important for one company to make sense of the data obtained from the web site and social media, making sense of customers' habits comes first for another one. With the development of Web 2.0 and social media, users have begun to produce content and share the content they produce. Constantly evolving social media platforms allow users (personal or institutional) to share content with different formats simultaneously. Thus, the amount of data in different formats has progressively increased, attracting the attention of many scientific disciplines, from computer science and social sciences to marketing and health sciences. Concordantly, it has become increasingly difficult to analyze this continuously growing data. The Big Data concept that we see right at this point is expressed as the ability to analyze huge amounts of data in different formats which is continuously growing. Big Data includes not only the data generated by users, but also those generated by machines and sensors. Significant investments are being made by private companies and public institutions, and new techniques and softwares are under development for the analysis of Big Data, which is gaining importance in many fields (Azad *et al.*, 2019; Provost & Fawcett, 2013; Opresnik & Taisch, 2015)

In the context of this study it is considered that understanding how Big Data serves to company's employer branding issues are important for further developments.

3. Big data, social media and employer brand

Brands are one of the most valuable features of businesses and therefore, brand management is a key activity for an organization. Companies generally perform branding efforts through the manufacture of products and corporate brand development. However, branding also falls into the field of human resources management. On a growing trend, companies are taking advantage of employer branding to influence the potential workforce, and to adapt currently working employees to corporate culture and strategies. Employer branding is a purposeful and long-term strategy that is used to manage the perceptions and awareness of potential employees and stakeholders (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, Dabirian *et al.*, 2019; De Stobbeleir *et al*., 2018). Numerous texts and articles written about employer branding emerge as a demonstration of the interest in this concept. Evaluating the employer brand image requires a more extensive and more complex process compared to evaluation of awareness. Because, during image evaluation, *how* the business is remembered (positive/negative) was also tried to be determined in addition to determining *whether* the business is remembered (Bisis & Suar; 2016; Cascio & Graham; 2016). Different features on the employer image of the business are examined in the literature (Davies *et al*., 2018; Lievens & Slaughter; 2016). For instance, characteristics such as the company's culture, its values, the benefits it provides to its employees and the work environment affect the employer image. It is possible to get opinions on certain aspects of the institution in order to determine employer's brand image. People evaluate the employer identity and evaluation generally based on value propositions (benefits). These can be sorted by characteristics such as social responsibility, ethics, innovativeness under the employer identity, and as benefits such as job security, wages, career opportunities and working conditions under the value proposition. Companies should define and manage how Big Data are related to these issues. Advertising and public relations activities are important communication tools for establishing corporate identity (Berhon *et al.*, 2005; Knox & Freeman, 2006).

The social media term is defined in brief as the online platform that provides the communication and sharing that individuals engage in through the Internet (Komito & Bates, 2009). Social media, introduced into our lives with the development of Web 2.0 technology, provides unlimited creativity for brands. These brands must determine for what purpose they will use social media and how they will benefit from it, by creating a strategy, and must proceed by finding out clearly how it is going to work. Like all marketing efforts, social media, too, must be used as a part of a comprehensive and integrated plan with a strategic approach (Chaney, 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media should be considered as one of the main parts of communication strategies in a planned way. Companies utilize written, visual and audial communication tools and techniques to create an employer brand and ensure its continuity. Where online communication, in particular, has come into prominence, especially the Internet is one of the most important sources of information for young population. In this context, it is thought that social media will assume the most fundamental intermediary role in employer branding activities of businesses (Sivertzen *et al.,* 2013).

Social media has a structure where users can communicate with each other at any time, and its most basic feature for users is that it is a platform to which users can access whenever they want without space and time constraints. Social media has resulted in an increase in mobile device use, and it has become the center of people's lives for facilitating one-to-one communication between businesses and consumers, and for being easily accessible (Manovich, 2011). It is the most powerful medium for disseminating the accessed information and for this information to raise awareness. Individuals and brands also benefit from the power of social media in this direction (Goh *et. al.,* 2013).

Brands interact with the target audience by producing content through blogs, social network sites, and image and video sharing sites. When social media is used to communicate with consumers, improvements can be made to the product or service by evaluating consumers' wishes and recommendations (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media is highly effective in evaluating the reactions of the target group and receiving rapid feedback. On social media, brands provide insights into their new products, campaigns and projects, while also strengthening their mutual communication with consumers. Through image and video sharing tools and blogs, social network sites facilitate brand loyalty creation by gathering consumers together around brands. Playing an important role in creating brand loyalty, social media channels are prominent components of brand management (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). It is also fairly important to establish and to be able to manage a fitting relationship on social media. Brands must listen to their target audiences carefully on their own social media platforms, analyze them well, be very familiar with them and be able to answer all their questions. Social networks enable various departments, from human resources to corporate communications, to customer relations and sales, to communicate one-to-one with customers (Shah *et al.,* 2017).

Rather than waiting for the target audience to reach the brand, brands take their places on platforms where the target audience is found. On social media, where people shift from a position where they are consuming content, to a position where they are generating and publishing content, a language appropriate to the brand's identity should be used. Sincerity is of great importance in the use of social media, and when brands are sincere, consumers will often trust the brand. Shared contents of brands that are sincerely present on social media will be appreciated by target groups and will be shared with their own friend circles (Bruhn *et al.*, 2012). This gives brands new supporters and followers, so that consumers become volunteering marketers of the brand as well. Social media has put its mark on the employer branding process. As of 2020, the number of tweets posted daily on Twitter is approximately 500 million, the number of Facebook users is above 1 billion, and the number of users on LinkedIn is over 600 million (Clement, 2020). These figures give an idea of the size of the unstructured data that can be generated from these sources. Out of these generated data, businesses can benefit from the Big Data technologies to quickly isolate, process and store the portion of data relevant to them (Provost & Fawcett, 2013). On social media, users are now able to share data in different formats at the same time. For example; text, link and video can be found in a single content shared on social networks.

Big Data, which emerged through content shared by people on social media, is the raw material in researches. Especially social media hosts Internet researches, and collected data are analyzed both by current statistical methods and by newly-emerging analysis techniques (Wang *et al*., 2007). Social media communication is an integral part of integrated communication for brands today. The need to process, manage and analyze Big Data gathered from various social networks that have become a part of our daily lives with the digital age has an epistemological impact for research conducted by social scientists. The Big Data obtained through social media tools provide researchers with the opportunity to examine, via an extensive information base, how individuals process information in online environments and the factors under the impact of which they share information with other individuals (Opresnik & Taisch, 2015).

Data management and comprehending dates in the hospitality management processes gained attention recently. The use of Big Data through people analytics has also introduced a new dimension into human resources management and hospitality managerial processes. In this novel dimension, the fact that employer-employee relations have come into a prominent context while providing competitive advantage has resulted in an increased interest of researchers in employer brand concept (App *et al*., 2012). Research supports that social media plays an intermediary role in utilizing the employer brand, for example the "best place to work" perception (Rosethorn, 2016; Sivertzen *et al.,* 2013). Previously, Big Data analysis of the hospitality industry at an international level has been discussed in subjects such as transportation and hotel reservations (Fuchs *et al.,* 2014). Considering Big Data as the influence of online sharing posted via social media will be investigated which has not been clearly identified in previous research. In the light of the above conceptual framework, the main research question of this study is;

Whether Social media posts that serves big data creates an employer brand perception in the hospitality industry?

4. Research method and findings

In the context of the hospitality industry, the starting point of the study was whether the content shared by employers via social media and employees' perceptions of the "best place to work" and to what extent this content related to Big Data. Despite not deriving benefits from Big Data and its analysis to increase the sectoral activity of Turkey, it is thought that rendering it applicable will bring a great potential for the hospitality industry. Furthermore, in contrast to the lack of branding implementations in local enterprises in Turkey, international chain hotels' social network activities constitute the origin of the content provided for the Big Data in the context of Turkey. Within the scope of this study, social media sharing of 5-star international and local hotels located in Ankara was examined. Social media sharing of the hotels were analyzed as texts. Textual analysis (Leonard and McAdam, 2001) was conducted using open coding to develop inductive themes from the sharing, and resulted in a list of occurring subject areas. The similar approach has been used in previous studies (Tuzun and Takay, 2017). Moreover, a second quantitative study conducted to measure the level of perception of employer brands from the same mentioned 5-star international and local hotels employee's located in Ankara.

The qualitative research section of this study consisted of two parts. In the first part, sharings have been analyzed in a 6-month period (February 2017 - August 2017). A total of 910 messages were reached. Categorizations were generally assigned to words, word phrases, a sentence or sentences that had common keyword attributes. The categorization was generated by the study authors. According to the contents of the sharings posted, we distinguished social media sharings which serve to the employer branding concept as: (a) Promotional Messages, (b) Motivational Messages, (c) Celebration Messages, (d) Social Responsibility Activities, (e) Events for Customers, (f) Events for Employees and Company Rewards Sharing. Moreover, it was observed that all the hotels actively post sharings on Facebook and that they solely copied Facebook posts on Instagram and Twitter accounts. Since no mutual interactions were observed in these accounts, content analysis was only performed on Facebook posts. On a side note, it was observed that the greatest numbers of followers are also encountered on Facebook pages of the hotels. Because of absolute anonymity and privacy, we did not declare the names of the hotels. We created codes for IC (international chains) and LH (local chains). Examined individually, it is observed that 128 of them are promotional, 10 of them were motivational messages, 11 of them were celebration messages, 3 of them were sharing related to social responsibility issues and 2 of them were about awards won by the hotel. The hotel carries out all sharing as photo sharing (see Table 1).

Table 1: Frequency of Hotel Social Media Sharing Based on Employer Brand Dimensions

Hotels	Promotion Messages	Motivational Messages	Celebration	Social Responsibility Activity	Events for Customer	Events for Employees	Company Rewards Sharing	Total Sharing
IC 1	128	10	11	3	7	1	2	162
IC 2	104	21	7	3	10	-	-	145
LH 2	110	6	5	-	8	1	-	130
LH 1	88	13	8	8	3	1	1	122
IC 5	68	-	9	1	1	2	-	81
IC 6	38	24	8	-	3	1	-	74
IC 7	15	22	9	1	0	25	0	72
IC 3	42	0	11	11	0	4	3	71
IC 4	20	2	8	0	0	0	0	30
LH 3	10	-	7	-	6	-	-	23
Total	623	98	83	27	38	35	6	910

In the second part of the study, a survey was conducted of employees working in the above analyzed hotels (one of the international five-star hotels did not accept to participate in the study). The perceived employer brand level of hotel employees for whom content analysis was carried out was measured. 246 of the questionnaires sent for the research have been collected. After the pre-analysis evaluation of the questionnaires and the removal of those which were not completed or could not be used, analyses are continued to be carried out with 149 questionnaires. In order to evaluate the employees' perception levels of the employer brands of hotels, employer brand scale is established. A scale consisting of 23 expressions is prepared out of the expressions included in the studies of Ambler and Barrow (1996), Knox and Freeman (2006) and Backhaus and Tikoo (2004). The scale consists of 23 items rated on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (completely true). Sample items were ''Hotel … Is widely regarded as a highly prestigious employer", "Hotel X, Really cares about their employees as individuals", "I would like to work in this hotel for the rest of my career". Explanatory factor analyses were conducted to the scale. As a result of factor analysis, four items were not loaded properly. Those items were excluded from the scale. The final scale consists of 19 items and the scale's alpha reliability coefficient was 0.81. As seen in Table 2, the highest mean regarding the employee's perception of employer brand belongs to IC2 and the lowest level of employer brand perception to IC5.

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation results obtained from the surveys

Hotels	N	Mean	Sd
IC2	15	4,54	0,35
IC3	25	4,31	0,46
IC6	20	4,30	0,45

Hotels	N	Mean	Sd
LH2	12	4,25	0,18
IC1	25	4,20	0,39
LH1	15	4,01	.605
IC4	14	3,72	0,45
LH3	10	3,37	1,01
IC5	13	3,30	1,03
Total	149	4.01	.55

5. Conclusions, discussion and limitations

The aim of this study is to demonstrate the concept of Big Data and its relations to social media and employer branding issue. The first part of the study qualitatively examined the social media sharings of hotels regarding employer brand and the second part quantitatively test employees' employer branding perception level. Ten different lodging operations' social media usage from Ankara, Turkey was content analyzed regarding employee brand in detail. Moreover, a survey was conducted among the mentioned hospitality operations. The final sample consisted of 149 employees.

The findings of the first part of the study indicated that both international chain and local hotels mostly shared promotional messages for employer brand enhancement. Sharings related to motivational messages, social responsibility activities, and events for customers and employees were mostly done by international chain hotels. One can say that the local chains' social media sharings were mostly based on promotional activities. In this study it has been observed that both international and local chain hotels use Facebook as a medium of sharing message in social media.

Findings from the second part of the study indicated that international chain hotels' employees have higher perceptions regarding the employer brand. Celebration messages and social responsibility activities sharings are the common parts of the first two highest hotels for the perception of employer brand. On the other hand, LH3 and IC5 hotel employees state the lowest level of perception of employer brand. LH3 have no sharings rather than promotional activities and IC5 has little sharings the other issues of employer brand than promotional activities.

To sum up, the "Big Data" concept could serve in providing crucial information for hospitality operations' employer branding concept. This study indicated that based on analyses of 910 social media sharings, hotels use promotional messages for the enhancement of employer brand. Among the dimensions of the second most shared messages from social media was related to motivational messages. The second part of this study confirmed that Big Data serves employer brand in the eyes of employees too.

As to the quality of the social media posts, responses from participants and conducting the study in a metropolitan city could be considered the limitations in this research. Results may differ in other Turkish communities. Further research is needed to explore the potential generalization of the impact of this study. Additional research could be conducted in the different geographical regions of the country. As an exploratory step, findings of this study may serve as a framework for questionnaire development and contribute to design of future research to be conducted in Turkey or in another country.

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Mobilides, Context Costs and Heritage in Tourism and Leisure Relations on the Border of Central Portugal with Spain

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Abstract: The persistence of borders has been based on the fact that they are crucial for the reproduction of territoriality and of national identity narratives. In this context, and considering the border as a line that separates, divides and controls the existence of areas/territories, it implies that the effects (context costs) disappear with distance, in addition to the emergence of new meanings and dynamics depending on their accessibility, resources held, forms of settlement and economic activities. The Luso-Spanish border is the most stable and, at the same time, the one with the most critical development indexes, due to its penalising demographic evolution, productive disarticulation and differentiated administrative policies. Tourism development is seen as an instrument for the diversification of economies in peripheral and often underdeveloped frontier regions. These areas have, through their history and natural heritage, resources of great value, of which the international rivers, the classified natural areas, the castles and fortresses, the historical villages, the traditions and festivities, the gastronomy and the presence of different cultures stand out in the central Iberian border. Facing this panorama and considering formal and informal relations, cooperating or competing, we try to identify dynamics and forms of cooperation in the construction of a resilience space, in the face of existing constraints and heritage values held, capable of generating new attractions and functions in the oldest European border. Under favourable conditions, these territories contribute to tourism development in the framework of neighbourly relations and interests. In the case of Portugal central border with Spain, it is possible to speak of a porosity that is historical, with the territory(ies) coming together, either through public policies (EU, national, regional and local), or through private investments. The study aims to analyse and systematise the factors of tourism promotion, the political developments and the permeability of the border, in the construction of a tourism and leisure destination.

Keywords: border, cooperation, mobility, tourism, ecocultural resources, resilience

1. Introduction

Borders can, in general, be understood as regions in which economic and social life are directly and significantly affected by the proximity of an administrative division, whose political, financial and cultural differences imply territorial specificities and pose their own challenges to their management (Fernandes, 2021). Although a physical border may change its meaning and functions, the effects of immaterial barriers may persist in the form of imaginary barriers, incorporating feelings and remoteness that penalize these spaces, requiring the construction of cooperative relationships (Trigal, 2013; Lois & Caballo, 2015). Controlling the movement of people, goods and capital between states is the most relevant function of border management, accompanied by its assertion of sovereignty in terms of its administrative boundaries. The persistence of national borders has been based on the fact that they are crucial for the reproduction of territoriality and national identity narratives (Prokkola, 2008; Medeiros, 2010; Fernandes & Cravino, 2021). In this context, and considering a line that separates, divides and controls the existence of areas/territories on both sides of the line, it implies that the effects disappear with distance, in addition to the emergence of new meanings and dynamics depending on their accessibility, resources held, forms of settlement and economic activities.

Tourism development should be perceived as a tool for the diversification of economies in peripheral and often underdeveloped border regions. Borders are becoming more important for tourism and leisure activities, due to the increase in mobility (infrastructures and policies such as the creation of the Schengen area), cooperation and dissemination of resources and heritage, as well as the incorporation of technologies in the qualification and promotion of these territories, and the control of circulation flows (as seen in COVID-19). These areas have, through history and natural and cultural heritage, resources that promote attraction and development of tourism activities, fostering new attractions and functions, driven by greater mobility and the increased dissemination of tourism resources and services.

Taking as object the Luso-Spanish border between central Portugal and Spain, we try to evaluate the tourist potential of the territory, considering the existing economic dynamics, the tourist resources and services and the forms of cooperation achieved. The aim is to identify and systematise the main assets and strategies that promote tourism and leisure activities in this area and to understand the logics of action for the qualification of resources and the territory promotion. The analysis of the several studies on the socio-economic dynamics of the Spanish-Portuguese border, the contributions of the cross-border cooperation policies and in particular the development support and funding programmes (INTERREG and POCTEP), as well as the existing territorial enhancement and tourism initiatives, have allowed the development of the study. The construction of a space of resilience, in the face of existing constraints and the heritage values held, extends attractions and new functions. In this context, tourism and leisure induce territorial development and qualification, with significance in heritage preservation and social sustainability.

2. Mobility and exchanges in border territories

Borders represent spaces of separation, with their own identities and imaginaries as a result of their geography, their historical and political evolution and the cultural elements of their communities. They are spaces of exchanges, cultural hybridisms and heritage heritages as a result of their functions, flows and social and economic interactions generated over time (Dominguez et al., 2013; Sofield, 2006). We can consider that the spaces, people and institutions of the border live their quotidian of invading geographical, linguistic, fiscal and political limits. The border corresponds to a territory where, from here to there and vice-versa, more than oppositions and rivalries, mobilities, exchanges and even complicities predominate. In fact, the "conflict" associated with the separation is complemented (or interspersed) by the combination of interests between residents from one side and the other, with the use of context advantages, such as in trade and employment, favoured by price differences, tax burden and prohibitions (Ribeiro & Valente, 2013).

In many cases, geographical positioning has, in time and space, caused or promoted the marginalisation of border peoples, as it is also often a reflection of the unequal distribution of power in the economy and society (Sofield, 2006). Thus, borders assume different roles and meanings as a result of their history, political orientations or geographical characteristics, promoting themselves as spaces of porosity/permeability or containment/barrier.

Cross-border cooperation has been an important instrument to achieve the objectives of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), as well as to implement the objectives of the Lisbon and Rotterdam processes to achieve sustainable growth and territorial cohesion in Europe. Particularly in achieving the objective of cross-border cooperation (ESPON, 2007; Medeiros, 2018), more fluid cross-border relations have been promoted between regional and local governments and administrations along the Spanish-Portuguese border.

Border tourism is characterised by the fact that the destination is the same border and that tourism activity focuses on visiting spaces/attractions that belong to different states. However, its history has generated a remarkable historical and cultural legacy, to which the environmental one is added and which is now proving to be an attractive resource for greater tourism activity (Hernándes-Ramirez, 2017; Campesino Fernandez, 2014, 2016). The restrictions arising from the presence of national borders have always had a negative impact on the development of tourism in these regions, generating inertia and mistrust to effectively use the potential of these territories. The structural backwardness in the Luso-Spanish border regions led to the creation of the Operational Programme for the Development of Border Regions (INTERREG) Portugal-Spain, with the Community objective of moving towards greater economic and social integration and convergence within the European Community. It was with the creation of the INTERREG initiative that the Community took on very clearly the need to develop border areas and stimulate cross-border cooperation between neighbouring populations separated for centuries (Lange, 2012; Oliveira, 2005; Policarpo & Mogollón, 2015). However, cross-border cooperation has not achieved its main objectives. There are some difficulties derived from the limitations caused by the strong role played by the States (countries), the great differences and asymmetries that exist, and also their own historical inertia, which continues to feed resistance and fears on both sides of the border (Fernandes; 2021, Calderón, 2015; Salgado, 2010). Uncertainties persist, but connections, approximations and complicities are gained that resources and heritage unite and non-administrative functions foster. The resources remain, the heritage is valued and the smokers and activities that induce demand, self-esteem and income for the border territories are encouraged. In the last three decades we have witnessed strategies of defronteirisation between Portugal and Spain, which have promoted and facilitated mobility between the two sides of the border, and an increase in institutional relations (formal and informal), taking advantage from European Union support and cooperation programmes and the openness of communities and political representatives to the creation of channels for dialogue and rapprochement. Of these processes, the following advances stand out for their importance:

- Increased access and transport infrastructure;
- Reduction of administrative barriers to movement by the Shengan area
- Increased institutional relations and collaoarative projects;
- Creation of specific support programmes for territorial cohesion;
- Increased socio-cultural relations and activities;
- Community awareness of the need to increase formal and informal partnerships and relationships;
- Increased community support infrastructures and equipments;
- Political effort to establish collaborative bases;
- Decrease in the perception of the border as a barrier.

Since the implementation of the Schengen Agreement, the free movement of people has been permitted between the signatory countries, thus fostering the development of the European integration project (Decoville & Durand, 2018). The Schengen area guarantees unrestricted travel within a territory of 26 countries, home to more than 400 million citizens. The Schengen Agreement that set out the gradual abolition of checks at common borders. A Europe without internal borders brings huge benefits to the economy as well, which shows how tangible, popular and successful the Schengen achievement is and the importance it has for the societies and cross border territories (European Commission, 2015). Fosters the mobility between countries and boosts many social and economic activities, generating financial and cultural flows that enrich the regions.

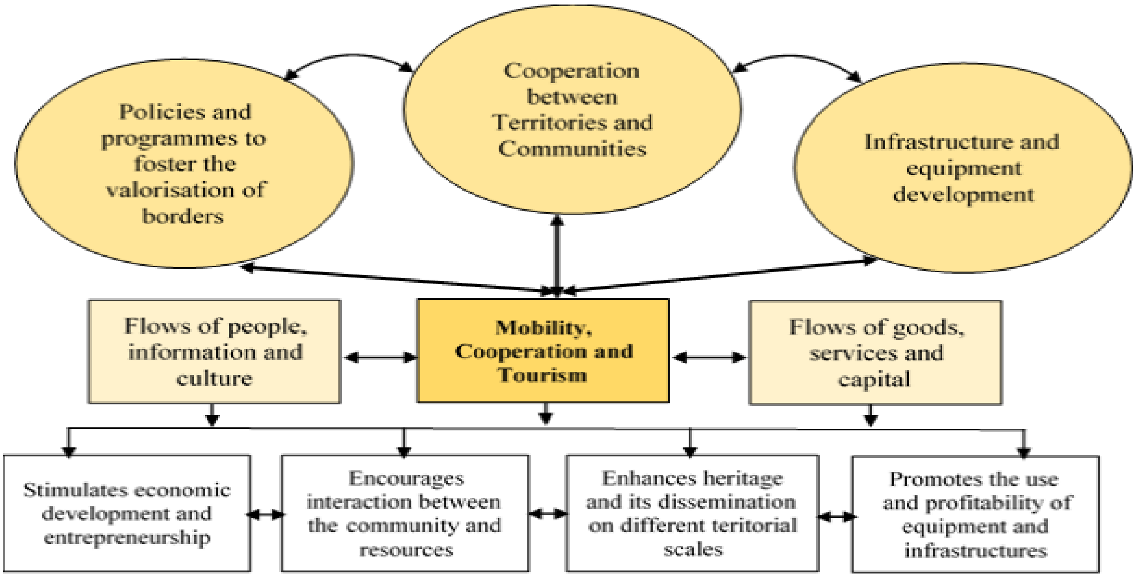

Figure 1: Conceptualisation of the relations of mobility, cooperation and tourism and leisure activities on the border territories (Source: adapted from Fernandes & Carvino, 2021)

Through commercial exchanges, relationships have been fundamentally altered by the incorporation of diverse social connections, cooperative and sometimes in solidarity, which allow their communities to maintain themselves and generate functions for economic and social well-being. The enhancement of heritage and respective identities allows promoting new attractions, supported beyond commercial relations in tourism and leisure practices that tend to be widened and diversified. Cooperation tends to be a vitalising factor, generating instruments that reduce the weaknesses that these lines tend to represent and assume. The development of the conditions for enhancing the territory for a diverse set of natural and cultural heritage resources should be promoted in a framework that ensures the sustainability of the values, natural resources and identity of the territories (Figure 1). In these processes, employment opportunities and socio-professional integration of communities are promoted, as shown by the use of tourism resources, the generation of services associated with natural and cultural resources and the cooperative strategies of local governance and the impulses of the respective communities (population and companies) (CPC, 2014; Fernandes & Natario, 2020, Fernandes *et al.*, 2012). *The income generated by tourism movements between borders can be a catalyst for permanent peace solutions, as both parties realise the benefits and the risks involved. Such an understanding can change the* *attitude and behaviour of local people and businesses over time when the feeling of sharing from the same pool becomes stronger* (Kozak & Buhalis, 2019, p.3).

In this context, tourism as a development factor in border spaces has been increasingly recognised over time (Fernandes, 2014; Kovácks *et al.*, 2020; Prokkola, 2010), due to the fact that many peripheral border areas hold great potential for the development of tourism and leisure activities. Their heritage is preserved and with authenticities that provide differentiating experiences (a consequence of their relative isolation) and allow the diversification of economies in these peripheral and often underdeveloped regions (Dominguez *et al*., 2013; Timothy & Saarinen, 2013), so the border constitutes a privileged area for action and support by European Union policies and programmes.

The EU has always understood the importance of strengthening ties between border areas, and one of the priorities of cross-border cooperation programmes is tourism development, which offers a recognised opportunity for border regions to develop common programmes (Tarpai, 2010; Muhi & Remenyik, 2013). There are five major priorities that translate into specific guidelines aimed at the full insertion of these underdeveloped regions into the European space through cooperation programmes between them. In the case of Portugal with Spain, it is possible to recall which priorities were identified. Priority I - Cooperation and Joint Management for the Promotion of Competitiveness and Employment, Priority II - Cooperation and Joint Management for the Environment, Heritage and Risk Prevention, Priority III - Cooperation and Joint Management for Spatial Planning and Accessibility, Priority IV - Cooperation and Joint Management for Socioeconomic and Institutional Integration, Priority V - Technical Assistance to the Cross-Border Cooperation Process. Cross-border tourist destinations thus make a significant contribution to EU regional policy. Their benefits are reflected in strengthening economically less developed border regions by creating new jobs and retaining existing ones. They also help to reduce cooperation reservations on both sides of the border, foster the emergence of European identity, the integration of its inhabitants and cohesion. Cross-border mobility and consumption, which includes all border crossings, regardless of destination, purpose of travel or distance travelled, corresponding to a broader approach than traditional tourism concepts (Mayer *et al*., 2019).

The temporary movement of people outside their usual place of residence to cities that are adjacent to the dividing line between two countries has various motivations, such as business, leisure, visits to family and/or friends, social events and shopping, among others (Moral *et al.*, 2016). The border territory can act or be converted, in an analogous way, to other well-known tourist and cultural routes or itineraries: historic routes, pilgrimage routes, routes of historic towns, among others. This “appropriation” includes the movements of travellers and tourists and tourism products, suported by the history and heritage at the border. This border tourism would have, in a way, a transversal and integrative character with other tourism products (Jurado-Almonte & Pazos-Garcia, 2018). Taking into account the design “Europe without borders”, where the emphasis on complementarity and cooperation prevails over competition (Lima, 2012). Tourism has proved to be a strategic factor in territorial cooperation, especially in inland areas, highlighting in particular its ability to bring together measures that have direct or indirect impact on the four existing axes of action (Promoting competitiveness and employment; Environment, heritage and natural environment; Accessibility and territorial planning; Fostering cooperation and economic and social integration). In this way, the different editions of the INTERREG initiative, first, and the tourism programmes and other programmes at the regional and municipal levels, have co-financed projects and socio-economic initiatives related to tourism, in order to promote cooperation and establish new markets for these regions (Jurado-Almonte & Pazos-García, 2018).

3. Meodology

The research is methodologically developed through the documentary exploration of studies on the portuguese-spanish border, the cooperation programmes (in particular INTERREG and POCTEP) and the initiatives/projects developed for the valorisation of resources and territorial promotion in the centre of Portugal with Spain.

In this context, we have tried to systematize the information about tourist attractions (natural, cultural and facilities), development policies and cross-border cooperation and implemented projects. A structured interpretation was promoted, able to assess the contributions to the social enjoyment of the border, the dynamics of mobility in the face of economic and administrative contexts in presence, as well as the formal and informal relationships of governmental entities at local and regional level.

4. Central Portugal border with Spain and the dynamics of cooperation and heritage enhancement

The relations in the cross-border space have acquired a growing importance and increased their influence on the European political, economic and cultural evolution. In the case of the border of Portugal and Spain, it is possible to speak of a porosity that is historical, with approximation of the territory(ies), either through public policies (community, national, regional and local) or through private investments. There is a concern of the regional governmental entities in the promotion of cooperation, in the development of projects and common initiatives and, particularly, in the promotion of entrepreneurship. It is worth highlighting the POCTEP BIN-SAL Empreende projects (2016-20), which streamlined investments and entrepreneurship in order to enhance endogenous resources and services associated with tourism and territorial cohesion, involving municipalities, development associations and HEIs. In general, it can be considered that the border between Portugal and Spain presents (in both countries) very similar characteristics, as it evolves progressively, where regions and municipalities establish partnerships and the border increases its permeability, strengthening the closeness of people and forms of institutional and business cooperation (Figure 2). This border is multi-peripheral in terms of its geographical position, its relationship with the decision-making centres, its capacity to mobilise and valorise resources, and its effective territorial integration and investments, thus presenting structural constraints. Taking this perspective allows us to identify conditions that contribute to the capacity of systems to adapt and evolve and to build resilience. Governance and management issues and the discussions that accompany building resilient tourism destinations continue to be the subject of research in the tourism literature. At the same time they attract increasing attention in fields such as planning, ecosystem management and the protection of areas with special status (e.g. National Park, Geopark, UNESCO World Heritage Site).

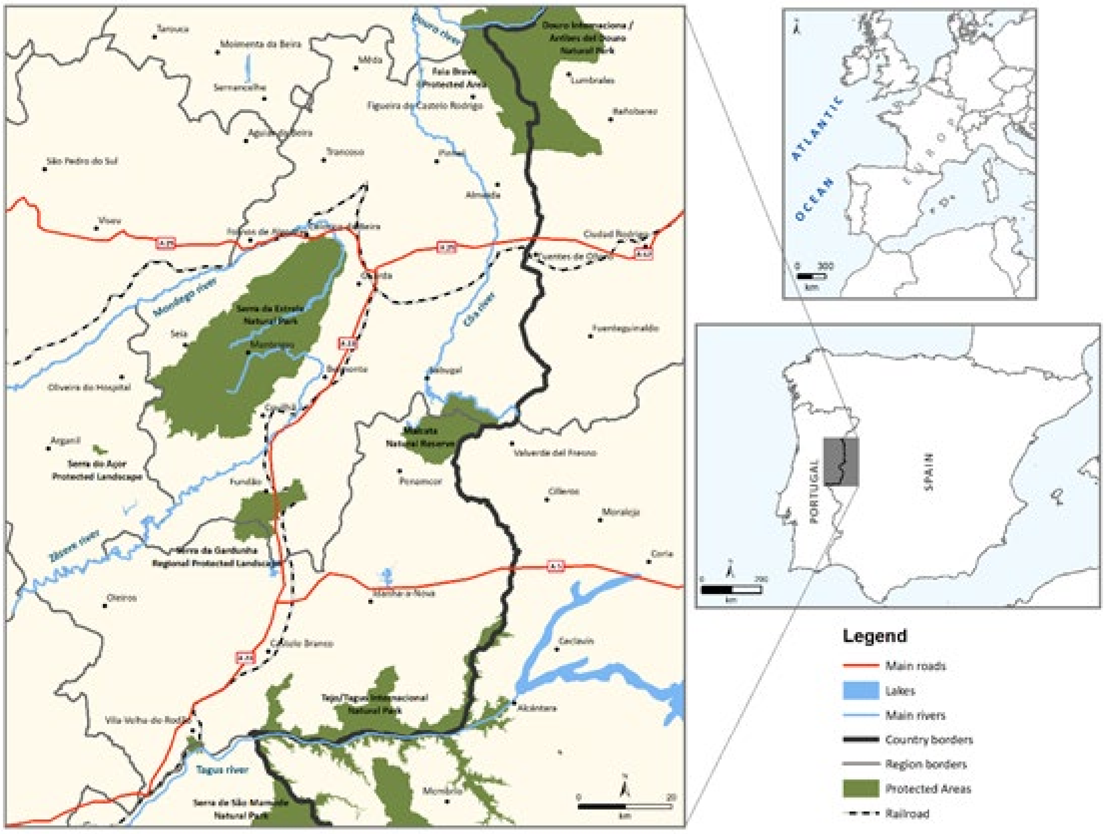

Figure 2: The Iberian Peninsula and the border area between central Portugal and Spain (Source: Compiled by the author)

Both sides of a border are visited and the assets of at least two neighbouring countries are exploited. This includes tourism derived from specific qualities of a border (e.g. differentiated prices of goods and services or distinct cultural identities and practices) and the goal of visiting to experience the area "on the other side", including tourists and tourist infrastructure, attractions, and spaces that extend or are adjacent to a border (Mansvelt & Hortelano Mínguez, 2010; Campesino Fernandes, 2016). The connotations that this space receives are diverse and change according to the events, actors involved and policies defined. Due to its meaning and function, the border was historically characterised by a strong militarisation but weak development policies present a historical and natural heritage of great integrity and present an increase in equipment and accessibility, which enhance its exploitation as a visiting space (Mansvelt & Hortelano Mínguez, 2010).

The increased permeability of the border influences the development of tourism infrastructure, associated tourism services and the transformation of the territories on both sides. Political factors can also create problems for cross-border cooperation in tourism by establishing different social and ideological systems that affect not only tourists but also local tourism stakeholders. In this context, it is important to be aware that tourism development has a transversal impact on society-economy-environment, which consequently drives the need to create synergies, which, in border spaces, are faced with greater governance demands. These imply that the actors involved develop concepts of change, grounded in complex and potentially unfavourable territorial relations in the face of the different costs of existing contexts. It is important to distinguish, as Hernández-Ramírez (2017) points out, cross-border tourism and tourism at the border. The first takes as destination a territory larger than the administrative border itself. The territory to be visited would cover a more or less wide space, of transition and boundaries, somewhat lax on both sides of the border and where the fact of the border was felt. Globally, the tourism challenge for destinations is to become robust enough to withstand disturbances and flexible enough to recover or reinvent themselves, contributing to their resilience. This implies a more evolutionary and adaptive perspective, considering and managing tourism destinations as complex adaptive systems (Hartman, 2018).

Relationships, fundamentally through commercial exchanges, have been registering alterations by incorporating diverse social connections, cooperative and sometimes solidaristic, which allow their communities to maintain themselves and generate functions for economic and social well-being. The valorisation of the heritage and respective identities allows promoting new attractions, supported beyond commercial relations in tourism and leisure practices which tend to be widened and diversified. Cooperation tends to be a vitalising factor, generating instruments that reduce the weaknesses that these lines tend to represent and assume.

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It is emphasised that places value their ecocultural assets in order to increase their competitive profile. Heritage stands out as a differentiating resource for the territories and a strategic element in the design of new products aimed at capturing specific segments of tourism demand, fosters the collective identity of the receiving communities, strengthens feelings of mutual aid and cooperation and encourages conservation and sustainable use actions. Thus, heritage valuation becomes a reference factor for local development, capable of generating territorial balance as a result of the attraction it generates and the activities it brings about in its economic and social appropriation, among which tourism and leisure activities take on relevance. At the same time, heritage symbols (castles and bastions, for example), which have constituted life and history on the border and which also represent tourism resources, are strengthened and preserved. This is why the border itself can become a destination and the main attraction for tourists (Mayer et al., 2019; Timothy, 2005).

Thus, in addition to the known tourism products (rural, ecotourism, agrotourism, gastronomy etc.) that can be found in border areas, it is possible to develop a new product, which can be known as “border tourism”, “cross-border tourism” or “tourism on the border”, and which satisfies a very diverse demand, eager to consume the history and heritage of border areas for tourism (Jurado-Almonte & Pazos-García, 2016). Border tourism is characterised by the fact that the destination is located at the same border and that tourist activity focuses on visiting spaces/attractions that belong to different states. The tourist visit is an experience of rediscovering, contemplating and participating in the cultural singularities, as well as the historical heritage, which is sometimes marked by cultural and political confrontations of the past and local hybridisms. Campesino Fernández (2016) distinguishes and emphasises what are potentialities and tourism products for the case of la Raia, or the Iberian border. He states that, for the most part, the natural and cultural heritage of the border remains a “potential resource with attractive and expected profitability” that has not been transformed into tourism products. However, its history has generated a remarkable historical and cultural legacy. The restrictions arising from the presence of national borders have always had a negative impact on the development of tourism in these regions, generating inertia and mistrust to effectively use the potential of these territories.

The structural backwardness in the Luso-Spanish border regions led to the creation of the Operational Programme for the Development of Border Regions (INTERREG) Portugal-Spain, with the Community objective of moving towards greater economic and social integration and convergence within the European Community. It was only with the creation of the INTERREG initiative that the Community took on very clearly the need to develop border areas and stimulate cross-border cooperation between neighbouring populations separated for centuries (Lange, 2012; Policarpo & Mogollón, 2015; Oliveira, 2005). However, cross-border cooperation has not achieved its main goals. There are some difficulties derived from the limitations caused by the strong role played by the States (countries), the great differences and asymmetries that exist, and also their own historical inertia, which continues to feed resistance and fears on both sides of the border (Fernandes, Natario, & Braga, 2014, 2016; Salgado, 2010). In this context, it is necessary to systematise a set of factors and opportunities to be considered for border development:

- Important financing instruments (INTERREG V-A Programme and POCTEP), which will have a special impact on the strengthening of local development structures and the modernisation of economic activities already in place;
- Heritage sites that requires greater awareness and dissemination, namely religious and military monuments and historical infrastructures (bridges, roads and viaducts, among others);
- Enhancement of the cultural and natural heritage which, in addition to its legal protection, will be subject to qualification processes, safeguarding its historical and cultural value, affecting the new functions and uses for which tourism is privileged. To highlight the concerted strategy around Wine, Gastronomy and the UNESCO World Heritage Site and the BIOFRONTEIRA project, framed within the Protecting the Environment and Promoting Resource Efficiency of Cross Border Cooperation;
- Presence of two international rivers, with great ecological value and classified as international natural parks (Douro and Tagus), generates an attraction potential to develop aquatic activities, navigation, active tourism, sport fishing and bird watching, among others;
- Articulation of the cities in constructive strategies to promote the discovery and valorisation of the border heritage – Cencyl Cities Network (The heritage of the Cencyl Cities – includes 440 elements classified as Goods of Cultural Interest and National Heritage);
- The historical border element, with cultural hybridisms, differentiated and complementary commerce and services and the possibility of visiting the old Portuguese and Spanish border posts, taking advantage of the offer and services on both sides of the border;
- The existence of some brands for the promotion of regional products and the promotion of tourism in this territory. To highlight the actions promoted with the name Lat. 60, the gastronomy associated with the wines and meat products of some provinces and municipalities;
- Financing and support for the creation and development of business initiatives related to rural and inland tourism (active leisure and itineraries), which articulate tourist resources and products with the projection of the border.

The relationship between borders and tourism development is complex and manifests itself in many ways. A physical border can form a barrier to tourism flows, or can be crossed almost unnoticed. The permeability of the border, the barrier effects caused by the border, such as regulations for the movement of people and goods, will directly influence tourism and the development of flows of goods and people (Kabakchieva & Vasileva, 2020; Prokkola, 2008; Timothy, 2006;). The tourism activity between the border itself and the territories beyond it is a necessary line of research, on the basis of the new emerging cross-border identities and functions, showing the integration between bordering territories (Mansvelt Beck & Hortelano Mínguez,2016). The potential of tourism– resources of the cross-border area – is significant and diversified, and in most cases, well preserved and capable of generating different attractions (markets) throughout the year. The capacity to foster new activities and services is recognised, generating important socio-economic dynamics for the revitalisation of the border and its communities. It is expected the strengthening of relations between border communities and the increase of social enjoyment of this space, promoting actions of sharing, of exchanges in the construction of a joint strategy of effective promotion of an integrated tourist offer. The articulation between resources, infrastructures and services should promote mobility and territorial cohesion.

5. Conclusions

In the border region of Central Portugal with Spain, we have witnessed a loss of economic dynamism and a negative evolution of the population, which has weakened the territories and their economies. In these scenarios, heritage, natural and cultural resources may contribute to the strengthening of tourism, which, in turn, makes it possible to diversify economic structures and strengthen territorial competitiveness and social equity. The heritage, material and immaterial, of this region, associated with its history, cultural diversity, and natural resources generate relevance and international recognition. They constitute arguments for the construction of a growing tourist function in these territories and foster attractiveness and entrepreneurship. The expansion of tourism stimulates the economy, preserving values and identities and generating new uses and functions. Furthermore, it promotes the consolidation of relations between communities and their mobility along the border, allowing exchanges and the desired sustainability.

Cooperation programmes and institutions have played a key role in channelling financial resources to these territories. In general terms, borders and administrative boundaries are understudied components of tourism mobility, being traditionally perceived as mobility territories for other destinations and not as tourist destinations themselves. The historical recognition of borders, their political relations, cultural hybridisms, historical heritage, and natural resources bring new interests to these spaces and their functioning.

It is essential to capitalize on the natural and cultural resources in the development of tourism and the creation of services, enhancing entrepreneurial and resilient strategies towards the territory. It is urgent to evaluate the strategies, the ongoing initiatives and the effects of the cooperation policies, in order to reconsider the formats of support and development of border regions in peripheral spaces. The border between central Portugal and Spain, as an international space, composed of a vast and valuable heritage, must assume increasing recreational and touristic functions, enhancing neighborly relations and generating international attractiveness.

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Literary Routes as a Successful Tourist Offer in Porto

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Abstract: Nowadays tourist aspires to something differentiated, personalized, focused on quality, culture, and the environment. As this tourist is a more demanding one, it is crucial to provide an innovative offer bearing in mind that this type of tourist aspires to something more specific. This is exactly the case of literary tourists. By using a literary text to invite people to visit a city, which we may call "literary invitation", we intend to provide some real and material knowledge about the city, often in the form of a route to be travelled. Tourist itineraries immerse visitors in the plot of a narrative or in the historical era it refers to and therefore, enhances the experience of a cultural visit assuming an important political and economic significance in today's tourism destinations. Besides enhancing cultural exchange and cross-border relations, tourists mobilize large economic resources that can promote the socio-economic development of the territories. This paper intends to present an analysis of the motivational attributes of literary routes in the perception of the tourist destination Porto based on information obtained from a sample of 272 tourists/visitors in the city during the summer of 2020. The analysis of the results allows us to state that they represent a reliable basis for tourist agents interested in reevaluating the essence of tourist activity in the city, in the context of literary resources and attractions, and these motivational factors may be incorporated into marketing strategies.

Keywords: literary route, literary tourism, literary itinerary, Porto, Camilo Castelo Branco

1. Introduction

Today there is an increasing number of tourists who refuse to travel in mass tourism programs, focusing on individual and intimate experiences. Today's tourist aspires to something less traditional, more differentiated, personalized, focused on quality, culture, and the environment, with intangible values Innovation in tourism is thus essential for all professionals in the sector. Offering new, improved products and/or services adapted to modern needs allows a country or city to stand out from the competition. Literary tourism can be a great asset to attract tourists and, in the long term, translate into greater financial results.

The growing awareness of literary tourism has given it a growing popularity. There are currently countries and cities whose writers are ambassadors of their language and culture, leading tourists to visit their homes or places related to them and their works. It is now unthinkable to look at some of the world's most inspiring literary cities and forget their great writers. For example, London, England, has tours that honor Arthur Conan Doyle's, *Sherlock Holmes* and Charles Dickens. In Ireland, a Dublin Literary Pub Crawl invites tourists to walk in the shoes of writers like James Joyce, Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw and W.B.Yeats. In Paris we can pop into the Maison de Victor Hugo and in St Petersburg you can trace the route of *Crime and Punishment*'s wordsmith, visiting the apartment museum where Dostoevsky spent the last years of his life.

Whoever the writer may be, using a literary text to invite for a city is intended to provide some real and material knowledge about the city, often in the form of a route to be carried out. In fact, one of the instruments of tourism promotion may be tourist itineraries. These routes invite tourists and readers to make fictional experiences come alive. Literary tourism enables travellers to immerse themselves in the local culture, landscapes, and nature, while increasing their knowledge about authors and literature.

As Herbert (2001) points out, living what the writer presented in his books, knowing the places he went or even visiting places of symbolic meaning, are experiences that "readers-tourists" or "tourists-readers" seek. According to this author

> *"people visit literary places for various reasons. First, they are attracted to places that have connections to the lives of writers. Old houses, in which a writer lived and worked, can create a sense of nostalgia, and inspire admiration or reverence [...] Secondly, tourists can be attracted by literary places that form the settings for novels. Fiction can be represented and there is a fusion of*

> *the real and the imaginary that give these places a special meaning. Fictional characters and events often generate stronger images" (Herbert, 2001, p.314).*

Thus, the literary itinerary allows the visitor to know the city as a material reality, as a space that allowed the writer to build and develop a scenario for the narrative, giving the tourist the possibility to observe the city in another way, that is, walk the streets, observing the specific particularities of the city to which he would not have access by simply observing the geographical reality, without a route or literary itinerary.

The tourist itineraries have a potential that covers various sectors, from the economic to the sociocultural. They not only contribute to the dissemination of the cultural heritage of the region, but also increase the interest in Culture and Literature, attracting tourists with a higher level of education and, potentially, with greater economic power, thus generating greater revenues (Herbert, 2001; Eusebius, Castro & Costa, 2008). In addition, by increasing the attractiveness of places with lower demand and during the low season (since, according to Curado (1996), there is a greater proportion of cultural tourists moving in winter), literary itineraries also contribute to the extension of their stay and result in an increase in revenues.

Moreover, literary itineraries, as documents designed to attract, tend to influence how the landscape is interpreted, i.e, the way the visitor perceptions the landscape in this itinerary and, at the same time, give more visibility to specific cities or geographical realities.

In this perspective, the design of itineraries and routes can be considered as a structuring activity of the offer in a tourism destination. These itineraries are an invitation to discover and rediscover a tourist destination.

2. Research methodology

The main objective of this study is to understand if literary routes will be an opportunity to expand the tourist offer in Porto. With this purpose, we designed two different itineraries based on the life and work of Camilo Castelo Branco and we conducted an empirical investigation based on a questionnaire that we present to a sample of 272 tourists/visitors from the city of Porto in the summer of 2020 (between June to September). The research had as its fundamental objectives to prove the interest in literary routes and the conditions for.

The results allowed us not only to make a very approximate estimate of the tourist's suitability to these new tourism proposals in Porto, but also to analyze the importance of these proposals in redefining the city's tourism offer and its diversity.

3. Porto as the stage to literary routes

Porto has always been the city of artists and, therefore, we can find much of the history of the city in the works that were bequeathed to us, in particular in the literary field.

Although we do not intend to present a list of the writers who were born, died and in the city left or gave testimony, it is thanks to them that Porto has been considered a place of literary inspiration and can present itself as a literary city.

Camilo Castelo Branco is undoubtedly one of its most notable writers and who most identifies with the city. Although he was not born in this city, Camilo is a man from Porto. This city, besides being his living space between 1843 and 1872, also served as inspiration for most of his books that allow us today to know the city of the 19th century through the movements of his characters. The city of that time enhanced his imagination and his enormous capacity to create plots and, therefore, Porto is, simultaneously, the city of his experience and his imagination. The writer's relationship with space is present throughout his literary production.

> *"The Camilian text registers (...), the urban and human Port of 19th century" (Castro & Oliveira, 2012, p. 27).*

With the work of Camilo Castelo Branco, it is possible to suggest the organization of itineraries with the aim of providing the knowledge of the places connected to the memory of the writer and, at the same time, (re)know the Port of the 19th century. The itineraries allow participants to contact the writer's places and explore the texts *on site*, joining the physical spaces to the writer's affective memories.

4. Results

Individual profile of respondents

As can be seen by the analysis of Table 1, at the global level, our sample consists mostly of female individuals (68.8%).

Table 1: Individual profile

Tourists/Visitors		Frequency	%
Gender	Female	187	68,8
	Male	85	31,3
Age	18 to 27 Years old	82	30,1
	28 to 37 Years old	26	9,6
Average=41,63	38 to 47 years old	57	21,0
	48 to 57 Years old	66	24,2
	57 to 68 Years old	24	8,9
	68 years old or more	17	6,2
Qualifications	High-School	48	17,6
	Degree	108	39,7
	Masters	100	36,8
	PhD	16	5,9
Employment	Retired/Pensioner	23	8,5
situation	Student	45	16,5
	Unemployed	7	2,6
	Part-time worker	16	5,9
	Full-time worker	181	66,5
Monthly income	(-) than 1000 €	40	14,7
(individual)	1001 – 2000 €	106	39,0
	2001 – 3000 €	63	23,2
	(+) than 3000 €	22	8,1
	DK/DA	41	15,1
Country of origin	Portugal	197	72,4
	Spain	22	8,1
	France	15	5,5
	Italy	10	3,7
	Germany	6	2,2
	Other*	22	8,1
*With representativeness less than 2%			
Total		272	100,0

Source: Own elaboration

Regarding age, we would like to point out that it was a condition for inclusion in the study that all respondents were 18 years of age or older. According to the table under analysis, we also verified that age was recoded into age categories, with the objective of obtaining homogeneous amplitude classes. The last class was aggregated because the remaining ones contained few observations.

After this codification, we observed that, although the average age value is 41.6 years, it is the class of the elderly that represents the smallest number of respondents, that is, those whose age, in this classification, is higher than 68 years represent approximately 6.2% of the respondents. The most representative class is that of young adults (18-27 years) with 30.1% of respondents.

Tourists/visitors with a high level of education predominate, 39.7% have "Bachelor's Degree", 36.8% have completed "Master's" and 5.9% have completed the "PhD". 66.5% are "Full-Time Workers" and 5.9% "Part-Time Workers", i.e. about two-thirds of respondents are in economic activity and the average monthly income from the sample shows that 14.7% have income "Up to 1,000€", 39.0% have an income between "1001 -2000€", 23.2% between "2001 - 3000€" and 8.1% "More than 3000€", which allows us to say that respondents mostly pursue a paid profession with amounts located between 1001 and 3000€ (62.2%).

72.4% of respondents are national, with only 8.1% of the Spanish appearing in second place, followed by the French, with 5.5%, the Italians with 3.7% and the Germans with 2.2%. In our opinion, the reason for these figures was the pandemic, because border circulation, although open in the months in which we conducted the surveys (June to September) remains very conditioned, thus limiting movements, especially external ones.

5. Traveler's characteristics

Analyzing now the results obtained for Porto as the destination of the trip it is possible to show in Table 2 that most respondents (72.1%) are not visiting the city for the first time, and more than half (54.0%) remain in the city for a period between "3-5 nights". It should be noted that 13.2% of respondents reported that their visit does not imply overnight.

Table 2: Travelers' profile

Tourists/Visitors		Frequency	%
1st Visit to city	Yes	76	27,9
	No	196	72,1
Reason for travel	Holidays/leisure	211	77,6
	Visit to family /friends	29	10,7
	Business	4	1,5
	Wine and gastronomy T.	10	3,7
	Shopping Tourism	10	3,7
	Literary Tourism	8	2,9
Length of stay	No overnight	36	13,2
	From 1 to 2	61	22,4
	From 3 to 5	147	54,0
	From 6 to 10	23	8,5
	More than 10	5	1,8
Daily spend	0-50€	85	31,3
	51-100€	94	34,6
	101-150€	36	13,2
	151-200€	15	5,5
	+ 200€	17	6,3
	DK/DA	25	9,2
Total		272	100,0

Source: Own elaboration

As the sample includes a significant number of national tourists it is our opinion that this value may be justified by the geographical proximity between the place of residence and the destination visited. 77.6% of tourists are in "Holiday/leisure" period, 10.7% have as their main reason the "Visit to family/friends", 3.7% seek "Ethnographic Tourism" and "Shopping Tourism" and 2.9% the "Literary Tourism." Regarding travel costs, most respondents report that daily spends between "51-100€" (34.6%) or only "0-50€" (31.3%).

6. Travelers' reading habits

Looking now at the profile of our respondents regarding their reading habits, we found that about half (48.2%) of the tourists/visitors interviewed read less than 5 books per year and 34.6% read, in the same period, between 5 and 10 books (table 3).

Table 3: Reading habits

Tourists/Visitors		Frequency	%
How many books do you	0	8	2,9
read per year	(-) from 5	131	48,2
	5 – 10	94	34,6

Tourists/Visitors		Frequency	%
	(+) from 10	39	14,3
If I could, I'd rather:	Get to know the different places mentioned in his works	167	61,4
	Know places related to the life of an author.	49	18,0
	Make the itineraries of the characters of his works	38	14,0
	I don't care any of the above	18	6,6
Have you heard of Camilo	Yes	228	83,8
Castelo Branco?	No	44	16,2
Do you know the work of	Yes	161	59,2
Camilo Castelo Branco?	No	111	40,8
Without knowing the author would be interested in a literary route?	Yes	200	73,5
	No	67	24,6
	Does not respond	5	1,8
Total		272	100,0

Source: Own elaboration

The table also allows us to verify that, these tourists/visitors mostly prefer to know places mentioned in literary works (61.4%), 18.0% prefer to know places related to the life of an author (place where he was born, childhood home, place where he wrote, place of his death, ...) and 14.0% would like to make itineraries related to the characters of literary works. 83.8% of tourists/visitors have heard of the writer Camilo Castelo Branco and 59.2% know his work. It should also be noted that 73.5% of respondents reported that, even if they did not know the writer Camilo Castelo Branco, nor his work, they would be interested in performing a literary route inspired by their life and/or work in the city of Porto.

7. Motivations to participate in a literary route

After analyzing the sociodemographic profile of the population surveyed, the characteristics of the trip and its literary appetences, we will then present the motivations (reasons) pointed out to participate in a literary route, indicated in Table 4. It should be noted that of the total of the 272 respondents, 66 (24.3%) reported not being interested in carrying out any route, so from now on, we will analyze the reasons that motivate the 206 tourists surveyed to carry out a literary route.

Table 4: Reasons why you would participate in a literary route

Tourists/Visitors		Frequency	%
1. Learning new things	Total disagree	2	1
	Disagree	2	1
	Agree	48	23,3
	Quite agree	64	31,1
	Total agree	90	43,7
2. Seek cultural enrichment	Total disagree	4	1,9
	Disagree	6	2,9
	Agree	32	15,5
	Quite agree	68	33
	Total agree	96	46,6
3. Experience places associated with literary works	Total disagree	6	2,9
	Disagree	65	31,6
	Agree	66	32
	Quite agree	69	33,5
4. Participate in sophisticated cultural tourism programs to improve the tourist experience	Total disagree	2	1
	Disagree	18	8,7
	Agree	70	34
	Quite agree	72	35
	Total agree	44	21,4
5. Seeing things you don't normally see	Total disagree	6	2,9
	Disagree	8	3,9
	Agree	51	24,8
	Quite agree	50	24,3
	Total agree	91	44,2

Tourists/Visitors		Frequency	%
6. Better understand the literary work by visiting places	Total disagree	6	2,9
	Disagree	7	3,4
	Agree	62	30,1
	Quite agree	80	38,8
	Total agree	51	24,8

Source: Own elaboration

According to the data in table 4 we can ensure that the opportunity to participate in a literary route is seen by tourists/visitors with great expectation because, in addition to the 98.1% who see it as an opportunity to "Learn new things", 95.1% believe that allows "Cultural enrichment" and 93.2% "see things that normally do not see". 90.3% agree to "participate in sophisticated cultural tourism programs to improve the tourist experience", 93.7% agree that literary itineraries allow "Better understanding the literary work visiting places" and 97.1% that this allows "to experience places associated with tourist works".

In order to understand the motivations of tourists regarding the opportunities to participate in literary routes we will present below (Table 5) an analysis of the results obtained in relation to the two proposals of literary routes presented and their influence on the travel experience, according to several motivational aspects.

Table 5: Influence of literary itineraries on travel experience

Tourists/Visitors		Frequency	%
1. Would participate in some or all the itineraries presented	Total disagree	4	1,9
	Disagree	4	1,9
	Agree	94	45,6
	Quite agree	48	23,3
	Total agree	56	27,2
2. Would pay for the proposed itineraries	Total disagree	4	1,9
	Disagree	19	9,2
	Agree	106	51,5
	Quite agree	41	19,9
	Total agree	36	17,5
3. Would prolong the trip to make a route	Total disagree	2	1
	Disagree	70	34
	Agree	78	37,9
	Quite agree	40	19,4
	Total agree	16	7,8
4. Would repeat the destination to perform a route	Total disagree	6	2,9
	Disagree	61	29,6
	Agree	74	35,9
	Quite agree	50	24,3
	Total agree	15	7,3
5. Participating in a route increases my degree of satisfaction with the destination	Total disagree	2	1
	Disagree	14	6,8
	Agree	92	44,7
	Quite agree	57	27,7
	Total agree	41	19,9
6. Would repeat the destination if there were new routes based on the work of the same author, or other authors	Total disagree	6	2,9
	Disagree	58	28,4
	Agree	61	29,9
	Quite agree	56	27,5
	Total agree	23	11,3
Total		206	100

Source: Own elaboration

The analysis of the table above allows us to state that the majority (96.1%) of respondents agree that they would participate in one or more of the itineraries presented and 20.6% say that they fully agree with this statement, however, the amount is reduced to 88.8% if these routes are paid.

92.2% of respondents agree that "participating in a route increases their degree of satisfaction with the destination" but 35.0% of respondents said they would not "prolong the trip to be able to participate in a literary route", 68.7% agree with the possibility of "repeating the destination if there are new routes based on the work of the same author, or other authors", which allows us to affirm that literary itineraries are seen by tourists as an asset of the destination, important enough to increase their degree of satisfaction with the destination and, in many cases, enough to influence a new visit or even to prolong the stay.

8. Analysis of correlations

Also based on the results of surveys conducted to tourists /visitors to Porto, we applied the analysis of Variance ANOVA, which allowed us to cross the information collected and understand which characteristics of the sociodemographic profile of the sample interfere with their personal interests / motivations to participate in literary routes and under what circumstances.

Thus, we begin by verifying that the higher the level of education, the greater the motivation to participate in literary proposals, and greater willingness to prolong the trip or even repeat the destination to participate in a literary route (table 6).

Table 6: Motivational elements of literary routes presented according to academic qualifications

Qualifications	Would participate in some or all the itineraries presented	Participating in a route increases my degree of satisfaction with the destination	I'd repeat destination if new routes are available
High-School	3,27	3,20	2,97
Degree	3,80	3,71	3,24
Master	3,77	3,54	3,04
PhD	3,92	4,08	3,92

Source: Own elaboration

Table 7 shows us that the situation of employment also interferes with the motivation to participate in the routes presented because the group that shows the least appetite is that of the unemployed and retired/pensioners are the group that values the itineraries the most, even admitting prolonging the trip or repeating the destination if they were aware of new itineraries.

Table 7: Motivational studies of literary scripts presented in relation to the employment situation

Employment situation	Would participate in some or all the itineraries presented	Would pay for the proposed itineraries	Would extend the trip to participate in a route	Would repeat the destination to participate in a route	Participating in a route increases my degree of satisfaction with the destination	I'd repeat destination if new routes are available
Unemployed	2,43	2,14	2,29	2,29	2,43	2,00
Student	3,71	3,57	2,96	2,64	3,25	2,75
Retired/Pensioner	4,21	3,79	3,53	3,89	4,37	4,00
Full-time worker	3,69	3,38	2,93	2,98	3,59	3,17
Part-time worker	4,00	3,64	3,21	3,57	3,71	3,29

Source: Own elaboration

Associating this analysis with the income level of the various respondents, Table 8 allows us to find that respondents who are most available to participate on one or more itineraries, even if they are paid, have a monthly average income between 2001 and 3000€. For these tourists/visitors, participate in an itinerary is a way to increase their satisfaction with the destination. Tourists/visitors with incomes more than €3000 per month are the most available to repeat the destination if they are aware of new routes (Table 8).

Table 8: Motivational elements of literary routes presented according to the level of income

Income	Would participate in some or all the itineraries presented	Participating in a route increases my degree of satisfaction with the destination	I'd repeat destination if new routes are available
DK/DA	3,53	3,23	2,70
(-) than 1000€	3,55	3,03	2,83
1001-2000€	3,66	3,71	3,38
2001-3000€	4,05	3,86	3,20
(+) than 3000€	3,43	3,71	3,43

Source: Own elaboration

If we look at the cultural origin of the various respondents (table 9), we conclude that Spaniards are more available to repeat the destination to participate in a literary route and French visitors prolong the trip to participate in a new route. The Germans are the people who are the most interesting in repeating the destination if new routes are available.

Table 9: Motivational elements of the literary routes presented, by country of origin of the visitors

Origin	Would extend the trip to participate in a route	Would repeat the destination to participate in a route	I'd repeat destination if new routes are available
Portugal	2,92	2,96	3,05
Spain	3,40	3,70	3,70
France	3,77	3,08	3,85
Italy	3,50	3,50	3,50
Germany	2,50	2,50	4,00

Source: Own elaboration

Table 10 shows that people who visit the city but do not stay overnight are those who associate participation in a literary route with their degree of satisfaction with the destination and those who remain for a period of 1-2 nights those who show the most interest in extending the trip to carry out literary itineraries. Visitors/tourists who have a stay of 3 to 5 nights consider repeating the destination to participate in new literary itineraries. This information leads us to consider, once again, that literary routes can be effectively an asset in the tourist offer of the city.

Table 10: Motivational elements of the literary routes presented, according to the stay

Stay	Would extend the trip to participate in a route	Participating in a route increases my degree of satisfaction with the destination	I'd repeat destination if I was aware of new routes
No overnight	3,19	3,77	3,27
1-2 nights	3,30	3,38	3,19
3-5 nights	2,90	3,74	3,29
6-10 nights	2,47	3,11	2,26
(+) than 10 nights	3,00	3,00	2,80

Source: Own elaboration

Visitors/tourists whose main motivation is literary tourism are more available to prolong the trip to participate in a literary itinerary, however it is the wine and gastronomy tourists who most identify with the opportunity to repeat the destination to carry out a route (table 11).

Table 11: Motivational elements of the literary scripts presented, according to the reason(s) of the trip

Reason(s) of the trip	Would extend the trip to participate in a route	Would repeat the destination to participate in a route
Holidays/Leisure	2,81	2,94
Visit to family members	3,85	3,30
Business	3,50	3,00
Wine and gastronomy Tourism	3,88	3,88
Shopping	2,25	2,63
Literary Tourism	4,00	3,75

Source: Own elaboration

9. Conclusion

In the analysis presented we would like to point out that the level of educational qualifications directly influences both the reasons for participating in a route and the value attributed to them as a travel experience. In fact, tourists/visitors with PhD consider the itineraries decisive in the tourist experience, so that they not only consider participating in one or more itineraries but also say that they would repeat the destination to participate in a new itinerary.

The same happens when we look at the level of income because it is the group of respondents who have income between 2001 and 3000€ that most highlight their willingness to participate in some or all the proposed itineraries, underlining their satisfaction with the destination. In addition, it is the people who spend more than 200€ per day those who show more interest in participating in tourist itineraries and even in repeating the destination to carry out new itineraries.

Tourists who have a stay of more than 10 nights are the ones who show the most interest in participating in literary itineraries, but those who do not stay overnight or remain only 1 or 2 nights are those who are most available to extend their stay to carry out an itinerary or even repeat the destination to participate in new itineraries.

Among all visitors/tourists' surveyed pensioners are those who reveal not only a wider range of literary motivations but also are most available to carry out the literary itineraries even if they need to extend the trip or repeat the destination.

Between the foreigners who visit us the French are the most available to extend the trip to participate in a literary script although also the Spanish and Italians show interest in these opportunities of literary tourism and claim that they would repeat the destination to participate in one or more literary itineraries.

Finally, establishing a relationship between the reason for the visit and the interest shown in the literary itineraries, we could conclude that it is the literary tourists who value this opportunity most associated with tourist destinations.

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Analysis of Oleotourism and Museology: Bibliometric Analysis and Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract: Traditional Olive Grove represents about 80% of the awards in the National Olive Oil Competition of Portugal, substantiating the importance and relevance of the sector. The term "oleotourism" is considered as a movement that increasingly aims to know all the features, qualities, and differences in olive oil production. As a dynamic movement, this term uses museology to present and promote its products to the public and tourism. From museology articles, it was understood that the museums should not be limited to the institutionally conceived idea, instead of that, it should be understood as a global science of a distinct, which encompasses the universe and society. Subsequently, the relevance of conducting qualitative research arises, studying the literature on oleotourism associated with museology and analysing their contributions and effects on tourism. After reviewing the existing databases, the SCOPUS database was selected to collect and analyse the bibliographic material. Hence, as the purpose, this study aimed to highlight the scientific publications with the most significant impact of the terms "oleotourism" and "museology", understanding their research trends. In the systematisation process, we considered the final 100 articles with the most citations published in journals between 2005 and 2021. The articles analysed were reviewed using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses for the systematic literature review. For the bibliometric analysis, the Bibliometrix R program was used. As a result, from the bibliometric analysis, it was found that, as research trends, the keywords "olive oil tourism" and "museums" were highlighted, with Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom as the countries with the most citations. In addition, the journals "Sustainability", "Museum Anthropology", and "Museum Management and Curation" in the publications on these themes are highlighted. In comparison, through the systematic literature review, it was understood that the research trends focused on: the conceptualisation of oleotourism; the influence of museology on tourism; and the importance of museum education. Despite the importance of this research in helping future studies, there are some limitations on their analysis, which will be recommended to use specific databases for the themes and increase the number of articles considered.

Keywords: oleotourism, oleo culture, museological, bibliometrics, research trends

1. Introduction

Oleotourism is connected to products developed in the rural olive-growing sector, offering an opportunity to diversify olive growth (Parrilla-González, Murgado-Armenteros and Torres-Ruiz, 2020). Its potential implies complementarity with other types of tourism, for the substantial part when the product is tested and for the intangible benefits, such as its contribution to a healthy lifestyle (Ruiz Guerra, Molina and Quesada, 2018). Furthermore, the dynamics around oleotourism influences the transformation of oleic spaces into tourism spaces, driving the creation of museums (Parrilla-González, Murgado-Armenteros and Torres-Ruiz, 2020). While, in museum management, several studies focus on the importance of museology to foster cultural promotion and development (Tišliar, 2017; Welsh, 2013). Following these insights, the importance of studying the existing literature on oleotourism associated with museology arises. The literature observes the relationship between these concepts, "oleotourism" and "museology", but little or nothing is discussed as a cooperative association of both terms. Thus, this study attempts to overcome an existing gap in the literature: the lack of scientific information about their relationship.

Through a systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis, our goal is to analyse their contributions and effects. Specifically, this study aims to highlight the scientific publications with a more significant impact through the SCOPUS database, analysing the terms "oleotourism" and "museology" and their variations, such as “olive tourism” and “museum”. This analysis uses the final 100 articles published in journals, with the highest number of citations, between the period 2005 to 2021. As qualitative study tools, some programs and review methods were used through the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) and Bibliometrix R. The Bibliometric analysis searches to understand the relationship of articles, journals, countries, and keywords with the impact on scientific research, using the crossings performed by the Bibliometrix R program.

2. Methodology

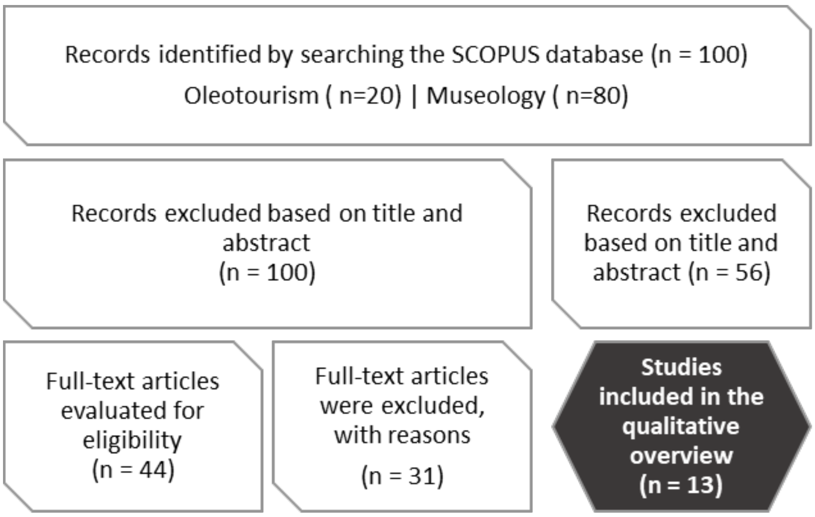
Bibliometric studies are characterised by using statistics to analyse the academic literature. Several authors assume that the leading Bibliometric indicators include the number of articles, the number of authors, the productivity of authors, and the productivity of countries or journals (Guilera, Barrios and Gómez-Benito, 2012). In addition, it is important to note that bibliometric studies provide indicators of research output in a field over time and allow scholars to study science as a system of knowledge creation (Raan, 2003). Also, some bibliometric analysis studies for the tourism universe analyse the universe of literature (Benckendorff and Zehrer, 2014). Increasingly, tourism has been an area of consistent interest for several researchers, which justifies this type of study and analysis for scientific research (Ferreira, Sousa and Gonçalves, 2020).

After reviewing the existing databases, the SCOPUS database was selected to collect and analyse the bibliographic material. Other databases were also considered, but since the information is repeated, the database considered was SCOPUS, which is considered the most complete.

The database search process was searched to highlight the scientific publications with the most significant impact, analysing the literary material for the terms "oleotourism" and "museology" and their variations, such as “olive tourism” and “museum”.

After searching the database and analysing the cross-references of the concepts, the following were selected the final 100 articles published in journals, with a higher total of citations (CTs), since 2005. The time limitation between 2005 and 2021 results from the analysis of the concepts' development and the need to equalise the results to no more significant discrepancies. Nevertheless, it is important to note that of the 100 documents, 20 correspond to the oleotourism theme, while 80 articles correspond to the study in museology. The discrepancy of documents in the themes results from the recent research in oleotourism and the lower impact in scientific research than museology.

This study begins with a systematic review of the literature, reviewed through the PRISMA, undergoing various processes of screening and eligibility, as shown in Figure 1.



Source: Own elaboration

Figure 1: Review process through the PRISMA

The stratification and elimination process involved excluding the articles that did not respond to the theme; subsequently, 56 articles that did not follow the intended theme and 31 articles that did not respond to the research objective were excluded from the eligibility process. After the filtering and elimination process, 13 articles were reviewed (six documents in oleotourism and seven in museology). Concerning bibliometric analysis, the database used corresponds to the TOP100 articles obtained by the material research. Subsequently, in this analysis, cross-references were created that responded to the articles, authors, keywords, countries, and journals that stand out in the database.

3. Systematic literature review

For science, a systematic literature review is an investigation that brings relevant studies together on a topic or issue. It uses a literature search database as a systematic source and identification, selection, and analysis methods to conduct a critical and comprehensive review. As mentioned in the methodology, articles were selected through PRISMA analysis, which considered the relevant articles to answer the objective. Specifically, this study begins with a brief systematic literature review of seven museology articles and six on oleotourism. Based on this analysis, it was verified that oleotourism is an activity that distinguishes itself in rural areas, having a significant role for the tourist destination, development the growth of the local economy, new workplaces and opportunities (as the creation of qualified jobs in tourism, and all the activities surrounding tourism). Furthermore, studies also emphasise the concern for the environment, with particular reference to olives valued as cultural assets. Measured as a consolidation activity that drives sustainable growth and rational resource allocation, oleotourism is considered a vital factor for the development of Mediterranean countries (Tregua, D'Auria and Marano-Marcolini, 2018; D'Auria *et al.*, 2020). Several authors agreed that oleotourism has a fundamental role for multiple reasons. Their relations with local territories, businesses, resources, and other tourism activities also favour sustainable development (D'Auria *et al.*, 2020). Thus, oleotourism arises and encourages a growing interest among tourists who want to participate in this self-realisation experience. An increasing number of olive oil mills are diversifying their businesses to incorporate this type of tourism, and in some areas, the olive grove is the primary source of livelihood (Parrilla-González, Murgado-Armenteros and Torres-Ruiz, 2020). This activity involves several principles for enriching and sustainable tourism because it is socially caring, economically viable, and culturally rich, making it a potential tourist attraction. From the point of view of destination sustainability, based on an agri-food industry, some scholars have described other aspects to keep in mind, such as resource efficiency; environmental preservation; conservation of local biodiversity; investment in the quality of employees' work; cooperation with the local community; conservation and appreciation of traditions; and economic viability (Ruiz Guerra, Molina and Quesada, 2018). These spaces also serve as informative components, providing information about the olive oil culture, its health properties, and the cultural and social heritage of the environment where the activity is carried out. At the same time, they encourage tourists to become ambassadors of this product since it meets their needs and desires and fulfils their expectations (Parrilla-González, Murgado-Armenteros and Torres-Ruiz, 2020). The interest in this type of tourism is so high (from a social, economic and political point of view) that many factories and oil cooperatives have started to develop this activity. This activity involves converting cultivation or production areas (such as mills) into a place no longer just for production. Also, it is a unique space where visitors can enjoy a tourist experience (Ruiz Guerra, Molina and Quesada, 2018). In this perspective of oleotourism, it is understood that the relationship with museums emerge, where museums are not usually seen as agents of change, instead they are recognised as essential mechanisms to empower local communities, define, recognise, and develop their indigenous heritages (Ames, 2006). For Franklin (2018), tourism associated with museology can be realised as a new field of tourism studies. Discussions about the social impact of museums have generally focused on their relationship with society at large or the middle and upper classes, from which most museum visitors are drawn (Ames, 2006). Through research and experimentation, museum studies programs can provide exemplars for new museum practices (Welsh, 2013). Museology can and should be the principal agent in Humanisation and respect for Life processes. To promote their public participation, museums claim that their audiences are knowledgeable and learn skills to help preserve and communicate cultural heritage (Tišliar, 2017).

4. Bibliometric analysis

The second methodological moment of this study involves the bibliometric analysis of the database, highlighting some key aspects (the relationship of articles, journals, countries, and keywords with the impact on scientific research). For this, to systematise the databases, it was analysed the TOP100 final articles about oleotourism and museology, published in journals with more citations between the period 2005 and 2021. The database compilation of these themes resulted in the Bibliometric analysis. This analysis attempted to study the development and impact of tourism and museology. To this end, the following were studied: the geographic and temporal characterisation; the most prominent articles; the authors most dedicated to these themes; and the interrelationships arising from these themes.

So, from the bibliometric analysis, it was found that the four keywords with more occurrence for oleotourism were Olive Oil, Olive Oil Tourism, Sustainability and Olea Europaea. While the four keywords Museum(s), Heritage, New Museology, and Education from the museology database. They conclude that, as verified in the systematic literature review, the research trends of these articles direct the oleotourism studies towards tourism

and sustainability and the museology studies directed towards museums and education. In this research, the articles with the most citations were highlighted. Table 1 shows the TOP5 articles in each topic with the most citation
ns.

Table 1: TOP5 articles with the most citations in oleotourism and museology

Topics	Documents	Citations (CTs) (n)
Oleotourism	Louadj, L. and Giuffrè, A. M. (2010) "Analytical characteristics of olive oil produced with three different processes in Algeria", *Rivista Italiana Delle Sostanze Grasse*, Vol 87, No. 3, pp 187-195.	27
	Millán, M. G., Pablo-Romero, M. D. P. and Sánchez-Rivas, J. (2018) "Oleotourism as a sustainable product: An analysis of its demand in the South of Spain (Andalusia)", *Sustainability*, Vol 10, No. 10, pp 101.	14
	Millán Vázquez de la Torre, M., Agudo Gutiérrez, E. M. and Morales Fernández, E. (2011) "Analysis of supply and demand of oleotourism in southern Spain: a case study", *Cuadernos de Desarrollo Rural*, Vol 8, No. 67, pp 181-202.	9
	Guerra, I. R., Molina, V. and Quesada, J. M. (2018) "Multidimensional research about oleotourism attraction from the demand point of view", *Journal of Tourism Analysis: Revista de Análisis Turistico*, Vol 25, No. 2, pp 114-128.	8
	Tregua, M., D'Auria, A. and Marano-Marcolini, C. (2018) "Oleotourism: local actors for local tourism development", *Sustainability*, Vol 10, No. 5, pp 1492.	8
Museology	Colwell-Chanthaphonh, C. and Ferguson, T. J. (2006) "Memory pieces and footprints: multivocality and the meanings of ancient times and ancestral places among the Zuni and Hopi", *American Anthropologist*, Vol 108, No. 1, pp 148-162.	81
	McCall, V. and Gray, C. (2014) "Museums and the 'new museology': theory, practice and organisational change", *Museum Management and Curatorship*, Vol 29, No. 1, pp 19-35.	79
	Kreps. C. F. (2008) "Appropriate museology in theory and practice", *Museum Management and Curatorship*, Vol 23, No. 1, pp 23-41.	31
	Carter, J. and Orange, J. (2012) "Contentious Terrain: Defining a human rights museology", *Museum Management and Curatorship*, Vol 27, No. 2, pp 111-127.	22
	Dean, C., Donnellan, C. and Pratt, A. C. (2010) "Tate Modern: Pushing the limits of regeneration", *City, Culture and Society*, Vol 1, No. 2, pp 79-87.	22

From this table, it is notable that the article published by Louadj, L., and Giuffrè, A. M. (2010), on the analytical characteristics of olive oil produced with three different processes in Algeria, with 27 CTs, and the article by Colwell-Chanthaphonh, C., and Ferguson, T. J. (2006), entitled by Memory pieces and footprints: multivocality and the meaning of ancient times and ancestral places among the Zuni and Hopi, with 81 CTs, stand out with the most citations.

Then, searching to know the characterisation of the articles understudy, the journals with more prominence in this database were identified, analysing more than 70 journals, highlighting the journals "Muzeologia a Kulturne Dedicstvo", "Museum Anthropology", "Museum Management and Curatorship" and "Sustainability". The journal "Sustainability" is highlighted by research on the theme of oleotourism, justifying the direct relationship of the theme with sustainability.

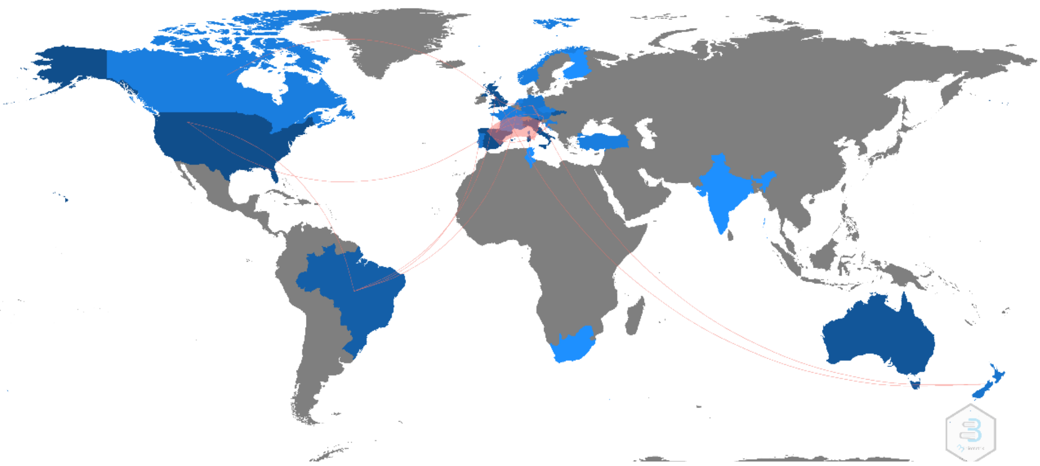
Regarding the geographical and temporal characterisation of the publications, Figure 2 highlights the number of citations according to the temporal evolution, allowing the analysis of the scientific production in the last 15 years. Unfortunately, for 2021, no complete information on the articles was available yet. Nevertheless, this analysis shows that citations in "museology" since 2005 has been showing a decrease. In contrast, research in "oleotourism" appeared in the last ten years, with a lower impact in the scientific world, also presents a reduction.

	Citations (n)	
Year	**Museology**	**Oleotourism**
2005	16	
2006	15	
2007	14	
2008	13	
2009	12	
2010	11	11
2011	10	10
2012	9	
2013	8	8
2014	7	
2015	6	6
2016	5	
2017	4	4
2018	3	3
2019	2	2
2020	1	1

Source: Own elaboration

Figure 2: Citations according to the temporal evolution

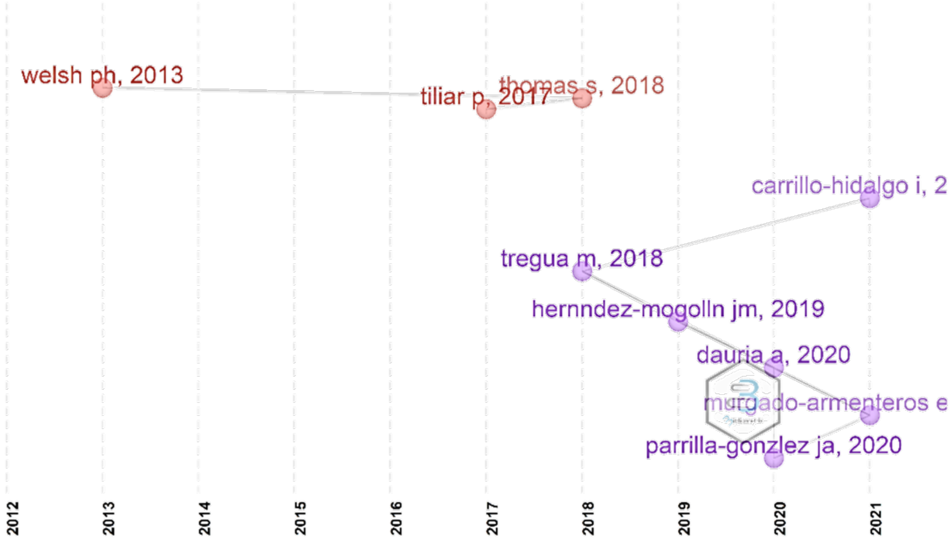
After analysing the research trends, the articles and authors, and the journals most used to publish these themes, it was possible to understand which countries are the most dedicated to studying these themes and the citation relations map between countries. So, Figure 3 shows that in Europe, the scientific research on the themes, museology and oleotourism is concentrated. It is important to note that, for the database of oleotourism, the countries of Italy, Spain, Brazil and Portugal stand out as those with stronger citation relations and scientific production. Meanwhile, for the museology database, the United Kingdom, United States, Italy and Australia stand out as those with the most robust relations with the theme. It is also interesting to note that, in an overview of both themes, the countries of Italy (CTs=60) and Spain (CTs=34) stand out, with relationships with the United Kingdom (CTs=51), the United States (CTs=45) and Australia (CTs=41) standing out. Subsequently, other relationships are associated with this research, such as Brazil and New Zealand, but minor impacts (CTs=16|CTs=9).



Source: Bibliometrix R Program

Figure 3: World map with citation relations between countries

Considering the scientific production of the themes under analysis, Figure 4 shows how the direct citation network is interrelated, based on the documents' temporal dimension and scientific output.



Source: Bibliometrix R Program

Figure 4: Direct Citation Network

This figure exposes the articles located, on the one hand, on the right of the image, in violet, which are the articles of the oleotourism base. On the other hand, the articles located on the left of the image are the museology articles in red. The image analysis shows that the scientific production in oleotourism is more recent, with a list of citations since 2018. In contrast, for the museology database, the relation of direct citations is highlighted from 2013 to 2018. By analysing the interrelationship of the documents, it is possible to understand which articles cite each other in both subjects, i.e., there is a co-citation relationship. Therefore, it is important to reinforce the relationship of the articles, and their influence on the development of each theme is present. However, the discrepancy in the association of both themes is verified when they relate, i.e., the scientific production in museology does not pass through the scientific production in oleotourism, and inversely.

5. Conclusions

After reading the systematic review and the biometric analysis of the concepts, some pertinent conclusions were reached in response to the objective. This study aimed to understand the relationship between the themes of oleotourism and museology using a stratified SCOPUS database. Specifically, to answer the purposes of this study, it was understood that from the systematic literature review, studies in oleotourism are dedicated to conceptualising the term, the analysis of the potential and tourist typologies with which it is associated, and the development of society and economic level. In comparison, a systematic literature review in museology directs its investigations towards the analysis of museums and the importance of education and study programs in the subject. Still, this review allowed to create a line of connection between oleotourism and museology. This connection is reformed through oleotourism's demand to develop ways of promotion and dissemination associated with museology. On the other hand, it was also possible to verify this connection through museology's demand for ways to grow and make museums more dynamic. In addition, both themes follow different paths in their scientific production but address themes and research trends that can be related and respond to each other.

The bibliometric review confirmed these research trends, focusing on prominent keywords such as "museology", "museums", "oleotourism" and "heritage". Also, there were highlighting the publications of the journals Muzeologia a Kulturne Dedicstvo", "Anthropology of Museums", "Management and Curatorship of Museums" and "Sustainability", for the case of oleotourism. So, this analysis proves, in response to the purpose, some benefits can arise from this connection, giving more concise answers to the market. Moreover, their publication can be related to journals in museology or sustainability. Furthermore, scientific research on both subjects highlights that the concepts are developing in recent years during the study. Even though oleotourism is a current subject, it has been marked by its impact. The countries that have the most scientific production on these themes are Italy, Spain, Brazil and Portugal for oleotourism, and the United Kingdom, United States, Italy and Australia for museology, which may be related to the regional tourism offer and the need for research and development on these themes. In conclusion, it was understood that these terms are recent. Also, their development is increased, which drives the need for research on the themes, highlighting the importance of developing studies on these themes and relating them. Despite the importance of this research in helping future studies, there are some limitations on their analysis, which will be recommended to use other databases (such as OLEA SSR markers, WOGBC - Worldwide Olive Germplasm Bank of Córdoba, Marrakech and Izmir, and among others) for the themes and increase the number of articles considered. So, future studies should continue in this area in these contours, looking to extend the search of articles. From this study, it is also essential to understand that more and more research has emerged that aims to provide answers to both themes, but in singular analyses. Therefore, it will be important to investigate these terms together, searching for solutions to answer the museology and oleotourism development.

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Brand Equity and Cleanliness Regarding Brand Experience, Consumer Well-Being and Customer Satisfaction Within the Restaurant Sector

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Abstract: This study was conducted with the aim of finding the relationships between the variables Cleanliness (CLL) and Brand Equity (BEQ) in relation to Brand Experience (BE), Customer Well-Being (CWB) and Customer Satisfaction (CS) within the restaurant sector. The study population consisted of people who have eaten on the premises in restaurants in Peru during the last six months of the year 2021. The sample consisted of 416 people. A PLS-SEM analysis was used using SmartPLS 3 software in order to respond to the hypotheses set out in the study. The results allowed all the hypotheses to be tested, highlighting the confirmation of the influence of Cleanliness and Brand Equity on Customer Well-being in building Brand Experience and Customer Satisfaction in the restaurant sector.

Keywords: cleanliness, consumer well-being, customer satisfaction, brand experience, brand equity, restaurants, PLS-SEM

1. Introduction

This study focuses on the restaurant sector in Peru, which has become an international powerhouse of cuisine (Ontaneda & Quiroga, 2020), allowing it to be recognised for the sixth time as the "World's Best Culinary Destination" in 2018. (PromPerú, 2019).

However, in 2019, the situation in the sector changed radically as a result of Covid-19, due to mobility restrictions, social distancing, and the perception that restaurants were establishments where infection was possible, which led to a significant decrease in custom (Bartik et al., 2020). In response to this situation, establishments and authorities encouraged the implementation of biosecurity protocols, focusing on increased cleanliness of restaurants and the use of digital tools such as contactless payments or the use of digital menus (Gursoy & Chi, 2021).

From an academic perspective, this new situation has also begun to be studied under the concept of Cleanliness (Barber & Scarcelli, 2010; Gursoy & Chi, 2020). In this sense, the present study seeks to contribute to the knowledge of this still little-studied variable and at the same time relate it to other extremely important variables in the catering sector, such as Brand Equity, Brand Experience, Consumer Well-Being and Customer Satisfaction.

With regard to Brand Experience, previous research has found that restaurant customers associate it with food quality, interaction and price equity (Ali et al., 2016; Jin et al., 2012; Ong et al., 2018), which can influence a future visit (Mohamed & Musa, 2012) and generate a sense of affection and commitment to a brand (Brakus et al., 2009).

Likewise, in the restaurant sector, another widely studied variable is Customer Satisfaction. In this regard, previous research has shown its relationship with service quality, customer perceived value and satisfaction (Ryu et al., 2012; Sivadas & Baker-Prewitt, 2000), as well as with overall restaurant image, perceived value and behavioural intentions in restaurants (Ryu et al., 2012).

Finally, this study aims to incorporate a variable that has been little-explored so far in the restaurant sector, but of great importance: Consumer Well-Being, as it plays an important role in the decision-making process (Lee et al., 2002), and it can be associated with the selection of a restaurant if it is able to be perceived as an exclusive place that provides a good experience and also has a positive impact on the quality of life of consumers (Kim et al., 2012; Sirgy et al., 2007).

As a result of the theoretical gaps proposed above, the aim of this study is to demonstrate that Cleanliness and Brand Equity in the restaurant sector have a positive influence on Customer Well-Being, which at the same time influences Customer Satisfaction, and at the same time to check whether Cleanliness influences Brand Experience and Brand Experience influences Customer Satisfaction.

2. Revision of the literature

2.1 Brand Equity (BEQ)

Brand Equity (BEQ) came to prominence in the 1980s when a large number of mergers and acquisitions between companies took place (Leone et al., 2006; Agarwal & Rao, 1996) and BEQ was found to generate higher growth and higher margins for products, by allowing higher prices to be charged and reducing reliance on promotions (Aaker, 1992). At the academic level, Aaker (1992) defined BEQ as the set of brand assets and liabilities linked to the brand name and logo, which brings value to both the company and customers.

Regarding its measurement, Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) developed multivariate measurement scales. Aaker (1991) identified that BEQ is measured through four dimensions: brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand perception and brand quality; while Keller (1993) concluded that BEQ could be measured through two dimensions: brand image and brand awareness.

2.2 Cleanliness (CLL)

Goodman (1979) identified that cleanliness is the most important element in the catering sector, as it influences customer service satisfaction (Barber & Scarcelli, 2010). In this sense, Cleanliness can be defined as the variable that assesses the cleanliness and hygiene of different elements where food is served, such as the dining room, tables, kitchen, bathroom (Barber et al., 2011), staff, (Aksoydan, 2007), the environment of the establishment (Johnston, 1995) and all tangible objects related to the service (Brown et al., 1991; Park et al., 2016).

Regarding its study, even if only partially, previous literature has shown that in the restaurant sector, the general cleanliness of the dining area (Park, 2004), the appearance of the employees (Barber & Scarcelli, 2010; Ryu & Shawn Jang, 2008; Stevens et al., 1995), the conditions in the kitchen (Pettijohn et al., 1997) are important dimensions for restaurant users, since if they do not meet the expected standards of hygiene and cleanliness, they will be labelled as low or poor quality services (Aksoydan, 2007; Zeithaml et al., 1990).

2.3 Brand Experience (BE)

Today, customers are no longer only looking for tangible benefits, but also for intangible benefits, such as unique shopping experiences (Morrison & Crane, 2007; Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010), so it is known that brands that provide consumers with long-lasting experiences that endure over time, will improve the satisfaction and loyalty of their customers (Oliver et al., 1997; Reichheld, 1996).

Within the restaurant sector, brand experience is crucial for consumers and is directly related to the future decision to return to the same establishment (Mohamed & Musa, 2012), the recommendation of the establishment or the generation of word of mouth (Schmitt et al., 2015). Cleanliness is also known to be a variable that can influence the quality of the service received and the customer experience (Barber & Scarcelli, 2010; Bienstock et al., 2003; Liu et al., 2017; Lockyer, 2003). Therefore, it is proposed that there may also be a relationship between Cleanliness and the Brand Experience in the restaurant sector and the following hypothesis is proposed:

> ***H1:*** *Cleanliness influences the Brand Experience in the restaurant sector.*

2.4 Consumer Well-being (CWB)

While Consumer Well-being (CWB) is sometimes confused with customer satisfaction (Kim et al., 2012), in reality Consumer Well-being is conceived as a consumer's positive emotional response to a high quality good or service (Lee et al., 2002; Sirgy et al., 2007) and is manifested in the satisfaction of a consumer's desires in various material, social, emotional, and physical aspects of their life (Suranyi-Unger, Jr., 1981).

In relation to the antecedents of CWB, it is known that as the level of satisfaction with various aspects of life increases, so does the level of CWB (Dagger & Sweeney, 2006; Lee et al., 2002). Furthermore, while the existence of the relationship between CWB with constructs such as behavioural intentions, brand attitude, and customer satisfaction has been verified in previous literature, the same is not true for some of the variables in the present study such as BEQ or CLL. Despite the lack of previous literature on the study of these relationships, it can be assumed that they could exist, since the relationship between CLL and Brand Equity with Consumer Well-being should be very relevant variables for the restaurant customer. For this reason, the following hypotheses are put forward:

H2: *Cleanliness influences Consumer Well-being in the restaurant sector.*

H3: *Brand Equity influences Consumer Well-being in the restaurant sector.*

2.5 Customer Satisfaction (CS)

Satisfaction began to emerge as an important topic in consumer research in the late 1970s (Ainsworth, 1980; Andreasen, 1977; Czeplel & Rosenberg, 1977), with Andreasen being one of the first authors to study the variable (1977), defining it as the extent to which consumers' needs and wants are satisfied, associated with the reward obtained (Ainsworth, 1980) from experiences associated with a service (Anderson et al., 1994; Oliver et al., 1997).

In the restaurant sector, the antecedents and consequences of satisfaction have been extensively studied and service quality (Sivadas & Baker-Prewitt, 2000), customer perceived value or repurchase intention (Ryu et al., 2012) have been identified as determining factors in customer satisfaction. It has also been corroborated that Customer Well-Being has an impact on customer satisfaction through their purchase and contributes to the customer's life (Sirgy et al., 2007). It has also been shown that within the restaurant sector, BE is a determining factor in achieving CS (Hussein, 2018; Nam et al., 2011). As such, it is expected that such relationships also exist in the catering sector and the following hypotheses are put forward.

H4: *Brand Experience influences Customer Satisfaction in the restaurant sector.*

H5: *Customer Well-Being influences Customer Satisfaction in the restaurant sector.*

3. Methodology

3.1 Data collection and sampling

The data were collected through an online survey, using a digital questionnaire as the main tool, because it allows access to a large number of people more quickly, allows a wide range of questions to be asked and easily answered, and facilitates processing at a low cost (Evans & Mathur, 2005; Wright, 2005). The study population consisted of people who have eaten in restaurants on the premises in Peru during the last six months of the year 2021. The sample for the present study was 607 people, of whom only 416 answered all the questions correctly. The sampling was non-probabilistic.

To obtain information on the variables, an instrument was constructed using scales from the previously studied literature. These scales were initially written in English, so they were adapted and translated into Spanish in order to be used within the study population. The items used within the questionnaire were measured using Likert scales from 1 to 5.

Hussein's (2018) scale to measure Brand Experience (BE), was adapted. Also, Hyun's 2009 multi-dimensional scale was adapted to measure Brand Equity (BEQ). For Cleanliness, the scale of Park et al. (2016) was adapted. Henson & Roberts (2006), Ungku Fatimah et al (2011), Worsfold (2006). The Jin et al. (2012) scale was used to measure Customer Satisfaction, which was adapted from the one formulated by Fornell & Larcker, (1981). Finally, the scale of I. Kim et al (2012) previously used by Anderson & Gerbing (1988), Fornell & Larcker (1981) was adapted to measure Customer Well-Being.

To answer the hypotheses, a PLS-SEM analysis was performed using the SmartPLS 3 tool (Sarstedt et al., 2017) as it is a popular method for estimating relationships between variables within complex models. Furthermore, PLS-SEM models are recognised for their large statistical power and comprehensive analysis of results.

3.2 Results

The results of the present study and the hypothesis testing were evaluated through a PLS-SEM model. This process comprised two stages, the first examined the reflexive model and the second continued with the evaluation of the structural model (Sarstedt et al., 2017).

First, composite reliability and reliability for internal consistency of the constructs were assessed. The results obtained were greater than 0.70, indicating a high level of reliability (Sarstedt et al., 2017). The results for Cronbach's alpha, rho_A and pc were also higher than 0.7 and therefore satisfactory (Sarstedt et al., 2017).

The next step to validate reliability was to analyse the average variance extracted (AVE) across all items associated with a single construct. After analysing the results obtained, Brand Experience (BE), Brand Equity (BEQ), Cleanliness (CLL) and Customer Satisfaction (CS) and Consumer Well-Being (CWB) all showed scores above 0.5 (Sarstedt et al., 2017).

Subsequently, discriminant validity was assessed using the Henseler et al. (2015) heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) correlation test. Within the present study, it was determined that all variables were below the 0.90 threshold .

After reaffirming that the measurement model is of satisfactory quality, the structural evaluation was carried out. First of all, it was verified that there were no collinearity problems between the variables, and then the evaluation focused on understanding the predictive model in detail. For this purpose, the VIF was used, resulting in values lower than 5, as proposed in previous literature (Sarstedt et al., 2017).

Next, the R2 values were evaluated, taking into account that the closer its value is to 1, the higher is its predictive accuracy (Sarstedt et al., 2017). The results showed values of 0.540 for Brand Experience (BE), 0.698 for Costumer Satisfaction (CS) and 0.750 for Consumer Well-being (CWB), being a medium intensity in the case of BE and CE and high in the case of CWB.

Hypothesis testing was then performed by bootstrapping 5,000 samples. Regarding H1 (CLL-BE), the results allowed the acceptance of this hypothesis with a path coefficient of 0.74. The H2 (CLL- CWB) was also reaffirmed and its path coefficient was 0.75. Likewise, H3 (BEQ-CWB) was accepted although its significance level was 0.019 and a path coefficient of 0.19, the lowest of all. Finally, both H4 (BE-CS) and H5 (CWB-CS) were tested, with the former achieving a path coefficient of 0.45 and the latter a path coefficient of 0.63.

To conclude the analysis, the results of f2 were analysed, for which values of 0.02 were obtained between BEQ - CWB and 0.09 for BE - CS, which represents a small effect. In the case of CLL - CWB and CWB - CS, the values were 0.43 and 0.52 respectively, and therefore their effects were average (Cohen, 1988) (see table 6). Finally, the predictive capacity of the model was evaluated through Q^2. The results in table 7 show that the Q^2 values were 0.38 for BE, 0.7 for CS and 0.62 for CWB.

4. Discussion

The results of this study present a series of relevant contributions to the study of the Cleanliness and Customer Well Being variables in the restaurant sector. Although the Cleanliness variable has gained much relevance in recent times, knowledge about it is still scarce, which is why this study aimed to contribute to its understanding and prove the existence of a relationship between it and Consumer Well-being, thus covering some of the theoretical gaps in the discipline of study. As expected, the results made it possible to prove the existence of such relationships, even more so in the context in which the study was carried out, where cleanliness and biosecurity protocols have become more relevant within the restaurant sector (Barber & Scarcelli, 2010; Gursoy & Chi, 2020), and it can be affirmed that Cleanliness is key to achieving Customer Well-being.

Secondly, the relationship between Brand Equity and Consumer Well-being was also verified, which reaffirms the idea that Customer Well-being is related to more variables than satisfaction or loyalty (Dagger & Sweeney, 2006; Lee et al., 2002), and reinforces the importance of Brand Equity within the restaurant sector, which is undoubtedly a significant contribution to this discipline. Thirdly, the existence of a relationship between Cleanliness and the Brand Experience within the sector studied was also corroborated, which reinforces the contributions of Aksoydan (2007); Zeithaml et al. (1990); and Barber and Scarcelli, (2010), who had found that Cleanliness, along with food quality and value, is considered a critical component that influences customers' evaluation of the perceived in-store experience (Sirgy et al., 2007). Moreover, the results were verified that within the restaurant sector, BE is a determining factor in achieving CS (Hussein, 2018; Nam et al., 2011).

In addition, Cleanliness is a current topic in the sector, because consumers have high expectations, perceive and evaluate the appropriate appearance of the restaurant, that is why managers and owners must focus on the cleanliness of the environment (Kim & Bachman, 2019). Finally, there are various restaurant elements that also affect consumer satisfaction like the waiting time, service and food quality, and ambience of the facilities (Gupta et al., 2007).

4.1 Limitations and future studies

This study has some limitations. In this regard, it should be noted that the data were collected only in Peru, so it is recommended to expand the study population to other geographical contexts in Latin America, or other realities such as the United States, Europe or Asia.

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A Study on the Positive Impact of eWOM in Eco-Tourism Destinations of Vietnam

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Abstract: This research study focuses on the positive impact of eWOM in determining the selection of eco-tourism destinations. A positive review of tourism destinations has significant images, content and experience. Its natural beauty, environment-friendly practices, sustainability, and other factors determine an eco-tourism destination. The paper's findings suggest that tourists research before selecting a destination. An honest review of a previous consumer has more impact on a potential customer. Travellers opt for online and offline media to judge the authenticity of the destination. This research paper also examines how electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) impacts the tourists' decision to select and visit eco-friendly destinations?

Keywords: eco-tourism destinations, e-WOM, positive reviews, carbon-neutral, travel forums

1. Introduction

Electronic word of mouth marketing is seldom referred to as word of the mouse advertising because of its multiplier effect such as a reliable tool, real-time information, trustworthy and hands-on experience of the product. Users post their reviews and ratings regarding a destination based on their experience, significantly impacting their decisions. 92% of consumers have more faith in friends and family than in advertising. On travel forums, Consumer trust each other like their family and friends. They advocate their candid opinion about the destination and its surroundings and facilities, i.e., parking facility, restaurant, movie hall, gas station and ticketing services available on the ground.

The emergence of social media revolutionized brand visibility with content, images and videos. It is constantly updated with images and videos to get more visitors Interaction with Customers keeps buzzing and engaging the visitors on social media sites. Several studies discuss new-age travellers as always logged in, having ample information, a strong wi-fi connection, exploring new places, and checking accurate time information regarding destination, location, season, and other necessary information. (Camilleri & M.A, 2018)

A study conducted by Google in 2013 demonstrates the five significant phases of travel, i.e., dreaming, planning, booking, experiencing and sharing of pictures, reviews regarding their recent purchase. These stages demonstrate the customer's behaviour beforehand, throughout and subsequently during the journey. It was found that the views of previous users impacted every phase, especially shared on social media and Review Sites.

The above illustration reflects customers' positive reviews on the travel review website.

2. Electronic word of mouth(e-WOM)

e-WOM is a trustworthy source in portraying the positive side of the destination to a global audience. “In Internet marketing, consumers communicate with each other to determine the product's authenticity. Consumers are motivationally involved in e-WOM reviews left by writers, bloggers and reviewers". (Hussain, et al., 2020). Accessibility of products on e-WOM influences the potential customers to indulge in thorough surveys and planning. Ahmad, Hamad, Raed, & Maram (2019) identified three main dimensions of e-WOM as Quality, Quantity, and Trust, impacting the decision of travelling based on these dimensions." Vinyals-Mirabent, (2019) spoke about the several features of a destination such as landscape, natural beauty, culture, architecture, gastronomy etc. These features and panoramic images influence consumers and turn out to be the assessment aspect of choosing a destination".

As per the research paper of Constantinides E. and Holleschovsky, N.I., (2016), 93% of consumers opinionated that online reviews offer real-time suggestions, impacting their purchase decision. "Service Industry, i.e., destination marketers take advantage of engaging the consumer's and user to voice their opinion. This approach amplifies the reach of business". (Ruiz-Mafe, et al., 2018). "61% of consumers leave their opinion on travel review website to assist potential customer's. Their reviews help them to form an impression of the eco-tourism site." (Tata, et al., 2019)

> *"Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) is a dynamic exchange of thought processes, where the potential, former and actual consumer forms an opinion about the available product, service, brand or organization, which has a far-reaching impact on individuals and institutions via the Internet." (Ismagilova, et al., 2020)*

"Social media users' trust in the Internet platform significantly influences their intention to purchase a product/destination. Trust is an essential factor in online purchase, as people are affected by the good/bad experience of the product." (Mahmood, 2014) Consumer purchase decisions are influenced by online reputation and ratings given on online platforms (Schuckert, 2015). Previous visitors' reviews and ratings are seen as a reliable source when planning a decision (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008) (Park & Nicolau, 2015). UNWTO (2021) emphasized, for the long-term sustainability of eco-friendly destinations, retention of natural resources must be assured.

3. Eco-tourism

This branch of tourism targets environment-conscious travellers. Travellers keen to reduce carbon footprint are the exclusive clientele of this segment. Developing countries are funding the green belt conservation, afforestation, protection of flora and fauna, protecting extinguishing species and enhancing the environment sensitivity among the local community. Making people environment-conscious has become a necessity. Vision 2030 focuses on making the world a better place with 17 Sustainable development goals (SDG) determined by UNWTO. People across the globe are finding new ways to conserve natural resources.

Eco-tourism offers multiple opportunities for sustainable fishing, agriculture, recycling, reusing, reducing plastic waste, promoting green travelling by avoiding planes and motor vehicles. The International eco-tourism society defines it as "Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people and involves interpretation, education, cultural exchange, preservation of biodiversity, livelihood improvement and strengthening of human rights." Environmentally responsible properties in these destinations are eco-lodges, treehouses, homestay. **Ecotourism Destinations**

Eco-tourism destinations work towards sustainable development and inclusive growth. Several countries have breath-taking eco-tourism destinations,.These destinations have a stunning landscape, lush green ecosystem, miles of coastline. Different scholars have defined Eco-tourism destinations close to nature, conserved resources, and offered livelihood to the local community. The International Ecotourism (society, 2015), defined "Eco-tourism as a subcategory of sustainable tourism development restricted to natural surroundings." These destinations make optimum utilization of available resources, sustain the necessary ecological process, and conserve flora and fauna. UNWTO (2005) defines "Sustainable tourism as the overall protection of social and environmental impacts, addressing the visitors' needs, involve the environment protection and participation of the local community."

Eco-friendly destinations are focused on reducing the carbon footprint by complying with sustainable measures, i.e., avoiding flights to reduce carbon emission, opting to walk, riding a bicycle, driving electric vehicles, minimizing the use of plastic and other green initiatives. "A tourist visits almost 38 websites before finalizing a purchase decision of the destination. Potential tourist checks social media, search engines, booking sites, online reviews." (Dennis Schaal, 2013)

Numerous research papers discuss the relationship between tourism and the inconsistent landscape and its positive and negative impacts on the environment and local communities. (García-Martínez MÁ, et al., 2017). Millions of visitors visit eco-tourism destinations. This movement of visitors damages the site, and the vulnerable tourist activities disrupt the ecosystem. Over tourism degrades the landscape, and this environmental impact is responsible for the significant adverse effects on biological activities. The construction and development of infrastructure and facilities are often uncertain. (Deng, et al., 2002). Eco-tourism destinations minimize the impact and reduce carbon footprints by indulging in responsible behaviour. Tour operators encourage tourists to be environmental-friendly during their trips and strengthen the local community by purchasing the local produce and participating in nature conservation sensitivity. "Tourists are influenced by electronic word-of-mouth opinions, and this is rising with the development of electronic culture." (López, et al., 2014)

The Eco-tourism activities make the generic use of natural resources, including landscapes, terraces, waterways, vegetation, wildlife and cultural heritage. Urban forests are depleting under pressure; therefore, managing recreational carrying capacity ensures ecological value and satisfaction. Ceballos-Lascuráin, H. (1996) discussed the role of eco-tourism potentials in the environmental development of the Miankaleh Protected Region, which validated the suitability of Protected areas, where activities are consistent in every region on a comprehensive management plan to support sustainable tourism development. Eco-tourism focuses on environmental protection concepts, ecological tourism, and sustainable development is prevalent worldwide. (Saraskanroud, et al., 2011)

Eco-tourism is travelling to natural areas with a sense of responsibility to conserve resources and improve indigenous people's livelihood by giving them a source of revenue. (Jingjing, 2008) Eco-tourism denotes travelling to the natural environment, developed to conserve the vegetation, habitat and wildlife. Eco-tourism is mainly based on the natural environment available to tourists for using it, appropriating conditions and requiring protection of natural resources, which can be realized through evaluation of capability and capacity of the natural environment.

4. Methodology

The existing literature suggests that perceptions of the destination image are essential factors to determine the choices of tourism destinations. The researcher investigated the literature to bridge the gap of determining the impact of positive reviews in motivating tourists. This research study revolves around the positive reviews of tourists and users' reviews on electronic media, i.e. blogs, social media websites, and travel review websites. The researcher has investigated leading newspapers, review websites, social media, buzz, blogs, vlogs and viral messages. This research paper is conducted with the descriptive-analytical method by gathering previous research papers and reports. The researcher has scrutinized tourism review websites to check the content, images, travel advice, recommendations, things to do on a site, reviews, vacation rentals, hotels, travel forms. TripAdvisor, TourRadar, Responsibletravel, Kimkim, Zicasso, Amazon and Agoda websites offer top reviews, a recent review of the verified purchaser, reviews of the destination by several star ratings, text, image, video, video ratings, destination, trip reviews, and verified reviews of a user. The positive reviews while searching a destination are based on previous users' reviews.

5. Result

The paper discusses the parameters of Ecotourism, such as sustainability, natural resources, which are utilized as keywords by a tourist for selecting Ecotourism. User reviews regarding things to do, travel forums, browsing destinations, and themes results suggest that e-WOM positively impacts determining a product and reaching a consensus regarding its purchase. The experience shared by fellow travellers and users' ratings influences the purchase decision of tourists. A bad review and rating on tourism websites can turn potential buyers into non-potential buyers, as people's opinions trigger these reviews and ratings. The paper contributes to the determinants of e-WOM and their impact on tourist buying behaviour.

6. Discussion and recommendation

6.1 Impact of excellent e-WOM

The excellent word of mouth offers a competitive advantage of influencing the customers. Digital WOM can be accessed by anyone, offering accurate time information with images and videos to an online visitor. Following excerpts from the leading newspaper of Vietnam; *VN Express* highlights the impact of a positive review of tourist destinations:

- In January, the New York Times included Con Dao, the 16-island archipelago in the southern province of Ba Ria-Vung Tau, in its list of "52 places to love in 2021."
- In February, Phong Nha-Ke Bang, a UNESCO heritage site, was chosen among the world's 25 best national parks by TripAdvisor readers. With over 3,000 caves and grottoes, it is often called the "Kingdom of Caves."

- In March, Hanoi and Da Lat were included in a list of 14 best Asian spots to watch spring flowers by Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post.
- In April, Dam Trau on Con Dao Island was named among the 25 best beaches globally by US travel site Travel+Leisure.
- In May, the Hai Van mountain pass between Thua Thien-Hue Province and Da Nang City in central Vietnam was listed as the world's fourth most beautiful drive by American site Travel+Leisure.
- In June, the old Hoi An Town was ranked eighth in the annual list of 10 cheapest tourist destinations in the world
- HCMC was named among Time magazine’s 100 most incredible places in July.
- In August, British travel publication Rough Guides listed the Cai Rang floating market in Mekong Delta's Can Tho City among the world's 19 must-visit food hubs.
- In September, American new site BuzzFeed included the UNESCO-recognized Cat Ba biosphere reserve in the northern port city of Hai Phong on its list of 11 must-visit national parks.
- Cuc Phuong, a popular trekking destination near Hanoi, Asia's leading national park, was at the 2021 World Travel Awards in October.
- In November, Travel+Leisure mentioned Ban Gioc in Cao Bang Province in its list of 21 most beautiful
- In December, Mui Ne, a famous resort town in the south-central province of Binh Thuan, ranked ninth on the list of the world's 100 best beach destination waterfalls globally.

6.2 Travel forum

Word of mouth is persuasive for green travellers and offers real-time recommendations based on the customer's great experience. Green travellers use local transport, travel on foot, opt for bicycles, cause minimum damage to the environment, and follow green practices. They believe in a green and sustainable future. Green commuting, i.e., walking, bicycle, and train, reduce carbon emissions. Based on the online behaviour of customers, customized web pages and internet-based ads are recommended. Digital WOM can promote and demote destinations based on the recommendations of users.

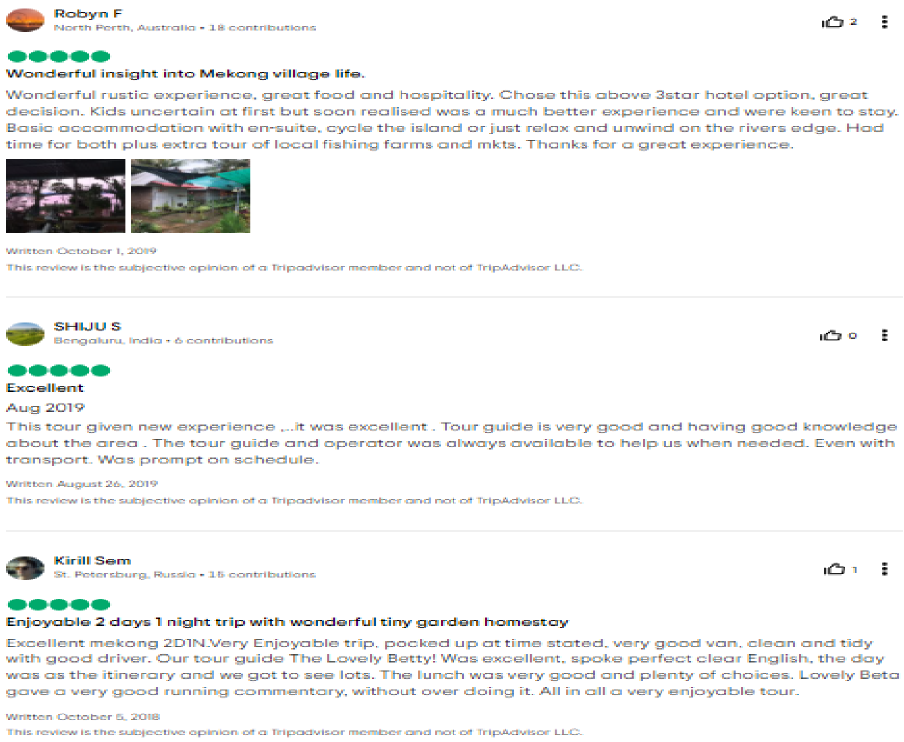

Figure 1: Positive reviews posted by the tourist on travel forum courtesy: Tripadvisor

6.3 Review sites

Online reviews can make or mar the business with positive and negative reviews. The tourism industry needs to be vigilant about its product line presence, rating, and reviews, as customers prefer to check online reviews about flights, hotels, sightseeing, and tour packages. The Global travel review websites, i.e., Bookings, Facebook, Expedia, Yelp, Hostel World, Foursquare, Airbnb, have multiple followers. Potential customers finalize their product line based on customer reviews, location, pricing, facilities, images, videos and virtual tours. The image drawn from Tripadvsiror represents Vietnam's jungles and monsoon forests in diverse ecosystems alive with unique wildlife.

Figure 2: Pu Luong Nature Reserve(Source: Tripadvisor)

6.4 Images and videos

Tourism Researchers widely accept the influencing capacity of destination images in the travel decision process. (Hanlan & Kelly, 2008). Researchers elaborated that "Beautiful images attract the potential buyer to the site, keep them engaged with the virtual tour of destinations and represent the multi-dimension views of the landscape." Mondo, Tiago & Marques, Osiris Ricardo & Gándara, José. (2020) investigated the image of Brazil and Rio de Janeiro as a blended tourism destination (TD) image by examining the image categories as positive or negative and cognitive or affective. The availability of information inspires tourists to visit a destination—images and videos of the destination are the most investigated item on the Internet. Pitana and Diarta (2009) validated that Images develop confidence regarding destination and services. Positive images have a favourable impact on deciding to visit the destination—the availability of images on search engines is well executed with the news, articles, and write-ups. Images and identity can influence tourists to visit a destination. Branding of destinations is significant when developing the strategies for Ecotourism. (Cameron, 2018)

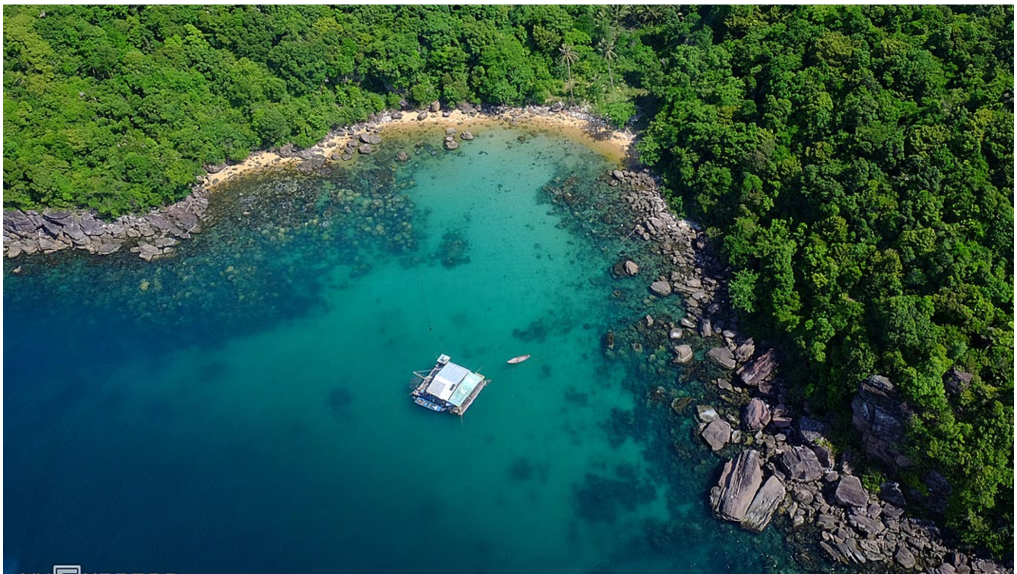

Figure 3: Vietnam tourist hotspot Courtesy: VN Express (Quy, 2021)

7. Information on potential purchase

When planning a purchase, the consumer gathers the information from various online sources where the destination marketers focus on content marketing for activating the USP (Unique sales proposition) of tourist attractions.

7.1 Online Search Engines

Search Engines are the nerve centre of information. They are connected to websites, social media, keywords, third-party websites. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Search Engine Marketing (SEM) are the two tools used by analytic web teams to increase the footfall of visitors. This assists the firms to enhance the visibility of the brand and its products by push marketing strategy, i.e., Pop-up windows, websites, weblinks, cookies, keyword searches are checked and followed by Millennials. Websites also record consumer behaviour and present the choice base ads accordingly. It can divert the customer to a targeted page to enhance the traffic of visitors.

7.2 Social media

Social media is the most sought-after tool among Internet users, as it enhances their visibility, thoughts, and expressions. Brands can showcase their products to global users by participating in social media activities. "This digital platform is used worldwide by the consumers. The Internet users always opt for social media to find any information, as users convey their thoughts, opinions, suggestions on these platforms" (Poturak & Turkyilmaz, 2018).

A customer visiting the destination posts their pictures, videos and experience, which affects the potential traveller in selecting the destination. A blog or vlog on a destination can persuade the customer to choose their destination; henceforth, travel agencies prefer to have a channel on YouTube, a dedicated web page on social media, i.e., Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Tik-Tok, Snapchat, Pinterest and Instagram. Instagram rules the market with one billion users. Millennials and Gen Z are regular visitors of social media sites to share their views via blogs and vlogs.

Social media networks are available in multiple languages and have billions of followers are associated. Customers can have social interaction with each other. Brands and products willing to reach consumers need to assure their presence on all the social media pages with active threads and customer engagement platforms by making them like the brand. Brands create a web page on social media and invite the users to like the web page. The use of social media is widespread all over the globe, with 3.6 billion people using this platform, which is likely to encompass 4.41 billion users in the year 2025. (Statista, 2021)

Social media is used for sharing information about travelling experience, knowledge, service and other products. "Tourists have become selective in choosing their destination based on adequate information available online, i.e., positive e-WOM statement, positive image, trust and satisfaction level of tourists attracts more visitors to a destination empowered by positive feedback." (Aprilia & Andriani, 2021)

7.3 Review/rating websites

Customers perceive the consumer review as a fact, emotion, experience, and even rumour. Their views are considered candid and authentic because their perception can change the behaviour of other consumers. Tourism review sites influence Customers' decisions. If there are no product reviews, customers may not opt for it thinking that the product is of inferior quality. Similarly, the excellent rating may initiate the potential buyer to purchase the product. (Blackshaw & Nazarro, 2006)

"In the digital era, all the travellers read online reviews and ratings during their travel; many customers would not like to book a destination if previous users do not give reviews and ratings." It is helpful to develop brand and destination recognition through online reviews. Sales and marketing of the service industry, i.e., hospitality, travel, and tourism sectors, are stimulated by images and videos shared on the Electronic Platform. (Mellinas, 2019)

Electronic word of mouth can be relied upon when planning a destination, as millennials constantly check reviews about a product or destination. Different Review ratings, i.e., Positive, moderate, negative review, impacts the consumer decision of buying/not buying the destination. Sometimes, consumer decision is also dependent on content. Reviews given on online platforms regarding the product impact the buyer's decision. (Park & Lee, 2009). Online reviews evaluate the parameters of products and services sold on third-party and retailers' websites. (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010)

7.4 Destination website

Having a website of destination can enhance its reach to the global market. When selecting a destination, tourists search for 'tourist friendly' information, reviews and ratings posted by previous visitors. A dedicated website can provide information about peak season, low season, sightseeing, availability of accommodation, food and beverage, sightseeing, transport, and ancillary measures to be adopted by visitors for harnessing with the environment.

In the tourism industry, customer-oriented websites can bring more business and revenue. Tech-savvy customers follow DIY (Do it yourself) principles as they garner the information from the Internet. Availability of information and booking is convenient for prompting the customer to buy the deal. Potential tourists search for better deals and compare prices and products on different websites. They judge the product's authenticity based on its presence. Having a website is essential for product marketing. Good quality of website speaks a volume about the product.

Websites can increase the business's sales and profitability. On e-commerce sites, adding the product to the cart option makes it convenient to purchase the product later as per buyers' time and convenience. Websites keep highlighting and promoting the products to bring more visitors. Having a website with good content, beautiful images, and videos can keep the customer engaged. Therefore, destination marketers must emphasize having a good website. Good content on the website can significantly influence the decisions and preferences of customers. Web-based marketing is increasing continually due to good internet speed. There is an increased demand for having the product/destination website. Chatbots answer the FAQs (frequently asked questions) to assist the customers with their enquiries. Furthermore, an option of a secure gateway can develop confidence in customers for online transactions. The positive impact of the secure payment gateway is that e-WOM has increased the no. of transactions for visiting eco-friendly destinations from across borders.

7.5 Selection of destinations

Destinations are selected based on their attraction, location—consultation with Friends and relatives, reviews, and ratings on social media sites. A bad review can prevent potential customers from booking a destination; therefore, it becomes vital to upgrade the word-of-mouth advertisement with positive reviews.

Millennials are tech-savvy, internet-friendly, and gadget-friendly and like to garner information faster, making them more decisive in handling information. E-WOM is a decisive factor for buyers while selecting the eco-tourism destinations, i.e., reviews like heaps of filth and litter left by tourists make the place looks dirty. It may influence the Internet surfer to search for cleaner and greener destinations. Today's millennials prefer to select their products based on Electronic Word of Mouth Communication, as it is an unceremonious form of communication to get an insight into the product line.

The destinations may be present on several platforms; therefore, destination marketers need to upsell their products by monitoring the reviews and promoting positive thoughts; they must monitor the data during the stay, after the stay, regarding parking, accommodation, availability of vegetarian and non-vegetarian food, restaurants, shopping, sightseeing, and ancillary facilities

Selecting the product based on electronic word of mouth advertisement involves the following:

Figure 4: Determining the selection of eco-tourism destinations (Source: Author)

To finalize the eco-tourism destination, the consumer identifies the destination of their choice and reviews it by judging its Compatibility, reviews, and ratings. The consumer also explores available alternatives based on budget and duration of stay.

8. Recommendation

The researcher recommends sustaining Ecotourism at these destinations with the following measures.

- A positive EWOM of Eco-tourism destinations can generate more eco-friendly tourists.
- Sensitizing the local community about conserving greenery, water bodies, natural habitat, and ecosystem can nurture the feeling of ownership among potential buyers. e-WOM can reduce the damage to the ecosystem if there is a dedicated web page on dos and don'ts at eco-tourism destinations.
- Maintaining the cleanliness of water bodies can prevent the disposal of sewage and chemical in natural reservoirs; these sustainable development goals can be attained by the local community and responsible tourism measures adopted by green tourists.
- If the tourists behave responsibly and remain sensitive to environmental risks, it can lead to articulate planning by determining the carrying capacity and reducing over-tourism to avoid mitigated risk.
- Eco-tourism brings social and cultural changes; development measures can prevent the negative impact of a loss of flora and fauna, biodiversity and expansion of urban areas.
- E-WOM can significantly influence the harmony of suppliers and buyers. Eco-tourism destinations can be the best resort to maintain the natural surroundings, clean water bodies.

9. Conclusion

The researcher has surveyed travel review websites and found that positive e-WOM influences potential customers. The destination is searched based on experience, review, and ranking. Destination management organizations resolve the customer complaint about generating a positive review, which can take Ecotourism to a new level of sustainability.

It was observed that almost 90% of buyers read reviews to determine product quality. Product sellers often instigate the customers to write positive ratings and give a 5-star rating to enhance website product visibility. Positive reviews and star ratings can make the property/destination more powerful than its competitors. Positive reviews like Unique, Remarkable, WOW, Incredible, Significant, Impressive can leave a lasting impression on potential buyers. They can adopt the product advertised by e-WOM message if the information on site is latest and relevant.

The researcher concludes that the reviews posted on the website are perceived to be more credible than advertisements, and they can influence the potential buyer for purchasing the destination. Consumers are willing to share their views regarding the visited destinations, attracting more tourists.

Good reviews can enhance the online reputation. Eco-tourists follow the responsible tourism ethics on electronic platforms and reduce the carbon footprint at travel destinations. A customer has a high affinity towards a remarkable experience; therefore, brands, products, and destinations must make themselves omnipresent on electronic platforms.

Tourism destinations have fierce competition for sustaining their business; therefore, excellent content and reviews are created in the e-marketing world. Authentic reviews result in buyers' conversion; therefore, destination sellers motivate the customers to share positive reviews to enhance brand reputation. Online promotions of events and virtual tours attract visitors. Consequently, positive reviews enhance the visibility of eco-tourism destinations.

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An Emotional Intelligence Training Program in the Tourism Sector

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Abstract: In a competitive and continually changing tourism and hospitality sector the need for high qualified and motivated human resources, which meet the current and future business demands is more than ever imperative. As tourism is expected to thrive in the coming years, it is essential for tourism employees to have intrapersonal and interpersonal abilities that lead to positive interactions with customers, contributing to their memorable emotional experiences and delivering at the same time benefits to the tourism industry. On the other hand, putting emphasis on Emotional Intelligence development, through innovative training programs and educational methods, can lead to qualified personnel, which apart from cognitive abilities can also develop emotional abilities, significant for the tourism sector. In this framework, an education and training program that implements Transformative Learning theory, based on critical reflection, rational discourse, and experience, can motivate tourism employees to get outside of their comfort zones and change their assumptions, their dysfunctional beliefs, their values, and the way of being in the world. In a multicultural environment, such as the tourism field, the implementation of Transformative Learning can lead individuals to be more inclusive, open to new cultures and ideas, re-establishing their perspectives and behaviors to be more functional. Additionally, the utilization of digital learning environments, which are extremely popular in the recent years and characterized by flexibility and ubiquity, can contribute to the effectiveness of the learning process and the improvement of Emotional Intelligence. This research presents a training program that embraces the advantages of digital learning environments utilizing Transformative Learning as a pedagogical tool for the development of Emotional Intelligence in the tourism sector.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, transformative learning, training program, tourism, online education

1. Introduction

Emotional Intelligence (EI) as a relevant topic in psychology and organizational behaviour which attracts the interest of the business field was conceptualized as a combination of abilities which allows individuals to be aware of one's own and others' emotions, and to manage them to achieve positive outcomes that lead to personal development and excellence (Goleman, 1998; Kalogiannakis & Touvlatzis, 2015). Furthermore, the development of EI in the working environment is overly critical as it is linked to leadership, job satisfaction, performance, organizational engagement, teamwork, motivation, low counterproductive work behaviour, healthy relationships, and reduced stress (Samanta & Kallou, 2019; Wang et al., 2017).

On the other hand, as the tourism sector is expected to thrive in the coming years, a tourism employee with high EI is a decisive competitive advantage for the tourism sector business and its reputation. To embrace the new challenges that arise, tourism sector businesses focus on employees who can communicate and interact with guests in an efficient manner (Koc, 2019). Interacting authentically with guests, understanding their thoughts and feelings and empathise them leads to their satisfaction and loyalty while delivering benefits to the tourism industry (Kallou & Kikilia, 2021; Koc, 2019). This interaction and communication as well as emotionally charged experiences between guests and tourism employees add value to the tourism sector leading to a higher quality of tourism services and a greater productivity (Kallou & Kikilia, 2021; Chang, 2014). Research has shown that unlike intelligence (IQ), EI can be developed and improved through training and experience (Salovey, Mayer & Caruso, 2002). Consequently, emphasizing on EI development, through innovative training programs and educational methods, can lead to qualified tourism employees, who can satisfy customers and accomplish organizational goals and profits (Kallou, Kikilia & Kalogiannakis, 2022).

The theory of Transformative Learning (TL), introduced by Jack Mezirow, is a popular area of research and the most integrated adult learning theory which continues to evolve during the last decades (Raikou, Karalis & Ravanis, 2017). TL concerns experiencing a fundamental shift in habits of mind, beliefs and values through integration of new perspectives based on critical reflection and rational dialogue. More specifically, TL implementation leads individuals to transform past assumptions, dysfunctional beliefs and values to new perspectives and attitudes shifting their worldview (Mezirow & Associates, 1990; Brookfield, 2005).Equally, individuals learn and change through constructive dialogue based on their experiences in a way that is serving their growth and the society (Rodgers, 2002).

Concerning the tourism sector, the implementation of TL in tourism education and training is essential since the students can reconstruct their past perspectives and assumptions through critical reflection and discourse and become more open minded in a multicultural environment such as the tourism sector (Kallou & Kikilia, 2021; Stone & Duffy, 2015,). Particularly important in the TL process are trustful relationships among the learners and the educator, as they feel comfortable to share information, engaging in discussions, and achieving mutual understanding (Taylor, 2008). Furthermore, studies have shown that implementing TL theory in tourism education and training can increase retention and provide better educational outcomes than the lecture method (Uyanic, 2016; Feinstein, 2004).

On the other hand, the integration and the utilization of digital technologies change the landscape of the educational and training programs. The emerging digital learning environments claim new teaching and learning methodologies, educational means, and techniques endorsing the educational procedure (Kikilia & Barbounaki, 2011; Kalogiannakis & Papadakis, 2007; 2008; Kalogiannakis, 2010; Papachristos et al., 2010). Digital educational technologies and online environments are flexible learning environments whicharecharacterized by ubiquity and autonomy enhancing the learning process and providing interactivity and engagement (Kallou & Kikilia, 2021; Mackness, 2020). Research shows that digital educational technologies and online learning are as effective as in person education, assisting the learning process while emphasizing in communication, interaction, and relationships development (Quiu, Li, & Li, 2020; Estelami, 2016). Additionally, digital learning environments are also characterized by immediate feedback, exchange of emotions, and social presence (Kalogiannakis, Papadakis & Zourmpakis, 2021).Considering the tourism sector, researchers conclude that tourism students are satisfied and enjoy the learning procedure in digital learning environments (Annaraud, & Singh,2017).

While EI has been acknowledged as very crucial for professional effectiveness and success, there is limited literature available describing the development and implementation of an EI training program focused on the tourism sector. The purpose of this paper is to design an EI training and development program implementing TL as a pedagogical tool, utilizing digital technologies in the tourism sector.

2. Methods

2.1 Participant recruitment

The participants who will attend this training program in EI must fulfil some requirements: they must be graduate and post-graduate students with working experience in the tourism sector or interested to work in the tourism industry and of course with openness, and willingness to learn EI competencies and work in teams.

2.2 EI training program description

This training program concentrates on the development and improvement of EI in the tourism sector through web conferencing technologies. The program sessions will be 8 (90' each) and will include:

- (1) Introduction to EI and its components, its importance in the tourism sector, the benefits of EI in the tourism sector and the characteristics of tourism employees with high and low emotional intelligent. The role of emotions in decision making, in building healthy relationships, in performance and in one's health.
- (2) Identification and understanding one's own emotions, perceiving others' emotions, identification of the mood, effective control of the mood and emotional expression.
- (3) Control of emotions, emotional regulation, anger management and practices for improvement.
- (4) How stress affects one's health, one's relationships and decisions, stress management.
- (5) Social awareness and communication, empathy, influencing others' feelings.
- (6) Relationship management, conflict management, communication techniques.
- (7) Wellbeing, learning optimism and trait happiness.
- (8) Self-Motivation and adaptability in the tourism working environment.

2.2.1 Aims and objectives

The basic goal of this training program is to develop each facet of EI, improving emotional and social skills for graduate and postgraduate tourism employees or graduate and postgraduate employees, interested in working in the tourism industry. Specifically, the primary aims of this training program are:

- to introduce students to the topic of EI in the tourism sector
- to introduce students to practices used in developing self-awareness, and self-regulation,
- to introduce students to practices used in developing social awareness, social skills, and communication
- to enable students to implement practices that manage stress and improve their well-being
- to enable students to cooperate and develop critical thinking in emotional and social situations that arise in the tourism sector.

According to the objectives of this program, learners will be able to:

- Demonstrate a sound understanding of the principal areas of EI
- Clearly describe the concept of EI and its impact on the tourism sector
- Identify their emotional state and manage stress
- Use their emotions in a constructive way
- Apply essential concepts, principles, and practices of EI
- Apply strategies for the utilization of emotions to achieve goals, to make better decisions, and reduce stress
- Develop strategies for communicative skills, and abilities to work with others
- Develop critical thinking skills and
- Reflect and evaluate EI facets using critical thinking, dialogue, and experiences, through collaboration in virtual teams

2.2.2 Educational design in EI training program in the tourism sector

The training program will be conducted in groups consisting of 20 participants each (Fig.1). The size of the groups is due to the nature of the course and the aims of the study which requires a limited number of learners to be able to collaborate in teams. The training program will be consisted of 8 sessions (90’ each).

2.2.3 Teaching methods inEI training program in the tourism sector

Development of EI is promoted through the following teaching methods:

- The learners attend the course presentations and participate in the discussion forums through a web conferencing platform
- The learners join the related virtual team and participate in discussions through critical reflection and dialogue
- The learners, based on their experiences, confront a disorienting dilemma
- The learners present their collaborative work in the virtual class
- The learners study the reference material, including worksheets, quizzes, exercise activities and videos

2.2.4 Implementation of TL theory in EI training program in the tourism sector

In this training program, TL which is characterized as a learner centred adult theory, will be implemented. Learners will be able to develop cognitive abilities and critical thinking, to become more aware of their working environment in conjunction with their experiences and constructive dialogue (Cranton & Taylor, 2012). Furthermore, TL will enable learners to re-establish their dysfunctional perspectives and behaviors and change them to be more open in new cultures and thrive in the challenging tourism sector (Kallou & Kikilia, 2021).

Figure1: Educational design of EI training program in the tourism sector

The adaptation of the ten phases of Mezirow's theory will be implemented individuals to change theproblematic sets of references into more inclusive, open, and reflective ones (O'Sullivan's, 2002; Mezirow & Associates, 1990). More specifically, individuals, in this transformational process, pass through separate phases which begin with a disorienting dilemma. The disorienting dilemma is a crisis which has been experienced or a trigger incident that is demanding, for further inspection of past experiences (Mezirow, Taylor, & associates, 2009). When describing this process, Mezirow (2000) referred to ten (10) phases of perspective transformation: (1) a disorienting dilemma, (2) self-examination, (3) conduct of a critical reflection of internalized assumptions, (4) acknowledgment of resources that cause these assumptions through other people's experiences, (5) exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions, (6) development of a plan of action, (7) acquirement of knowledge and skills for implementing the plan of action, (8) trying new roles, (9) building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships, (10) reintegration of new perspectives into one's life.

2.2.5 Educational technology in EI training program in the tourism sector

Web conferencing technologies, as synchronous tools, are recommended for this program (Teams, Zoom, etc). These digital platforms provide immediate feedback, ubiquity learning, flexibility, and enhance interactions between educators and learners, (Kallou & Kikilia, 2021; Matzakos & Kalogiannakis, 2018; Vlassopoulou et al., 2021). The educators, through these digital platforms, can share content, upload educational quizzes, videos, and assessments (Pokhrel et al, 2021).Furthermore, digital learning environments are considered beneficial in TL for facilitating discussions since learners feel more comfortable participating online (Henderson, 2010).

2.2.6 Educational tools in EI training program in the tourism sector

Interactive educational tools will be used to support digital learning andfacilitate the learning procedure, helping learners to be involved in critical thinking (Djamas et al., 2018). Contributing to the learning procedure and enabling learners to work and engage on group projects, the educational tools will consist of presentations, virtual workshops, quizzes, educational videos, eBooks, digital whiteboards, charting, mapping tools, and chat. Homework assessments will include additional articles and resources and video recording of a teaching session followed by a feedback review.

2.2.7 Educational techniques in EI training program in the tourism sector

According to Jarvis (2004), teaching techniques are not educational methods, but they define a unique perspective in education. In this EI training program educational techniques, used in adult education, will be implemented.Many of the techniques which will be used are participatory and learner centred. These techniques have been chosen according to the subject of the teaching unit, the educational level of the participants and in comparison, with the objectives of the teaching unit (Jarvis, 2004). More specifically, these techniques include case studies, brainstorming, role-play, teamwork, questions, and answers (using quizzes and worksheets), lectures, and exercise activities.

After an introduction of the session's objectives, the session starts usually, with a lecture. The aim of the lecture, which has limited time in adult education, is to introduce and motivate the learners to acquire the new knowledge which will be processed. Another technique proposed at the start of the session is brainstorming by posing a question or by introducing the topic. The learners answer the questions and express their ideas which are then examined. Exercise activities, case studies, questions, and answers (using worksheets and quizzes) are used to complete the learning procedure. Role-play is used to help the learners to experience a situation in depth and understand it better (Kokkos, 2006; Jarvis, 2004; Eitington, 2002).

During the session, the learners will be divided into virtual teams processing a disorienting dilemma. Their working experience in the tourism sector will help them confront the dilemma. Working in teams motivates the learners to interact with each other and develop a cooperative spirit. Within each virtual team, there will be a leader who will be selected by the learners and who will collect the main opinions. Instructions will be given by the educator so that the steps of TL theory are followed. The opinions and the conclusions from all the teams will be represented by each leader and discussed in front of all the learners and the educator. The educator will periodically change the composition of the teams so that the participants may interact and cooperate with other individuals. At the end of the session, a review lecture will be given from the educator (Kokkos, 2006; Jarvis, 2004) (Table 1).

Table 1: Curriculum design and teaching techniques in EI training program in the tourism sector through digital technologies

Sessions (90')	Topic	Teaching Techniques
1st session	-Introduction to EI -The role of emotions -Benefits of EI in the tourism sector -Characteristics of employees with high EI -Summary	Brainstorming (10') Lecture (20') Quiz (10') Teamwork- Discussion (40') Lecture (10')
2nd session	- Perceiving one's own emotions -Perceiving others' emotions -Identifying our mood -Emotional expression -Summary	Lecture (15') Exercise Activity (10') Case study (20') Teamwork-Discussion (40') Lecture (5')
3rd session	-Control of emotions and impulses -Emotional regulation -Strategies of emotional management -Anger management in the tourism sector	Lecture (15') Quiz (10') Case study (20') Teamwork-Discussion (40')

Sessions (90’)	Topic	Teaching Techniques
	-Summary	Lecture (5’)
4th session	-Stress - how affect us -Stress in the tourism sector -Stress patterns - Tips for stress management - Stress management strategies -Summary	Lecture (15’) Quiz (5’) Worksheet (5’) Case study (25’) Teamwork –Discussion (35’) Lecture (5’)
5th session	-Social awareness - Influencing others -Empathy in the tourism sector -Body language in the tourism sector -Tone of voice -Summary	Brainstorming (10’) Lecture (15’) Case study (20’) Exercise Activity (10’) Teamwork-Discussion (30’) Lecture (5’)
6th session	-Relationship management - Influencing others -Communication techniques - Active constructive responding -Conflict Management -Summary	Lecture (15’) Quiz (10’) Exercise Activity (5’) Role play (25’) Teamwork-Discussion (30’) Lecture (5’)
7th session	-Beneficial application of emotions -Team building in the tourism sector - Assertiveness - Self esteem -Wellbeing -Summary	Brainstorming (10’) Lecture (20’) Quiz (10’) Worksheet (10’) Teamwork -Discussion (35’) Lecture (5’)
8th session	-Motivation -Adaptability -Happiness -Optimism -Summary	Lecture (20’) Case study (20’) Exercise Activity (10’) Teamwork-Discussion (35’) Lecture (5’)

2.3 Training program evaluation and satisfaction

Upon the accomplishment of the training program, learners will have been measured in three (3) domains (Figure2):

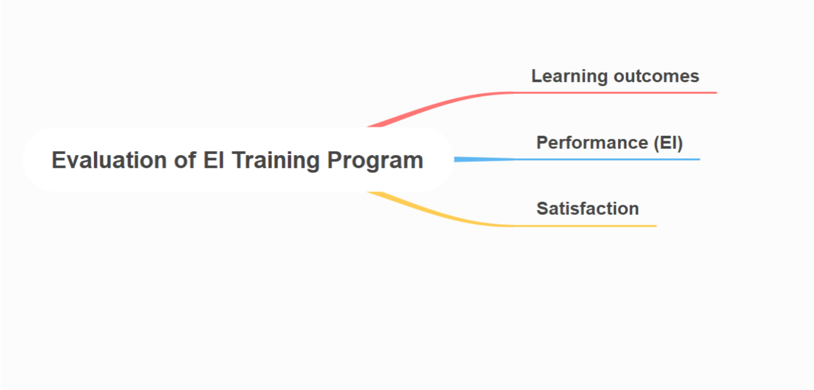

Figure 2: The evaluation of EI Training program in the tourism sector

Considering the extent of the learning outcomes, the learners must successfully complete and submit questionnaires, quizzes, exercise activities and homework assignments in each unitfollowing the schedule given by the educator. The rating scale of these assessment exercises will be ranged from 0 to 100%. Overall, the score of these exercises should be 60% at least for the successful completion of the program.

Furthermore, considering the learners performance, learners will complete a self-assessment survey which measures EI at the start and at the end of the program to reveal changes in participants' competence. The TEIQue measurement will be used, as it has shown advanced psychometric properties and it is linked to real life results (Petrides, 2009). TEIQue measures EI as a personality trait, referring to the learner's self-perception of the capabilities of their emotions (Petrides, & Furnham, 2001), and it is appropriate especially in EI training programs (O'Connor et al, 2019).

The version used will be the TEIQue-SF (Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Short Form). It was developed by Petrides & Furnham, (2006), it contains 30 questions (Petrides, & Furnham, 2001), and is characterized by high validity and reliability (Siegling et al, 2015). TEIQue consists of 4 dimensions: emotionality (recognition and expression of emotions), self-control (control of emotions and impulses), sociability (relationships and emotional management), and wellbeing (beneficial application of emotions). There are also two autonomous dimensions, adaptability, and motivation. A 7-point Likert scale will be used, ranging from 1 (I strongly disagree) to 7 (I strongly agree) (Siegling, et al; 2015; Petrides, Pita & Kokkinaki, 2007).

To evaluate the rate of participants' satisfaction within the training program of EI, the learners will be asked to answer a questionnaire after the 4th session and after completing the program. Through a satisfaction questionnaire, the participants will be asked to answer8 questions through a 5-point Likert-scale item (1 =totally disagree to 5 = totally agree) (Table 2). Finally, participants will be asked to note any suggestions for improvement, through an open question.

Table 2: Evaluation of the learners' satisfaction in EI training program in the tourism sector

	Evaluation of learners' satisfaction
1	The training program has satisfied my expectations
2	The program was useful for my development in the tourism sector
3	After the completion of the course, I would implement the acquired knowledge about EI
4	I believe that tourism employees should be trained in EI
5	I'm satisfied with the educational methodology of this program
6	I'm satisfied with the training material
7	I'm satisfied with the overallclimate of the training program
8	The educator managed to stimulate my interest during the training program
*	Please note any other comments and suggestions for improvement

3. Discussion- conclusions

Having empathy and communicating effectively with customers in the tourism sector is more than ever relevant. Tourism employees with high EI are an asset for the tourism industry providing meaningful experiences to customers. Emotional intelligent employees focus on customers' needs, resulting in customers' satisfaction and loyalty while delivering benefits to the tourism sector. The implementation of best practices in EI training can benefit tourism employees in the development and improvement of emotional and social capabilities. This can lead to a higher quality of the provided services in the tourism sector.

Particularly, the utilization of TL in this EI training program enables learners to reinterpret and re-evaluate their past assumptions and beliefs and shift their perspectives and the way they perceive the world. Within teamwork sessions through digital learning environments, learners critically reflect with their peers and the educator, challenge their beliefs and values, and change them to be more functional. Digital learning environments are ideal for implementing TL, since they can foster collaboration and engagement, leading learners to express their opinions without being interrupted. Implementing TL to facilitate the learning process for the development and improvement of EI capabilities, through digital learning environments, is a concept that can provide valuable outcomes, useful for further implementation and research in the future. On a final note, this training program is a major step for improving EI aspects in the tourism sector.

This program is in an implementation phase in cooperation with University of West Attica, in Greece and we expect the learning outcomes for the evaluation of this training program.

This paper proposes an EI training program in the tourism sector based on practical implications, communication, and interactivity. Therefore, this paper makes a significant contribution to the growing body of EI development providing a valuable insight in the tourism sector, conceptualising TL, and digital learning environments.

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University-Based Hospitality Centers: Popularity and Effective Advertising Models

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Abstract: Hospitality-based centres are not common units within the university's structures. Nowadays, successful universities must offer a variety of both new educational visions and opportunities for a rich campus life and university's public value (Sternberg, 2014). In this context, the challenge to combine more attractive possibilities for events hosting is focusing on special appeals. On the other side, and within the academic life, a cultivation of academic imagination (Lugosi, 2016) could be a competitive tool. Hospitality products show significant levels of importance of what an inspiring university should be. It can be so due to the meetings, events, exhibitions and conference tourism. When mixed up with the academic scene, this can become of exceptional advantage. University's increased popularity can be viewed in regard to the opportunities for rich academic and social experiences along with relaxation in such a form that breaks down walls (López, 2019). For its commercial hospitality space, *university-based hospitality centers* or university campus hotels (Hay, 2020) should be considered in the overall marketing strategy of the academic organization (Gibbs and Knapp, 2002). Developing *effective models of advertising* aimed at integrating tourism, events and social being into the university life can extensively contribute to the sense of community (Henry, 2012), thus to the popularity of the university itself. Networking could be easier to achieve, literacies on more different levels can be gained (Spasov, 2021) or secondary profits for academicians, students, guests, and visitors of the university with additional recreational benefits might arise. In this research, the authors show the results of an exploratory survey of the university-based hospitality center of the South-West University "Neofit Rilski" in Bulgaria and discuss possible implications on planning and management through effective advertising models. The emphasis lies on the unique combination between *tourism product* and *university organizational academic culture*. Results were utilized for the development of a more *holistic understanding* of the university activities' offer under the realm of hospitality.

Keywords: university-based center, hospitality, effective advertising models, education, nexus

1. Introduction

The last three years have marked an unprecedented change in the behaviour of humanity at all levels. As difficult as pandemics times, crises and unpredictability proceed to be valid nowadays. Against the background of this uncertainty, new and even stronger challenges are still emerging, especially regarding the ongoing changes in the socio-economic and political sphere. These happen in healthcare as the most affected area, but there are no fewer negative consequences in tourism, hospitality, and travel. This is the case in education as well. The situation is a little different as related to the university hotel camps. The subject of research is such - one Bulgarian structure, the Bachinovo University Center. As a unit, it serves as a hotel organizational unit for academic purposes, on the one hand, and - operates thanks to the good traditions established at the university, on the other one. This raises many questions, but the first one is about the type of relationships on the level of society, organizations and individuals, and the extent to which they depend on each other. Against the background of these issues, this more specific type of structure is presented here, namely the university hospitality center, and the specific issues of interest concern, of course, the question of how the center survives in times of the COVID-19 crises and how this could happen. According to the authors, there is one leading reason for this survival, namely the type of organizational culture of the university hospitality center itself. It was first established for the purposes of accommodating students, teachers, guests of the universities. Secondary to the university needs were the activities for events organizations and conferences. A good opportunity that could not be left unnoticed was the opportunity to expand the hospitality center and open it to guests outside the academic life such as pupils' sporting events and holidays.

The Bachinovo hospitality university center is located 3 km away from the town of Blagoevgrad, near the green area Bachinovo Park. The center, which was built in the last quarter of the last century, joined the structure of SWU "Neofit Rilski" in 2004. In its hotel part, Bachinovo University Center has a capacity for about 150 guests, including dining areas for visitors. Conference halls with a total capacity of 270 seats and a hall with 150 seats and of course a coffee bar are available and well equipped. In addition to the center, there is a modern Sports and Rehabilitation Spa area.

Obviously, Bachinovo University Center is an important part of the South-West University, which hosts many important conferences, team buildings, training courses, symposiums, camps of sports clubs and private events, including celebrations, personal celebrations such as gatherings, birthdays, weddings, bigger and smaller cocktails. The symbiosis between the center and the university is found mainly against the background of the main role of the center in the practical training of students majoring in Tourism (for the hotel part) and students of kinesitherapy (for the sports and recreation center). Students follow a schedule and have the opportunity to enter a real practical environment not only at the reception positions, but they have direct access to the entire production cycle of the hotel. Students gain practical skills in the field of hospitality, but also learn how to properly communicate with guests, how to react in a real environment and make their own decisions to avoid conflicts. Last but not least, the students get acquainted directly with the organizational culture of the center and the university, moreover - they become part of it. The Bachinovo University Center is part of all major events in the city, especially when these events are covered on a large scale by all media. Most of all, these are emblematic events that have gained regularity within the Cultural Calendar of the municipality and in cooperation with other centres of the municipality (Kyurova and Koyundzhiyska-Davidkova, 2021), and which contribute greatly to the economic development of marketing planning (Yaneva, 2020; Stoykova, 2015) for business areas operating in the city, including the hotel industry.

The Francofolie Music Festival, which was held annually in the city of Blagoevgrad, was of great importance for the city and business because thanks to it the influx of tourists was huge. During this event, the employment in the Bachinovo University Center is 100%. The World Championship in wrestling held in 2016 in Blagoevgrad also provided 100% occupation at the Bachinovo University Center. The events that the center hosts are interesting, especially during the crisis with COVID-19 they were more than vital. Hence, the Bachinovo University Center, along with the Sports and Rehabilitation Center is a very special university unit. It has a specific structure and a hybrid organizational culture. The present study aims to discuss this very specific kind of a mixture of two bodies: of the university and of the hospitality. The analysis used steps on an analytical approach applies a descriptive technique and uses primary data for the synthesis of the events organised by the university-based hospitality center. Finally, the potential for the implementation of better advertising models and strategic marketing decisions (Kotler, 1995; Yaneva, 2020) for the promotion of both the center and the university is provided.

2. The nexus education, university, university hospitality center and the need of advertising models for times of uncertainties

Education does not have the character of economic activity, and the market segment in it is difficult to determine. The economy is very different from the economy of education. There is very little research that works on the problem of education in terms of exchange of services, in the narrowest sense we can talk about knowledge transfer. However, there is one important point that is invariably present in the field of education in general. This is advertising, regardless of its exact form, whether word of mouth or recommendations for one or another educational institution. In more recent times, advertising for education is even present on Facebook. However, there are studies that address this issue and identify some important features for both public relations and advertising. They are generally aimed at promoting educational institutions and attracting more students, more resources and forms of incentives. Some authors point out (Marima 2015) that higher education institutions cannot solve all their problems with a sufficient number of enrolments. It is particularly important to attract the attention of other organizations through which joint projects are developed and with which they have a mutual interest, such as public-private partnerships, non-profit organizations, financial investments or donations.

An important element here is also the internationalization and development of these relations internationally. Other authors, Sikošek (2011), found that awareness of the importance of communication with organizations is also growing in higher education, as educational institutions are no longer an isolated system. Through marketing communications, including through public relations and advertising, education can boldly communicate its achievements and reach a larger group of students and learners. The main purpose of the information here is to create interest in the institution and in certain programs, then it can be said that the market element is almost absent.

The majority of literary sources attribute to marketing communications in education mainly informative character (Barnes, 1993; Kotler and Fox, 1995) or describe them as a tool for public relations (Molesworth, Nixon and Scullion, 2011). Marketing communication is related to the greatest extent to the waves of culture

(Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2011) and thus has to operate with symbols, signs, with different register of languages (Lockhart, 2010); many hidden persuaders or other barriers can occur, especially in view of the pandemic language (Belova and Georgieva, 2021). Some others are those scholars that point to the benefits and role of hidden advertising (Packard, 2007; Frank-Nielsen, 2012; Reventlow, 2013). Otherwise, both the international scientific literature and the Bulgarian literature in this field is very scarce. However, this line of analysis can outline some perspectives and means of realization (Trencheva, 2021; Dimitrova, 2019) and link them to the specific contexts as politics (Stoykova, 2021), entrepreneurship (Madgerova and Atanasova, 2021) and even social responsibility (Vasenska et. al., 2021) that arises against the functionality of a university hotel campus.

However, looking at the activities of the University Center for Hospitality Bachinovo, we were able to identify some important features that need special attention and give reason for future measures. This can be schematically presented by four components in a common nexus, as indicated by figure 1:

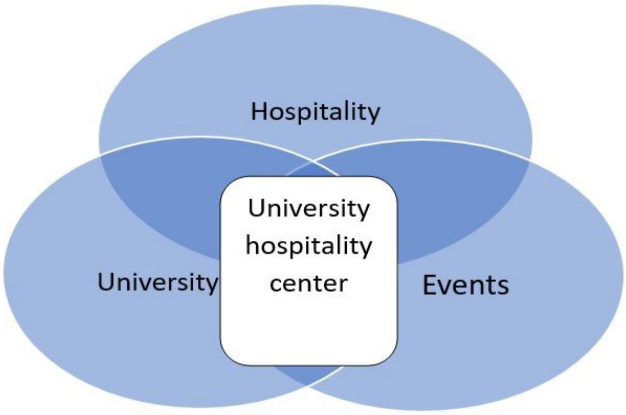

Figure 1: The university-based hospitality center nexus

The schematic representation of this nexus has three main acting sources, namely the university, the hospitality and events, whose interaction has, as a result, the establishment of the university-based center. We name this type of relations a nexus due to the fact that the relations between its components are strong, non-arbitrary but causal. Or in other words, education gives students and educators the tools they need for success; higher education proceeds to the university, but the university needs a stage and event to celebrate the education. In this regard, the university-based center exists due to a special kind of synergy. This synergy is revealed by the plethora of the various events thus ensuring knowledge sharing, knowledge transfer, networking and conferencing in the meantime. And this is the indirect cause of the hospitality services performed by the center. Following the perspective of the indirect causality, it can be assumed that the communication marketing tool of advertising can become a very successful and useful tool. For this reason, we suggest indicating these relations as a nexus of reciprocal relations *hospitality - events – university-based hospitality center - university*. Behind every successful business, including the hospitality industry, is a huge pile of sales. Good advertising, or also good promotion, can make this cup bigger. Advertising is a tool that has a universal character, and if done well, the effort and cost of it are never superfluous. In the hotel industry, advertising is open, in the sense that the organization pays an advertising price to the creator of the advertisement when creating the advertising message. Mostly real photos, beautiful images, advertising techniques of visual metaphors, advertising design are used. The marketing activities of Bachinovo Center are traditionally based on printed brochures. A small impression of it can be received by the picture (Figure 2) below:

Figure 2: University center Bachinovo of the South-West University located in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria

There are no convincing sentences and slogans, the advertisement is completely informative. This feature is undoubtedly related to the connection of the center with the organizational structure of the university. And a targeted advertisement of a higher education institution is a double-edged sword because it can have the opposite effect. It is difficult to talk about advertising an educational institution, a new curriculum or a faculty. But along with the so-called open advertising, marketers have not yet set the boundaries of hidden persuaders within the meaning of W. Packard and have not discovered the secret moves of masked (advertising) messages. Certainly, the model of hidden advertising has its place in marketing communications. Here, the activities of the Bachinovo Hospitality Center will implicitly refer to the educational institution. The possibilities for using such an interconnection are possible thanks to the established nexus between the university, events, hospitality and the center. Numerous visitors to the center could be the subject of hidden advertising at the university. As far as the media is concerned, it is a matter of future research to determine whether a traditional newsletter or new social media would be more appropriate. Of course, it is possible to find other decent ways to promote the center and the higher education institution. A justification for the use of the events organized in the university-based hospitality center can be additionally conceived as an opportunity to utilize hidden advertising and reach a wider audience can be followed in the next section.

3. Types of organized events 2019-2021 in the university-based center Bachinovo

The analysis of the hospitality activity of the Bachinovo University Center is made upon the description and synthesizing of the primary research data. After summarizing the results some main features that better characterize the activities of the university-hospitality center will be presented. Not explicitly included in the analysis is the fact that actually, the center operates as a hotel structure, which provides housekeeping and accommodation activities for various guests, but mostly academicians or guests visiting the center or the city with educational purposes. The figurative representation allows a good look at the type of events held in the center:

After the synthesis of the events organized in the Bachinovo University Center was made, some main features that characterize the activities for the last three years 2019, 2020 and 2021 can be presented. First place in the number of events is occupied by symposiums and conferences which are the most popular event type organized by the center. Although the center usually hosts a larger number of scientific events every year, for the given period and due to the pandemic and post-pandemic crises, their number is significantly reduced. However, it should be noted that the Bachinovo Center was one of the few places in the town of Blagoevgrad where scientific events were held for these three years. Both the large halls and the ability to comply with the distance requirement seemed to be a determining factor for the organizers to choose Bachinovo. Non-academic events, which include all types of celebrations for individuals and organizations, as well as the celebration of special events were ranked in second place among the types of events held. Such gatherings are a valid trend that surprisingly was continuing even during the public health crisis caused by the global COVID pandemic.

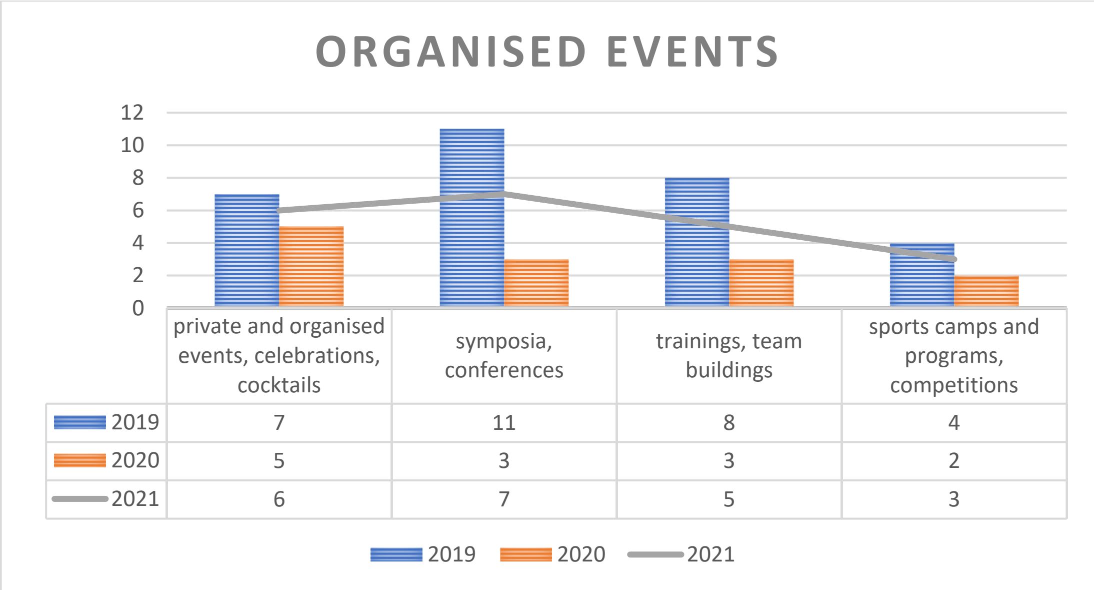

Figure 3: Types and number of organized events for the period 2019-2022

The next most important type of events, again for the given period, and again in times of uncertainty, were training courses and team building. These are again activities related to education. Sports camps, sports schools and tournaments came in fourth place, but this is a very important group of young people because they represent a potential candidate for enrolment in the university. Unfortunately, and as it was valid for the entire tourism sector, the housing activities and attendance at the university-based center have been in a recession and tourism decline is so far unknown. On the positive side, however, this drop could not reach zero values, which was a case for lots of the hospitality establishments in the region. So the center gained some popularity of this, and at the end, what happened was the lesser evil.

4. Conclusion

Following the recent trends for the MICE and MEEC industry related to the conditions of uncertainties and coronavirus pandemic, amid the political crisis on Europe's eastern borders, it is now more than ever clear that tourism is one of the first sectors to undergo radical change. However, the number of tourism service providers, including hotels and accommodations, are in a condition of constant severe competition. However, profiting from the instruments of advertising, potential tourists are reached by persuading messages and appeals, getting inspiring ideas for new destinations. For tourists, travellers, customers more doors are being opened and roads are being offered. In view of the wide tourism, economy, and education supply, even in a relatively small town, a market saturation can be reached, including in several ways. One of them is when the client (guest) chooses these places that have already been tested and those with a positive experience. The choice may be influenced by the impressions he or she has personally acquired. In this sense, the importance of former experiences plus the advantages of hidden advertising is growing, which following the mechanisms of rational persuasion as suggested by McKevitt (2018) can fulfil the role of a persuader who wins approval. The presented research discussed the nexus events, hospitality and university, and just as the battle for every tourist for travel and accommodation is, so is the battle between universities for every student. But for the latter type of competition the arsenal of advertising is not as usual, educational institutions are not market organizations. However, educational institutions can profit from different approaches and operate flexibly on several levels for networking and creating added educational stimulus, use their organizational structure and organizational culture in many different ways. The path to shared knowledge, a nice event and great team building can become a part of the learning experience. Thus, more value for organizations and individuals can be added, a hybrid educational and sociable environment can be created, and as a result university-based hospitality centers as a perspective part of the educational scene can be recognized.

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Glamping: An Active Back to Nature Trend in the Post-Pandemic Tourism Reality

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Abstract: Although that today most people reside in cities, megacities, megapolises or urban agglomerations, they are striving to experience nature more often and in a significantly ways following new forms of tourism. Sustainable going back to nature is one of them and it allows inhabitants of both cities and countryside to find more differentiated ways to be on their own and recharge spirit and soul. A tent in nature is a favourite vacation imagination for many Americans and Western Europeans. Innovations in this type of recreational activities are exciting push stimulus for the experienced and future camping fans. Being still a neologism for the linguists, glamping is not any longer an unknown term for the tourism practice and the admirers of nature and well-being know it. Being a new kind of luxury campsite and having revived the old-fashioned camping life means attracting newcomers especially those who get tired due to the long coronavirus outbreaks and those who desire to give rise to this fresh tourism trend. Glamping is also a kind of a boutique camping living. It is a trend that brings together the comfort of a hotel combined with nature and freedom of camping. The contemporary facilities can go far beyond most usual tents of campers combining new with old experiences. Thus, the purpose of this article is to reveal the potential of glamping in the scope of active life and well-being tourism, whereby a snapshot observation technique has been applied.

Keywords: glamping, well-being, typology, geographical distributive analysis, post pandemic, tourism form

1. Introduction

Although glamping is often considered as one of the latest trends and an alternative to mass tourism, regardless its classification, it gains a special attention especially today after the outbreak of the Coronavirus disease pandemic. In the context of social constraints, the concept of glamping finds additional motives for reorganization even in sense of reengineering processes. Although the origins of this tourism form are built upon analogies to camping and as regarding its origin, glamping goes far back to the dawn of human history. Today glamping can hardly be perceived as an entirely new tourism form, but as the new camping version that offers lots of opportunities, plenty of experiences and most of the advantages of the nature-based tourism. Glamping fans consider this variety of factors to be its most important appeal, together with the offering of excellent landscapes, ample spaces, luxury, magnificent ambience, and outdoor environment. Authors agree on the uniqueness of these factors, which glampers, practitioners, service providers and analysts unmistakably define as conditions of exclusivity. Along with the promises for unique experiences, intimacy sharing with nature, entering the fairy tales' world, rural imaginaries and a set of other dimensions, glamping belongs to comfortable outdoor experience. If seen through the lens of the environmentalist perspective, the consumption theory or hospitality management, glamping advocates magic of the natural element. Here the authors believe that its exceptionality is due to the successful combination of all of the aforementioned factors. In our opinion, these factors can be commented as primary factors. Along with them, there are some others that we describe as secondary factors which deserve new viewpoints of researchers, critical thinkers, admirers, and community developers. Secondary factors can be identified at three main levels: at the level of the individual, at the level of society, and at the level of humanity. The present paper claims for an increased attention to the first level, which can be successfully revealed through the prism of the concept of well-being as a representative of the secondary factors' level. The constructive features of combining openness and privacy, peace and tranquility, brilliant scenes and accommodation beneath, luxury and space, intimacy with nature and space within, health and safety caring are all present in a very specific way for the individual to go on a glamping vacation. The authors believe that looking at the secondary factors there reveals main potentials for gaining attractivity. Applying some reengineering methods to glamping has just started on many campsites and is spreading. In addition to the present situational dimension, glamping offers a rich dosage for variety of interests such as water sports, cycling, climbing, and observing flora and fauna. The prospects for these activities are practically unlimited, unlike just camping, just recreation, just observation, just sightseeing, just open-door overnight staying. Much in this vein, the authors reflect on the current situation of glamping in Bulgaria and involve to its overall notion the concept of well-being. In this sense, the main purpose of this research is to describe the potential of Bulgaria's tourism, leisure, and hospitality opportunities as opportunities for glamping. In addition to the stationary analysis, some discussions are provided in view of the main competitive destinations in South Europe.

Since in fact glamping sites comprise luxury tents in bright colors, modern caravans, and bungalows, they can also offer the highest quality of gourmet restaurants, including dinner under the stars, breakfast on the grass, etc. Glamping sites can be located near the sea or other water springs, near or in the middle of a picturesque landscape, they can have unique scenes, or they can emerge practically everywhere including in urban settings. This piece of evidence is confirmed by all fans of glamping, by the websites of glamping spots, as well as by the theoretical novelty in the literature sources on the subject.

The article also offers a new look at the way how literature sources are treated and rationalized. This is made by providing a geographically distributive (comparative) analysis. The applied methodology is the synthesis and deductive approach to glamping. Last but not least, our goal is devoted to the presentation of a glamping typology based on the tourism practice of a specific investigated region.

2. Literature review: Directions of the glamping camp establishments

In his entertaining reading, and without entering the scientific fields of tourism, recreation and hospitality, Jackson (2014) identifies some essential facts and gives basic tips for being a camper. He states main practical points and shares experiences of how unforgettable the camping experience can be. Undoubtedly and even in this technological 21st century, each of the readers can agree on having not forgotten their own story of spending a night in nature. Additionally, this outdoor staying can be a great experience, it can become a nightmare, or it may not necessarily be associated with a campsite, but it does have some rules and a checklist. A successful open-air experience in nature, on the other hand, also needs tools and tips, rules for cooking, but to become a successful tourist product more than a tent and stars up above will be needed. An important segment is the uniqueness of the experience and the inclusion of primary factors (luxury, price, location, service) and secondary factors (popularity, attendance, social, cultural, and environmental value, innovation). When choosing the appropriate accommodating outdoor form an important role plays the additional effect of well-being as one of the secondary factors' representatives.

Relevant, but already from the point of view of tourism theory and reality, many authors treat the evolution of camping tourism and rationalize the emergence of glamping. Very often the starting point is oppositional and justified by the presence of weaknesses and strengths of SWOTs (Miller, 2017; Pannel, 2017; Igoe, 2016). For the most part of these authors, the idea of transformation for camping practice has to been seen as the main discourse. Only a few researchers support the increasing trend of the active tourism in natural ambience and relate it to the role of well-being. And only few of the scholars perceive a connection between glamping, nature-based tourism, consumption and requirement of post-pandemic recovery in the lens of their interconnectedness.

Not only the evolution of glamping tourism (Cassiel, 2016), but also the diversification of tourist behaviour, visible in the growing demand for a more comfortable and luxurious accommodation; due to the perceived service quality Brochado and Pereira (2017) justify the growth of glamping in outdoor recreation and tourism.

Glamping all over the world is a fast-growing form of tourism and it is represented on the tourist market, not as well-established for now. Tourism theorists, as well as practitioners, have long known about this holiday activity which offers the best opportunity for tourism and outdoor recreation (O'Neil et al., 2010), that participants travel to spend time living in tents, motor homes, or other types of informal, rural accommodation (MacLeod, 2017).

The justification for this viewpoint is the direct relation to the very nature of camping. In addition, some indirect changes in tourists' behaviour and tourist experience are to be respected, including the possibility to combine more opportunities than the ones offered by camping. This combinative reveals the chance to stay in nature while implying a better component of frantic camping. Therefore, the definitions of glamping themselves are growing, and there are no such definitions as luxury camping (Vres and Vres, 2015: 42; Pereira, 2013: 1, Kuhar, 2016); boutique camping (Engama and Mauricette, 2013), five-star camping (STO, 2010), comfortable camping, adult camping, prima camping and other similar colloquial definitions. In Slovenia, even at the national level, they are introducing their parallel concept of glamorous camping, and in Turkey they say that thanks to glamping tourism, travel enthusiasts can live in the desert without sacrificing certain amenities (Göktaş & Kızılırmak, 2017).

As a result, the supply of this mixed type of tourist product, which includes camping outdoors, has an environmentally friendly effect, and at the same time includes a greater dose of comfort and luxury for campers. This view of the nature of glamping is mentioned by almost every writer on its issues, so the question "What makes a glamping experience great?" cannot remain unanswered.

Another major issue of interest to researchers is the type of tourists who prefer glamping tourism. In this way, they can better offer solutions in the preparation of regional and national strategies, or marketing tips for business and stakeholders. According to a large-scale study in Croatia, Cvelic-Bonifacic et al. (2017) managed to register 14 types of glampers. Thus, it turns out that glamping is a concept for fans of different tourism forms, and that glamping can make good use of tourism segmentation. In their study Lyu, Kim and Woo Bae (2019) identify different management strategies for developing satisfactory glamping travel sites. Glamping provides an answer to another important question for the tourism industry. This is the question of overcoming the seasonality of supply. Camps around the world are considered seasonally limited, but with the introduction of luxury and innovative products, glamping is a positive step in this direction. Innovations not only increase their competitive advantage, but by bringing luxury and comfort, the camps become independent of time. In this way, innovations have a direct contribution to reducing the impact of seasonality in campsites (Cvelić-Bonifačić, Milohnić and Cerović, 2017), but at the same time open the door to new and creative ways of accommodation. There is, of course, something to be desired from tourism research in this direction, and not so much in terms of tourism supply and demand (price-quality ratio of service). The identified gap lies in the sphere of the secondary factors of the development of this niche tourism form (Kiryakova-Dineva, Vasenska, and Koyundzhiyska-Davidkova, 2021). One next idea that remains undiscovered so far, or at least not entirely, is to trace the evolutionary nature of glamping through the prism of the whole cycle of economic values, environmentalism, sustainability, social significance, and human health, including well-being. It is the detailed examination of the relationship between nature-based tourism and the new social and health realities, including in times of crisis that will contribute to the better understanding of the complex matter of natural friendliness and social responsibility. It is certain that this research direction will give rise to a wider scope of interdisciplinary research.

Integrative connections between all spheres of human life, time for recreation, and the search for sustainable values are an integral part of human activities in today's reality. The activities of the modern tourists and travelers are likely to change, and it can be expected that the tourism industry will continue to change. In glamping, however, new requirements, such as more security, social exclusion, protection and hygiene, are meeting these requirements very quickly, incorporating new, innovative solutions and becoming the key to sustainable growth and development. Tserovich (2014) believes that the new type of camping will necessarily include innovative products. This, in turn, can create an entirely new type of search for recovery, which will establish as a reception spending the holiday as time being in nature. Today, we are not far from this possibility, as we are increasingly witnessing how constraints create a new kind of demand. Security, human health and harmony can be found through many different concepts. One of them is the concept of well-being.

3. Glamping typology in South Europe

As camping, glamping offers a variety of comfortable amenities, they can differ in terms of shape, materials and location. There is still no research on the classification of glamp camps and their types. One possible classification could apply the shape criteria, including glamping pods, glamping cabins, glamping domes, glamping tree houses, glamping tents, glamping bubbles, glamping yurts, glamping safari tents, glamping towers, glamping hobbit homes, glamping vintage trailers, glamping gipsy homes to mention a few among the popular ones. Another classification factor may be independence or integration with another type of accommodation, such as a campsite or another type of hospitality facilities.

Our stationary analysis for glamping facilities in South Europe and upon the suggested criteria is presented as follows:

Table 1: Glamping typology in South Europe

Type and subtype	Material	Shape	Location	Accommodation facilities
Tent Glamping (normal tents, yurts glamping, tips and teepees, safari)	Tent	Yurts, A-Form tents,	No limited location	Individual
				attached to other hospitality facility

Type and subtype	Material	Shape	Location	Accommodation facilities
Pods glamping (huts, barns)	Tent, mixed	Various, not specified	On ground	Individual or attached to other hospitality facility
Tree glamping	Wood	Various, not specified	On trees	Attached to a common areas (baths, bath tubs, kitchen, living area)
Bubble glamping Geo-dome Glamping	Transparent structure made of steam bent wood	Circular shaped	On ground bubbles or on water bubbles	Attached to a common areas (baths, bath tubs, kitchen, living area)
Glamping on water (huts on water, floating huts)	Wood, metal mixed,	Rectangle	On water or floating on water	Attached to a common areas (baths, bath tubs, kitchen, living area)
Caravan Glamping	Gypsy caravans, wagons, roulottes with exquisite furnishings, or rustic and basic facility	Circular or rectangle	On ground	Fully individual, no need common areas and facilities

Source: authors' own collaboration

4. Connecting academic research and practice

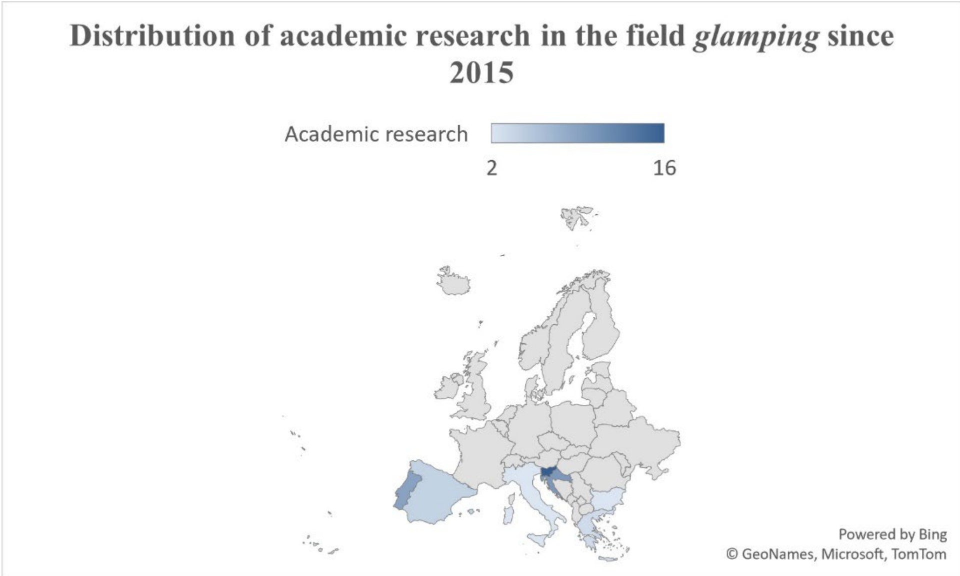
Modern tourists are becoming more aware and have a more pro-active attitude both to their own well-being and to the way they consume natural resources. Today's tourist takes these two points into account more and more, even when choosing a place to rest. Therefore, whether in a natural evolutionary way or thanks to an innovative tourist solution, glamping can accommodate conscious tourists, without much excess, without cement and concrete. In addition, glamping responds well to the different needs of tourists for profiled practice of a particular type of tourism, such as recreational, ecological, cultural, mountain, sea, extreme, etc. Carefree stay in the untouched nature can be rooted in the search for specific typical blacks, but the search for closeness and intimacy with nature is always inherent, especially since the small addition of luxury facilitates the goals of the tourist.

There are many views of tourists who are aware of the main intersections of the dichotomy of nature and well-being. The following parts of the physical aspects "physical health and wellness, lived experience and shared meanings, social lives and political realities" are of special importance to the prominence of the latter and as Dasgupta definitively approaches it. It is this kind of relationship between realities that can be spoken of through the manifestation of glamping, where human awareness and nature-based experience go hand in hand.

Along with the research conducted via mapping and the prospects achieved, another fact is to be regarded as even much more important. The authors were able to establish this fact thanks to a slightly different synthesis of research literature. This review was made on the bases of the literature on glamping synthesis over the period of the last 7 years. The exploratory analysis provided by the authors established some main lines in the research thus being in the direction of service, experience, and luxury. These features reflected the well-known nature of glamping. However, the scientific novelty here discovered through the application of the geographical distributive analysis shown in the next figure.

Using the principle of geographical distribution of the academic research on the national level for the region of South Europe there emerge countries with explicitly greater interest in the topics related to glamping. These countries are Slovakia, Croatia, Portugal, Spain, Italy and Spain. Our bibliometric analysis of the literature sources could embrace 44 scientific articles related to glamping. Bulgaria is represented by only 2 sources so far. A special case are Slovenia and Croatia. There, the topic of glamping is particularly well developed as an emphasis not only on scientific fields such as marketing, service and practice, but also in the scope of university education and research. Given that the graduates are the future specialists in tourism, it can be expected that there is a special kind of potential and a kind of transfer of knowledge between theory and tourism practice. For example, at the University of Maribor for the last 7 years, there have been 12 publicly published theses related to various aspects of glamping. Main direction of these works are sustainable operations and realization of sustainable tourism development in glamping, conceptual design of glamping and architectural interaction of nature - glamping, marketing of innovative, nature-related tourism products and cases studies related to glamping sites located at

Lake Zajarki in the town of Zaprešić, at Lake Velenje and in Kamenško and Medvedce, opportunities for glamping and motivations to visit a glamping site in connection with sustainability.

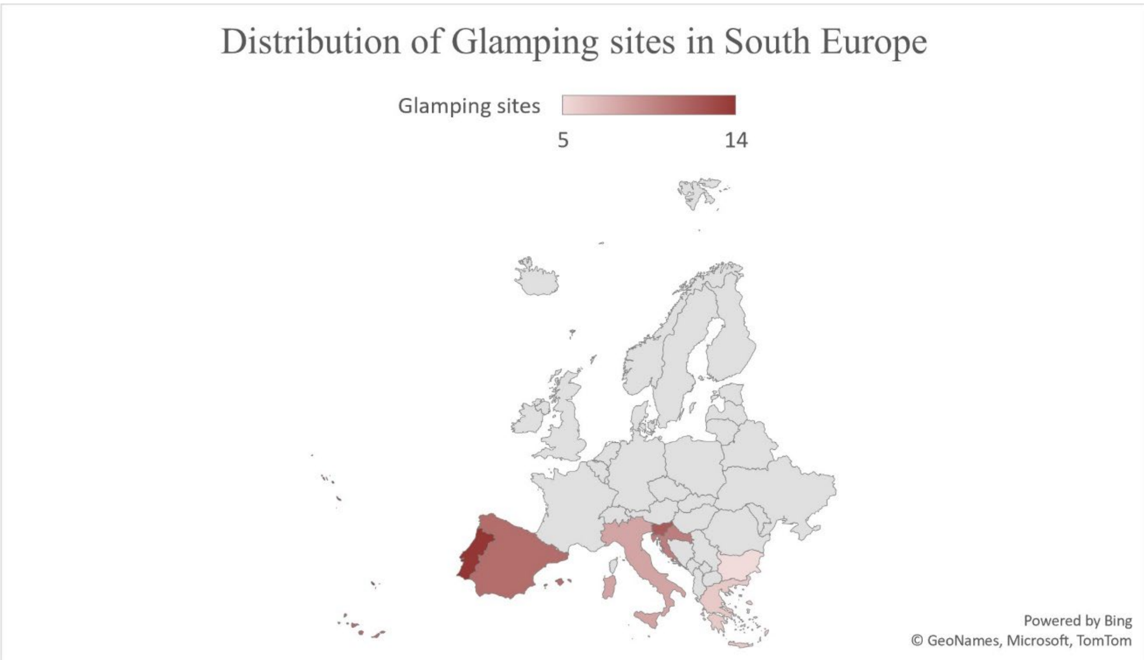


Source: Authors' own model estimation

Figure 1: Geographically distribution of glamping literature since 2015

This specific feature in university research seems to be very important for the future research of glamping. Additionally, the cases studies can significantly contribute to the better understanding of its potentials.

The next step of our investigation is related to the model of the distribution of the glamping sites in some South European countries. It was established again upon the geographical principle of regional distribution. We investigated some main marketing medias, namely according to the data from glampinghub.com, glamping.com and booking.com. In interesting point of investigation was again the geographical distribution of the glamping sites. Our idea was to look in a deeper detail into the kind of glamping sites and their dispersion. Although in her study Sommer (2020) was identified Portugal, Slovenia, Greece, and Croatia as main marketing destinations for Europe. According to our summary of primary data we can visualize the following geographical distribution:



Source: Authors' own model estimation

Figure 2: Distribution of glamping sites in South Europe

The presented two models confirm the possibility of a first comparative attempts for geographical distributive analysis. This analysis shows a direct proportional relationship between the development of glamping tourism and research in the glamping sector. In conclusion, it is clear that in the regions where glamping has a good pace of development, the academic interest in the respective country is greater.

5. Conclusion

In this regard there are some limitations. As regarding the first restriction, many of the offers have not been promoted on the specific web-cites, as these are promotional channels, which are not free of charge. Very often the glamping camps themselves have not yet realized the need for more active marketing and positioning activities on Internet and do not participate in glamping networks. Another limitation is that many glamping cites are positioned in the national language and for this are difficult to be recognized by glampers using English as lingua franca. Because in our case we are talking about countries such as Greece, Slovenia, Croatia - where due to linguistic peculiarities there is a great obstacle in the search for glamping tourism offers. Our idea here is to discuss the dispersion of glamping sites in South Europe which is on a regional level and to open the perspective for future research on European and global level. Some of the glamping establishments have positioned themselves as such in the tourism market and have a relevant marketing policy, but some of them are still in the beginning of marketization. The approach applied for that reason was the geographical distributive analysis with combined with the techniques of synthesis and comparison. Other and more sophisticated statistical methods can be applied in future research on the area. There is an additional restriction with regard to the proposed typology, because it is based on examples at the regional level and therefore it is not exhaustive. Future guidelines, comments and affirmation of glamping as a category of tourism are also to be a matter of future discussions. Some other limitations can be expected in regards of the literature review which appear due to the linguistic issues, because many authors publish in the national languages, and this cannot easily be followed.

This article confirmed the importance of a very interesting niche type of tourism - glamping. An analysis of geographically distributive analysis was attached to the topic, both in terms of the literature sources developing the topic of glamping and the specific sites positioned in Bulgaria. Along with the other different approaches to glamping, this study found that glamping is developing more and more in destinations that have good traditions and natural resources. In view of the literature and cartographic analysis, the authors confirmed the existing opinion that glamping is a promising form of camping with discomfort. This fact is confirmed for the relatively small in size, but large in terms of tourist offer destination Bulgaria. As in the whole of Central and Southern Europe, as well as in the Mediterranean part of Turkey, a new accommodation appears here almost every season, which meets the criteria of environmental friendliness, closeness to nature, relatively more amenities, good services and an unforgettable experience. Glamping sites in Bulgaria are located on the Black Sea coast and in mountainous areas. But there are already those who are not positioned among the necessarily attractive natural landscape. Among the glampings there are also those with classic tent or wooden buildings, but there are also new modern solutions such as balloon glamping Sineva. In addition, all glamping destinations in Bulgaria work in harmony with both nature and man, which contributes to the unique application of a well-being adventure. Glamping allows people to make their holiday as comfortable as possible and still enjoy a higher standard of hotel services and individual comfort. Due to the growing trend and the need for competitive advantage, Bulgaria has the potential to develop the marketing offer and promotion of glamping tourism, especially in the post-pandemic reality. Precisely in times of health and humanitarian crises, glamping sites can offer tourists a first-class experience that will offer security, protection, and at the same time ensure the inclusiveness of the experience.

Despite the above-mentioned conclusions, as a result of the author's research, some new perspectives for glamping are open. In the first place, they concern the more serious networking between glamping sites at a national and European level. Glamping should increasingly be seen not only as an alternative but also as a reality with added social, natural and anthropogenic value.

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Creative Tourism in Vila Nova de Foz Côa: Current Challenges and Future Perspectives

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Abstract: The tourism industry is constantly evolving, mostly due to the development of destinations and ever-changing tourist preferences. As a result, there has been a growing concern with promoting the use of existing resources and increasing profitability, particularly by encouraging diversity and creating local dynamics, moving beyond mass tourism. As tourists show a preference for more personalized and authentic experiences, there is also a growing demand for different experiences, paving the way for creative tourism and co-created activities. Focusing on creative tourism in Vila Nova de Foz Côa, this paper aims to contribute to the understanding of the concept of creative tourism, as well as to identify its potential and impact on this region. Drawing from a literature review crosscutting the concepts of authenticity, creativity, and memorability, and on semi-structured interviews with local stakeholders, authors put forward a comprehensive analysis of the state of the art of local policies and available tourism activities, outlining key-areas for future development. Overall, the main results of this research show that creative tourism in Vila Nova de Foz Côa is still at an early stage, and even though there is a common interest in developing this practice, it is necessary to improve the relationship between the different stakeholders, particularly when it comes to their communication and involvement in shared initiatives. On the other hand, given the potential of the region, it was also possible to identify prospective tourism products and activities, which can leverage future initiatives within this scope.

Keywords: co-creation, creative tourism, memorability tourist experience, Vila Nova de Foz Côa

1. Introduction

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2019), cultural tourists' main motivation is to know, discover and experience the tangible/intangible attractions/products of a tourism destination. These attractions/products are related to a set of material, intellectual, spiritual and emotional characteristics that encompass arts and architecture, historical and cultural heritage, gastronomy, literature, music, creative industries and living cultures in their lifestyles, value systems, beliefs and traditions (Richards, 2018). The practice of cultural tourism has intensified over the past decades, as tourists have shown a greater interest in getting to know the culture, heritage and history of the destinations they visit, which has boosted cultural attractions and heritage (Richards & Raymond, 2000). Richards and Wilson (2006) value creative tourism over cultural tourism, from the perspective of supply and demand, since creativity adds more value, while involving the tourist in the creative life of the destination, also enhancing the sustainability of creative resources. The creative industries refer to knowledge-based creative activities that link products, consumers and places, using technology, talent or skill to generate significant intangible cultural products, creative content and experiences (OECD, 2014). The main focus is on the development of creative production, including advertising, art, film, design, fashion, architecture, and crafts (Richards, 2011), ensuring a positioning among the most dynamic emerging sectors of world trade (UNCTAD, 2010).

Based on the studies of Richards and Raymond (2000), Richards and Wilson (2006), and Tan et al. (2013) this research aims to understand the concept of creative tourism in its application in inland destinations, namely in Vila Nova de Foz Côa. As specific objectives, the research aims to describe the profile of the creative tourist and critically reflect on the concepts of creativity and innovation in the context of creative tourism and the role they play in the development of Vila Nova de Foz Côa. In addition to relating the supply and demand motivations for creative tourism, this paper will also establish the importance of stakeholders and residents in the development of creative tourism experiences, while discussing its socio-cultural, environmental, and economic impact, crosscutting them with the behavioural intentions of tourists within this scope.

2. Literature review

Creativity has several advantages for *branding* cities, being associated with flexibility, the ability to reach members of the creative class, the attractiveness of creative lifestyles, and a link to the media (Richards, 2014). Its application to tourism has been developed in numerous ways and has registered a significant increase, with tourists wanting to take part in different and innovative experiences (Sá, 2017). This development includes the creation of tourism products and experiences, the revitalization of existing products, the enhancement of cultural/creative assets, the economic outcomes for creative development, the use of techniques to enhance the creative experience, and the addition of excitement and atmosphere to places (Richards, 2014). The application of creativity in tourism creates opportunities for (re)creating tourism destinations and benefits the local economy and community, contributing to the preservation and promotion of heritage, social cohesion, economic development, and sustainability (Almeida, 2019), and to a destination's competitiveness, ensuring that the human capital of cities is used to promote economic restructuring (Richards & Raymond, 2000). Creativity can also promote human-centred development, job creation and innovation, while contributing to social inclusion, cultural diversity, and environmental sustainability (UNCTAD, 2010).

The creative tourist is an interested and curious individual, who seeks authentic activities, recognizes identity, values quality and authenticity, wants to get to know new ways of life, and wants to be actively involved in activities (Almeida, 2019). These tourists crave engaging and practical experiences that, in theory, allow for tourist distinctiveness and immersion in the destination's way of life (Carvalho et al., 2019). To create an experience based on the tastes and interests of the tourist it is necessary to promote collaboration between the tourist and the organization/destination. As a result, the co-creation of experiences is a crucial process of creative tourism where all participants apply their knowledge, influencing the outcome of the experience (Carvalho et al., 2019). Campos et al. (2018) state that co-creation can be seen from two perspectives: the organization/destination and the tourist, both perceiving co-creation as a business and strategic orientation for competitiveness and development. Organizations/destinations aim to involve the tourist in co-creative activities by promoting interactions before, during and after the trip and developing memorable experiences. From this perspective, tourists are willing to collaborate with the organization in the production of their experiences, particularly in terms of design, production and consumption, as well as in the creation of customized goods and services (Campos et al., 2018). Albeit challenging, this collaboration favours the sharing of information and can positively affect tourist satisfaction, loyalty, and memorability, which can be key in defining the experience. The creative tourist is willing to pay more for sensory and engaging activities, with the creative experience being the basis of all that is memorable (Wang et al., 2020).

3. Methodology

Vila Nova de Foz Côa is a Portuguese inland town with considerable tourism potential. Within the scope of this research, semi-structured interviews were applied to local stakeholders to understand the impact of creative tourism on this region. In the perspective of Bogdan and Biklen (2010, p. 134) "an interview is used to collect descriptive data in the subject's own language, allowing the researcher to intuitively develop an idea about the way subjects interpret aspects of the world". The data obtained were analysed using content analysis, a technique used for the selection, organization, and interpretation of data in a simpler and more structured perspective (Bardin, 2016). The interviews were pre-planned and a script consisting of 19 open-ended questions was developed, based on the studies by Richards and Raymond (2000), UNESCO (2006), Steiner and Reisinger (2006); Richards and Wilson (2006, 2007), Kolar and Zabkar (2010), Ohridska-Olson and Ivanov (2010); Richards (2010), UNCTAD (2010), Carvalho (2011), Richards (2011), Grissemann and Stokburger-Sauer (2012), Santos et al. (2012), Urosevic (2012), Tan et al. (2013), Cabral et al. (2017), Sá (2017), Upadhya and Vij (2017), Campos et al. (2018), Ferreira (2018), Ferreira et al. (2018), Thi & Yang (2019), Ye et al. (2018), Almeida (2019), Carvalho et al. (2019), Dias et al. (2020), Gato et al. (2020), Serra et al. (2020), Wang et al. (2020), also considering the defined research objectives (Table 1).

Table 1: Interview script

Question
Objective 1: To identify the profile of the creative tourist in Vila Nova de Foz Côa
What do you understand by creative tourism?
What is the profile of the creative tourist?
How do you describe the creative tourist?
How has been the adhesion by tourists to the practice of creative tourism in Vila Nova de Foz Côa?
Objective 2: Associate the tourists' motivations with the concepts of authenticity in the tourist experience
Are the concepts of authenticity and co-creation of experiences present in the motivations of the creative tourist when choosing a destination?
Objective 3: To understand the socio-cultural impact on Vila Nova de Foz Côa
How would you describe the role of residents in the practice of creative tourism in Vila Nova de Foz Côa?
What is the impact of the practice of creative tourism on the local community of Vila Nova de Foz Côa? Does it generate a greater degree of involvement in the cultural agenda? In the interest for the proposed activities? Is it possible to exemplify?
Objective 4: Associate the creation of experiences with the concepts of creativity and memorability
What is the role of *stakeholders* in the creation of experiences in Vila Nova de Foz Côa?
What role does creativity, in the realm of experiences, play in attracting a certain profile of tourist?
Is there any typology of experiences in the region that influence the degree of memorability by tourists? What kind of experiences?
Objective 5: To understand the practice of creative tourism in Vila Nova de Foz Côa
Which are the main strategies in Vila Nova de Foz Côa in the scope of creative tourism?
Vila Nova de Foz Côa has more visibility after the implementation of activities related to creative tourism?
Which are the plans for Vila Nova de Foz Côa in the field of creative tourism? What is planned for the short and medium term?
Are there events/experiences held in Vila Nova de Foz Côa that are co-created with tourists? If yes, which ones and how are they organized?
Which are the main challenges and obstacles in the implementation of creative tourism in Vila Nova de Foz Côa?
Objective 6: Understand the economic impact on Vila Nova de Foz Côa
What is the economic impact that the practice of creative tourism has on the municipality of Vila Nova de Foz Côa? Has it generated, additionally, higher demand, less seasonality in the destination and an increase in the average stay? Did it generate investment attraction? Has it generated increased employment and skilled employment? What other activities have emerged, directly or indirectly related, to creative tourism? Please specify which ones.
To what extent do you consider that the implementation of strategies associated with creative tourism has enhanced and preserved cultural heritage, local culture, and initiatives aimed at the community and tourists?
Objective 7: To understand the environmental impact of creative tourism in Vila Nova de Foz Côa
The increasing in tourism demand in Vila Nova de Foz Côa already shown some environmental impacts in the region? If yes, which ones? Have strategies been taken to mitigate these impacts?
Objective 8: Global assessment of the creative tourism impact in Vila Nova de Foz Côa
In general, do you consider that creative tourism has a positive or negative impact on the city?

To determine the sample, the *snowball* method was used, selecting an interviewee with characteristics relevant to the sample, additionally asking to suggest another individual with the same characteristics, until the desired number of interviews is reached (Carvalho, 2011). Five interviews were conducted with entities in the tourism sector representing different areas of expertise (including both the public and the private sectors) (Table 2).

Table 2: Interviewees

Interview No.	Area of Expertise	Local	Date
E1	Côa Park Foundation	Via Zoom	22/09/2021
E2	Museological Nucleus	Via Zoom	7/10/2021
E3	Tour Operator	Via Zoom	14/10/2021
E4	Municipality	Via Zoom	19/10/2021
E5	Municipality	Via Zoom	25/10/2021

Drawing from this analysis, researchers produced a comprehensive set of findings that will be described in the following section.

4. Results

According to the interviewees creative tourists are young adults – 25/30 years old (E1, E2) – with a medium/high level of education (E1, E2, E3, E4, E5) and economic power (E1, E2, E3, E4, E5). These tourists travel mostly alone (E4) or as a couple (E3). Before the pandemic the most frequent creative tourist was international (E2, E4, E5), although the Portuguese are increasingly more receptive and open to these activities and experiences (E3). The characteristics mentioned differ from the literature (Carvalho, 2011; Serra et al., 2020), namely regarding the age group, travel characteristics and nationality. In these studies, a wider age range was considered, and it was concluded that the creative tourist is between 36-53 years old, employed and with specialized functions in intellectual and scientific activities. Both the literature and the interviewees agree that the creative tourist tends to travel as couples. As for nationality, the authors and the interviewees disagree, as the literature (Carvalho, 2011; Serra et al., 2020) suggests the prevalence of Portuguese visitors, while the interviewees point out that they receive more international tourists. They are active individuals looking for new skills, personal knowledge, and new sensations, are committed to the territory, curious, impatient, demanding (E1, E2, E5) and want to be in direct contact with residents (E3, E4). The expectations and personality traits of the creative tourist listed by the interviewees are in accordance with the literature review. Regarding the practice of creative tourism, the respondents report that it has been positive (E2) compared to other tourism experiences, considering that there is an interest in participating in creative activities, rejecting Richard's and Wilson (2007) perspective that it is not easy to find tourists who are motivated enough to participate only in learning activities.

The interviewees (E1, E2, E3, E4, E5) agree that authenticity is a driver for creative tourists since they seek a more direct contact with the community (E1) and show preference for originality (E2). E3 goes further and considers that authenticity is the future, creating a differentiating value from other destinations. The creative tourist in Vila Nova and Foz Côa intends to actively participate (E1) and get involved with what is real, particularly the heritage and history of the Côa (E2). The tourists themselves suggest and actively look for different activities (E2). The interviewees' statements fit the perspective of the literature review (Ohridska-Olson & Ivanov, 2010; Carvalho, 2011).

Interviewees reveal some difficulty in raising community awareness to the importance of creative tourism (E1). They expected a more active participation, more supply capacity, and a higher socio-cultural impact (E2), which is not yet the case, considering that the territory presents an aging demographic context (E1, E3). However, there are occasional events, such as the almond festival, in which residents are involved (E4, E5). There is an effort by tourism entities to involve the community and tourists in this new approach (E1), through the creation of partnerships (E2). An example of this are the cheese production activities that include the local community and tourists. The interviewees understand the importance that residents have in the practice of creative tourism, reinforcing the idea addressed by Mkono (2012), Urosevic (2012) and Ferreira (2018). The literature also mentions the language barrier, the fear of losing competitive advantage, low trust, lack of time, insufficient organizational capacity, and limited market orientation as a barrier to tourist involvement with the local community (Ferreira, 2018; Dias et al., 2020), while the interviewees refer to lack of motivation of residents as the main factor for low involvement in creative tourism activities.

Overall, the role of stakeholders is perceived as fundamental and very positive (E1, E2, E4). Some interviewees assume a positive relationship with stakeholders (E1, E2, E5), in that there is good communication and organization in the creation of experiences. E3 assumes that the role of stakeholders is still at an embryonic stage, with only a few people available to host these experiences. The perspective of the authors (Richards, 2011; Dias et al., 2020) highlights the importance of stakeholders in creating experiences, deeming it necessary to create greater involvement among all parties. The interviewees (E1, E2, E4) share the perspective of Richards (2014), Sá (2017) and Almeida (2019) that creativity is present in the creation of experiences, since it leads to the creation of new ideas, products and experiences, as well as the development of skills and knowledge (E1). Tourists seek experiences that go beyond regular supply, favouring creativity (E2). E3, on the other hand, considers that UNESCO World Heritage distinctions are more crucial than creativity when choosing a destination. In the specific case of Vila Nova de Foz Côa, interviewees described activities that influence memorability, namely visits to the pre-historic engravings, which can take place during the day or at night, by kayak, solar-electric boat, all-terrain vehicle or even on foot (E1). The interviewees consider that night visits influence the degree of memorability, due to the differentiation (E3) and the mystique the night can bring (E2).

Creative tourism activities have given visibility to Vila Nova de Foz Côa, mainly due to local partnerships (E2), as they allow tourists to learn more about local products and interact with the local community (e.g., in visits to wineries and farms, participation in harvesting and cheese making activities) (E1, E4), which is in line with the perspectives of Ferreira (2018) and Gato et al. (2020). The plans for further developing creative tourism are to increase and diversify supply and to involve tourists (E1). The interviewees have in mind different activities for the coming years, namely, an eco-tour, consisting of an electric-powered ecological guided boat ride focusing on natural, geological, and architectural facts; the *Ciência Viva* Festival, focusing on science-related activities; workshops for seniors; plogging; and active walks that include an interactive visit to an artisanal cheese factory, as well as a tasting.

The practice of creative tourism presents some challenges and obstacles, which according to the interviewees (E1, E3, E4) focus essentially on raising the awareness of the community, so that it does not feel invaded (E1). There is a difficulty in finding people who are available to welcome and have adequate minimum structures to welcome tourists (E3). In addition, it is challenging to maintain the will and persistence (E5) in the innovation aspect and the creation of new and creative activities that make the tourist return or influence others (E3). As an obstacle, legal issues, lack of support, accommodation and catering were also highlighted (E5), as well as the disadvantaged geographical location since Vila Nova de Foz Côa is in the far north inland territory. Covid-19 proved to be beneficial since inland destinations were a choice for many tourists, but, on the other hand, the activities themselves implied a greater economic investment, and often the need arose for the tourists to stay in the territory, not always being possible to accommodate the existing demand. Overall, respondents see more obstacles and challenges than those mentioned in the literature review.

From the interviewees' perspective, the practice of creative tourism has had a positive economic impact on Vila Nova de Foz Côa. E3, E4, and E5 are confident that this approach can bring advantages in the future, but products are still incipient, and it is difficult to quantify their impact (E3). There has been a significant increase in tourism over the years (E4) with E1 and E2 observing an economic impact resulting from the practice of creative tourism, which has increased the average stay. However, Vila Nova de Foz Côa still lacks tourist accommodation (E4, E5). Although a slight easing of seasonality has been noted (E4), according to E2, creative tourism has not yet managed to solve this problem. There is also some disagreement on whether this type of tourism has generated more employment. E1 states that creative tourism has resulted in younger people picking up traditional trades, while E2 and E3 assure that it has not led to an increase in employment, but rather a greater specialization. According to the literature (Fernández, 2010; Ferreira et al., 2018; Gato et al., 2020) the impact of creative tourism is positive on the economic level, which is in line with the interviewees' perspective. The authors recognize that this new practice contributes to the creation of new jobs, qualification of the existing workforce and the permanence of more people in the territory, namely tourists and residents.

With the emergence of creative tourism, some companies linked to tourist entertainment emerged and there was a need to diversify their supply. The interviewees (EI, E2, E3, E4, E5) agree that the implementation of strategies associated with creative tourism resulted in the valorisation and preservation of cultural heritage, local culture, and initiatives aimed at the community and tourists. They mention that it is an important aspect, since creative tourism raises tourists' awareness towards heritage preservation (E2, E3), while increasing the self-esteem of the local community (E1), something that is also found in the literature (Ohridska-Olson e Ivanov, 2010; Ferreira et al., 2018).

The environmental impact in the region is residual (E3, E5). However, there is an awareness that this tourism can lead to a greater environmental impact, which implies the development of mitigating strategies. This perspective is in line with previous studies (Richards e Wilson, 2006; Ohridska-Olson e Ivanov, 2010) highlighting the role of sustainability. It is noticeable an annual increase in the number of people interested in hiking, which points to a concern on the part of tourists regarding sustainability and environmental impact at the destination (E4).

Table 3 summarizes the main results obtained in the interviews.

Table 3: Summary Analysis of the Interview Results

Topic	Conclusions	Interviewees
Tourist Profile	Age between 30-60 years, medium/high level of education and medium/high economic power	E1, E2, E3, E4, E5,
	It is mostly international	E2, E4, E5
	Travels as a couple	E3
	Curious, committed, demanding, and want to invest in their own cultural and social development	E1, E2, E3, E4, E5
	Strong interest in performing creative tourism activities/experiences	E1, E2
Tourist Motivations	The creative tourist seeks the authentic	E1, E2, E3, E4, E5
	Intends to get involved with the local community and its way of life	E1, E2, E3, E4, E5
Sociocultural Impact	Difficulty in sensitizing and raising awareness in the local community	E1, E2, E3
	Effort by tourism entities to include the local community	E1, E2
Creating Experiences	Reduced communication and organization among the stakeholders	E3
	Reduced supply and few people available to host these kinds of experiences	E3
	Tourist entertainment companies consider the concepts of memorability and creativity when creating activities	E1, E2, E4
Creative Tourism Practice	Strategies are poorly consolidated and scattered	E3, E3, E5
	The destination gained visibility	E1, E2, E4
	The creative tourist presents a role of co-creator of his experience	E2
	Challenge in innovating, creating activities capable of influencing others and to find specialized human resources available to welcome these experiences	E1, E2, E3, E4, E5
	Legal issues, the lack of support, accommodation and catering, the unfavorable geographical location, and the seasonality of the activities themselves, as an obstacle.	E1, E2, E3, E4, E5
Economic Impact	Positive, but reduced economic impact	E1, E2, E3, E4, E5
	Creative tourism has encouraged the specialization of labor, the creation of workshops and companies linked to tourist entertainment	E2, E3
	There is a shortage of accommodation and restaurants	E4, E5
	Creative tourism has contributed to the appreciation and preservation of cultural heritage, local culture, and initiatives aimed at the community and tourists	E1, E2, E3, E4, E5
Environmental Impact	Low environmental impact	E3, E5
	Creative tourism promotes sustainability	E1, E2, E3, E4, E5
Global Impact Assessment of Creative Tourism	The impact of creative tourism is still small, but has the potential to achieve better results in the future	E1, E2, E3, E4, E5

Overall, the interviewees share the same perspective as the literature, considering that this practice is more advantageous.

5. Conclusions

The main objective of this research was to understand the impact of creative tourism in Vila Nova de Foz Côa. It contributed to a better perception of creative tourism and its implications for the territory. Crosscutting the analysis of the interviews and the literature review, it was possible to outline the profile of creative tourists, their motivations, as well as identify its potential impacts in Vila Nova de Foz Côa.

Creative tourists seek to invest in their own cultural and social development, acquire new skills and sensations, and are demanding and committed to the territory. In Vila Nova de Foz Côa there is a strong involvement of tourists in creative and authentic activities and experiences, fitting the literature. However, even though there is an effort by the entities to involve the community, there are still some difficulties in raising awareness towards the importance of creative tourism. Factors such as the language barrier, fear of losing competitive advantage, low confidence, lack of time, insufficient organizational capacity and limited market orientation may justify the low commitment of residents in the development of creative tourism experiences, a perspective that is aligned with the literature (Ferreira, 2018; Dias et al., 2020). The tourism entities in Vila Nova de Foz Côa propose partnerships to residents in certain activities, namely cheese production, wine harvesting, and almond picking, integrating residents and promoting a greater involvement with tourists. The creation of experiences necessarily implies the involvement of tourists, residents, DMOs and other stakeholders, to create a diversified supply. The creative tourist of Vila Nova de Foz Côa, takes on the role of co-creator, making suggestions on how to make experiences more unique and enriching.

Good communication and organization between the different stakeholders are also key. From the interviewees' perspective, the stakeholders' role is fundamental and there is in fact interest in investing in creative tourism, although there is still little communication, little supply, and few people available to host these experiences. The strategies implemented in Vila Nova de Foz Côa are still scattered, resulting from the individual performance of tourist companies, focusing on memorability to encourage the intention to revisit and influence others to visit the destination. The most memorable activities carried out were the visits to the engravings, almond picking, harvesting, sumac exploration, lunches, and dinners in nature, and the *FlyCamp* experience. Gastronomy is another noteworthy attraction.

The creative tourism activities brought visibility to the region, mainly due to the local partnerships that allowed tourists to get to know local products and participate in the activities with the community. To develop experience packages and increase the attractiveness and visibility of the destination, the interviewees presented their plans for Vila Nova de Foz Côa in the scope of creative tourism, focusing essentially on the exploration of the cultural and natural heritage. Legal issues, lack of support, accommodation and catering, as well as the unfavourable geographical location and the seasonality of the activities, become an obstacle to the development of creative tourism, which, in this case, requires investment in tourist accommodation, as well as in catering (Ferreira et al., 2018; Dias et al., 2020; Gato et al., 2020).

This new practice has encouraged the specialization of labour, the creation of workshops and companies linked to tourist entertainment (Fernández, 2010; Ferreira et al., 2018) and contributed to the valorisation and preservation of cultural heritage, local culture, and initiatives directed to the community and tourists (Ferreira et al., 2018; Almeida, 2019; Dias et al., 2020), thus increasing the self-esteem of the local community. However, creative tourism has not yet managed to mitigate seasonality, since the supply itself is seasonal.

Creative tourism is seen as a practice that promotes sustainability, because it is a process of creation and a renewable activity (Ohridska-Olson & Ivanov, 2010). In Vila Nova de Foz Côa, the environmental impact is reduced, however there is an awareness that the practice of this tourism can induce a greater environmental impact, leading to the design of strategies aimed at mitigating these impacts. The first step, and one of the most important, is to make tourists aware of this cause, and assessing the environmental footprint, something that has already been implemented.

Creative tourism is still an emerging practice in Vila Nova de Foz Côa. Despite the interest in developing this type of tourism, it is necessary to improve the relationship between stakeholders and their involvement in the development of creative initiatives and products, as well as to discuss successful strategies, as suggested in the literature (Richards e Wilson, 2006). Additionally, Richards (2010) suggests the creation of mega events and creative spaces, together with partnerships and networks, which can attract more tourists and mitigate seasonality. According to Richards (2012) there are three aspects to be considered in the development of creative tourism in a tourism destination, namely visibility, permeability, and flexibility. According to the author, most tourism products are now marketed online, which raises a concern on how small producers of creative experiences can stand out in such a crowded market. It is important for producers to ensure visibility for their products through the internet and social media. Additionally, producers must be more flexible and improve the ability to communicate, negotiate and interact personally with tourists.

Moreover, the CREATOUR project concluded that it is feasible to develop creative tourism outside big cities, despite the greater challenges, highlighting the need for short and medium term strategic planning measures (Gonçalves et al., 2020). Applicable to Vila Nova de Foz Côa, these measures include the funding of products and businesses, support for contexts and spaces of innovation and encouragement of creative tourism in articulation with local residents; intersectoral cooperation, networking and intangible infrastructures; capacity building and training; communication and marketing; and research, monitoring, and collection of information about the sector, in order to be able to permanently listen to the needs and expectations of creative tourism professionals.

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Fostering Accessible Tourism: Stakeholders' Perspective in Vila do Conde and Póvoa de Varzim

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Abstract: Nowadays, tourism is considered an important social phenomenon, stimulating the mobility of millions of tourists around the world. Accessible tourism is becoming increasingly visible and is considered a growing market segment. For this, it is essential to adapt infrastructures, making them fully accessible. This research seeks to raise awareness in the tourism sector for the creation of accessibility conditions necessary and aimed at all types of demand. In this way, it is intended to deepen the knowledge about Accessible Tourism, as well as evaluate, on the supply side, the awareness and consciousness of the importance of this segment and ascertain whether Vila do Conde and Póvoa de Varzim, meet all the necessary conditions to receive these tourists. This study adopts a qualitative approach with the application of interviews to seven entities, representative of the supply in the destinations, dealing daily with mobility impaired people. The main results show that, despite Accessible Tourism being an increasingly important market segment for the tourism industry, the existing tourism offer in the cities of Vila do Conde and Póvoa de Varzim (North of Portugal), is not yet fully aware and adapted to receive and serve people with reduced mobility.

Keywords: accessibility, accessible tourism, mobility, Vila do Conde, Póvoa de Varzim

1. Introduction

People with disabilities are part of a relevant population group in the world, growing due to the aging observed in several regions of developed countries and the incidence of diseases (UNWTO & ACS Foundation, 2014). The numerous barriers faced by this group of people in their daily lives or even when they travel outside their usual environment prove to be a significant barrier to their participation in tourism. More serious emphasis should be placed on physical and/or intellectual barriers and impediments in tourism.

There is an emerging need to adapt tourism destinations to the special needs of people with reduced mobility. Tourism, besides being considered a felt need today, is important for human development, and should be seen as a social asset available to all citizens, without exclusion of any group of people, regardless of their personal, economic or any other conditions (Silva, 2017). For this reason, accessible tourism should be committed to providing solutions and answers, assuming the involvement of several entities in different activities, and not only to Tourism.

This research analyses the tourism supply in Vila do Conde and Póvoa de Varzim in terms of accessible tourism, aiming to find out if the cities have the necessary conditions for disabled tourists to visit and stay, particularly in hotels, museums, tourist offices, and tourist sites.

2. Literature review

From the perspective of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2021) and the World Health Organization (WHO), there are over one billion people worldwide living with some form of disability. In the coming years, disability will increase as chronic diseases and population ageing increase (UNWTO, 2021). From the perspective of Gomes et al. (2017, p.1) disability "is any loss of a psychological, physiological or anatomical structure and/or function that induces incapacity for the performance of activity, within the standard considered normal for human beings". The incapacity of an individual is the inability to perform certain tasks, temporarily or permanently, resulting from several personal factors, including "disability", which may be temporary or permanent, progressive or regressive (Garcia et al., 2014), resulting from biomedical changes present in the biological structure or functions of the body's organic systems. Garcia et al. (2017) also consider that disability is assessed as a universal human experience, since we all have experiences related to several limitations and restrictions in activities occurring throughout life, featuring different types of disability: Motor disability - which causes the loss or weakening of the limbs, inducing limited mobility; Sensory disability - which causes blindness or impaired vision, deafness, or hearing impairment, or even speech impairment; Intellectual disability - which varies between "severe" and mild, and may cause slow learning or even learning difficulties.

From a strategic perspective for the tourism sector, Duch (2015) believes that the practice of tourism activity still requires interventions at the level of analysis of the social representations of some population segments, since people with different types of disabilities and/or reduced mobility, involving elderly and obese people, tend to be excluded from the strategic planning of economic activity and social integration of tourism (Duch, 2015). Adverse situations are diagnosed regarding people with reduced mobility, due to the impossibility of moving in urban spaces, generating reflections, and reinforcing the idea of indifference towards others (Neto, 2018), also revealing problems of inclusion, discrimination, and violence (Fontes, 2016). According to Campos et al. (2019), people with reduced mobility have special needs in their movement. Every day, these people are faced with physical and structural barriers present in most cities, making it difficult to strengthen the paradigm of social inclusion (Silva & Marques, 2018), being essential that cities adapt to meet all their needs (Campos et al., 2019). In recent years, the concept of accessibility has become more relevant for the tourism sector (UNWTO, 2021). This new concept gives equipment and products/services a probability to guarantee to all potential users an equal opportunity to use with dignity and safety (INR-Instituto Nacional para a Reabilitação, 2020). This evolution reveals an acceleration of changes in this sector, and in tourism destinations where competitiveness and quality have become fundamental guidelines in their tourism policies (UNWTO, 2021), being accessibility an essential factor in the evaluation of quality in tourism (Carrillo & Boujrouf, 2020).

Continuous investment is needed in the planning, construction, adaptation, and conservation of infrastructures (Carrillo & Boujrouf, 2020), due to the relevance of accessibility conditions in all environments and services associated with tourism activities, ensuring their use by people with disabilities (Carrillo & Boujrouf, 2020), and simultaneously ensuring appropriate tourism experiences. Accessibility will be an essential condition for people's quality of life contributing to greater civic participation and a growing increase in social inclusion and solidarity (INR, 2020). With the elimination of barriers, life becomes a minor obstacle to live regardless of the structure, age, or ability of each one (Garcia et al., 2017).

Urban and architectural barriers are understood as fixed barriers, which are associated with a more in-depth work and a significant financial cost, as they are considered barriers that are difficult to solve (Teles, 2014). The same research considers some types of barriers (Teles, 2014): Poles; Absence of pedestrian crossings; Absence of pavements; Absence of ramps; Commercial obstacles (for example: fruit stores, esplanades); Absence of lowering of pavements; Absence of comfortable and accessible pavements; Garbage containers that condition mobility and that imply the change of "route"; Steps and stairs, instead of ramps at the entrances of all establishments/services. Michopoulou and Buhalis (2013) also highlighted other possible barriers such as: Heavy doors for people with reduced mobility; Inadequate lighting; Lack of adequate tactile guide paths for visually impaired people; Lack of alternative fire alarm for hearing impaired people, such as vibrating pad, and flashing lights.

The concept of accessible tourism is based on a universal principle, ensuring that tourism is a social and fundamental right for all (UNWTO, 2021). Throughout life, all citizens will possess temporary or permanent disability (Carrillo & Boujrouf, 2020). According to UNWTO (2021), people with disabilities still face difficulties and barriers in their travels, such as: inaccessible transport; the existence of physical and communication barriers in museums and accommodation units; the lack of trained professionals in the travel sector; as well as the lack of information for planning a trip. From this perspective, accessible tourism for all is revealed as a need to integrate people with physical, mental or sensory disabilities into tourism infrastructures and services (Carrillo & Boujrouf, 2020), while tourism allows people with disabilities to master their skills and develop their abilities (Mendes & Paula, 2008), since being in contact with different environments and people outside their usual routine will help them to better capture their desires and needs, also increasing their quality of life and greater social interaction.

The promotion of accessible tourism for all involves public authorities and private entities such as travel agencies, tourism entertainment companies, tourist attractions, taking over a better understanding about this segment and develop a competitive advantage for the tourism services provided to customers in the regions they operate (Garcia et al., 2014). The accessibility of goods and services should be a free decision of tourism agents and not just an imposition by public authorities, which on any occasion must ensure the full and effective use and enjoyment of people with disabilities in tourism offers (Carrillo & Boujrouf, 2020). Creating better conditions for all will lead to a greater profitability of existing resources and a growth in national and international tourism demand (Garcia et al, 2014).

3. Methodology

This research focuses on the market of Accessible Tourism, a sector that is constantly changing and requires some attention from authorities and professionals. This study aims to find out if companies in Vila do Conde and Póvoa de Varzim have activities and/or services adapted to people with reduced mobility, to understand if there is a clear notion of the importance of this segment and if they are aware and willing to invest in it. To achieve this general objective and in order to make this research feasible, we proceeded to a construction of specific objectives: To define and characterise the type of visitor of the Accessible Tourism segment; To explore and understand tourism accessibility in the cities of Vila do Conde and Póvoa de Varzim; To understand if tourism companies, as well as tourism professionals, are able to receive people with reduced mobility; To identify the main existing barriers that affect tourism demand in Vila do Conde and Póvoa de Varzim. In view of the proposed objectives, the research methodology considered most appropriate was the qualitative one. Interviews are an important source of evidence, which with a proper analysis and interpretation, result in a reliable and grounded research (Silva & Russo, 2019). Seven interviews were conducted at various tourist sites in Vila do Conde and Póvoa de Varzim. This technique is adequate and relevant, having allowed for the understanding of several perspectives on Accessible Tourism, namely the tourism offer in these two cities, as well as their accessibility. The interview is the most used technique during the empirical qualitative work process (Minayo & Costa, 2018) and the semi-structured interview, applied in this research, consists of combining previously designed questions with open-ended questions, allowing the interviewer greater control over what he/she intends to know. A semi-structured interview with 18 open-ended questions was applied. The questions presented in the interview followed the literature review and the objectives defined in the research (Table 1).

Table 1: Theoretical framework of the interview script

Interview questions	Theoretical Foundation
Objective 1: To define and characterise the type of visitor to the Accessible Tourism segment	
What type of visitor does the accessible tourism segment encompass?	Garcia et al. (2014); Campos et al. (2019); Carrillo & Boujrouf (2020); Ferreira & Nunes (2021); Fontes (2016).
Characterise this segment, regarding your destination: Age group; Nationality; Academic qualifications; Socio-economic level; Typology of reduced mobility; Level of satisfaction with the services provided/activities made available	
Do tourists with reduced mobility represent an interesting market segment? Why?	
Objective 2: To understand if tourism enterprises as well as tourism professionals are able to welcome people with reduced mobility	
Tourist activities and products available consider people with reduced mobility?	Garcia et al. (2017); Righetto et al. (2018); Carrillo & Boujrouf (2020); Lopes (2015); Martins (2008).
Do you have statistical data on the numbers of tourists with reduced mobility visiting this place?	
Do you consider this place, a building adapted for people with disabilities? If yes, which activities/services are adapted and how? (In the case of hotels, the following subparagraphs have been added: Existence of lifts; Existence of access ramps; Places reserved for people with reduced mobility; Continuous path from the car park to the hotel; Accessible entrance; Adapted reception desk; Adapted furniture adjusted to the circulation inside the unit and the room; Appropriate emergency signage; Access to TV and telephone controls; Access and stay of guide dogs; Visual and/or auditory direction signs; Adapted lighting of common areas; Exterior and interior circulation space; Accessibility to the various equipment and services of the hotel unit (common areas and room); Adapted room service; Signage/tactile identification of the hotel unit facilities; Adapted bathrooms (washbasin,	Carrillo & Boujrouf (2020); Garcia et al. (2017); Henriques (2015); Lopes (2015); Righetto et al. (2018).

Interview questions	Theoretical Foundation
countertop, bath chair, support bars, non-slip/anti-slip floor, access to the tap levers, alarms, ...)	
Are there adequate information about accessible activities and services in Vila do Conde/Póvoa de Varzim?	Righetto et al. (2018); Carrillo & Boujrouf (2020); Lopes (2015); Garcia et al. (2017).
Are there any concerns in the training of your human resources, regarding this segment of Accessible Tourism?	Carrillo & Boujrouf (2020); Garcia et al. (2017); Ferreira & Nunes (2021).
Is there any employee trained in this area?	
Do you have partnerships with institutions for the reception of citizens with disabilities? If yes, which entities?	
Are tourism professionals prepared to serve people with disabilities?	
Objective 3: To identify the main existing barriers affecting tourism demand in Vila do Conde and Póvoa de Varzim	
Which are the main types of barriers that might affect a visit to this site?	Vaz (2013); Teles (2014); Silva (2018); Silva & Marques (2018); Henriques (2015); Garcia et al. (2014); Garcia et al. (2017); Michopoulou e Buhalis (2013).
Over time, with the implementation of accessible activities and services, has there been an increase in visits?	Lopes (2015); Lamônica et al. (2008); Carrillo & Bourjourf (2020); Garcia et al. (2014); Duch (2015); Silva (2018).
Objective 4: To explore and understand tourism accessibility in the cities of Vila do Conde and Póvoa de Varzim	
What are the appropriate means of promotion that could contribute to a greater demand for tourism associated with special needs?	Garcia et al. (2017); INR (2020); Garcia et al. (2014); Gonçalves et al. (2015); Tino (2018); Ferreira & Nunes (2021); ENAT (2021).
Are there any funding programmes for tourism businesses that want to target this audience?	
Are businesses in Vila do Conde/Póvoa de Varzim able to receive tourists with reduced mobility? What is missing to make them completely accessible?	Campos et al. (2019); Calhoa (2017); Lopes (2015); Garcia et al. (2014); Ferreira & Nunes (2021); Carrillo & Bourjourf (2020).
If the city of Vila do Conde/Póvoa de Varzim, invested more in accessibility, would an increase in tourist demand occur? Which would be the main touristic points targeted by this investment, and what specific measures would be considered? Access ramps to public spaces/tourist resources, reserved seats, low furniture, accessible entrances, visual and/or auditory signs, guide dogs allowed, existence of tactile identification, specific language for accessible tourism, sign language, Braille information, relief images .... (Other suggestions?)	Henriques (2015); Carrillo & Bourjourf (2020); Duch (2015); Calhoa (2017); Lopes (2015); Shakira & Marcelo (2019); Sousa (2012); Marques (2016); Ferreira & Nunes (2021).
Do you intend to invest in infrastructures aimed at this market segment (physical accessibility, diversity of means of information, diversity of tourist products)?	

The participants of the study sample are stakeholders of the destination. The sampling technique used in this research is the non-probabilistic sampling and by convenience, which consists in choosing people who share characteristics related to the research question, prioritizing those subjects that have information and experiences, deepening the analysis to solve the research question.

4. Results and discussion

According to Garcia et al. (2014) there are different types of disability: motor, sensory and intellectual. According to the interviewees, the predominant visitor type in these destinations has mostly motor disability, in similar values to visitors with visual and hearing disabilities. However, in the interview with the Póvoa de Varzim Tourism Office, it was observed that there is no type of visitor associated with this segment "*because they register a negligible annual percentage".* Regarding the characterization of the visitors of this segment, it is verified that in the tourist sites interviewed, most tourists prevail in the age group between 50-65 years old, except for Azurara Parque Aventura, with a younger disabled population between 15-30 years old. The disabled population visiting this place, are mostly from schools, to participate in outdoor activities. Mostly Portuguese, with high school education and an average standard of living. The typology of reduced mobility that prevails in these destinations is motor disability. The visitors present a medium/high level of satisfaction. Regarding the importance of the Accessible Tourism segment, all the destinations interviewed consider this segment to be important, even though it is a segment that has been little studied and with a low percentage of visits. It was noted that the Accessible Tourism segment must be constantly developing and changing so that nothing fails. The interviewees stressed that it should be seen and respected by all *stakeholders* in the sector.

Table 2: The Accessible Tourism segment and its importance

Subcategories	Interview Evidence
Accessible tourism segment	"They mostly present only physical disability" (E1). "It is a small significant annual percentage" (E2). "Visitors with physical, visual and hearing disabilities" (E3). "People with motor disabilities"(E4).
Characterisation of the visitor	"In my opinion, it is a relevant segment" (E2). "Secondary education and aged between 50-60 years. Average level of satisfaction" (E4). "Young population, between 15-30 years old and with high-school. Average level of satisfaction" (E6). "Between 50-65 years old and with completed high-school. High level of satisfaction."
Importance of Accessible Tourism	"An important market segment because it allows reaching a wider public segment" (E1). "People who need and deserve double the attention and have to be received in a special way. It is a segment that has to be in constant development so that nothing fails" (E3). "Accessible tourism is a segment that should be more analysed and appreciated by everyone" (E4). "An important segment. I have always seen and see this type of tourists differently." (E6). "It's a very interesting segment. I think this market segment should be studied more" (E5).

According to Campos et al. (2019), people with reduced mobility have special needs in their movement. Every day, these people are faced with physical and structural barriers present in most cities, hindering the social inclusion process (Silva & Marques, 2018). After conducting the interviews, it was observed that, in general, tourism activities and products in both cities are not fully accessible. There are adapted services, but not all places have this advantage. The tourism offices in Vila do Conde and Póvoa de Varzim, are accessible at the main entrance, due to the existence of access ramps. However, there may be some difficulty on the part of tourists with reduced mobility to manoeuvre throughout the visit, since the spaces, despite being wide, have furniture that makes it difficult to perform the manoeuvres, also are not adapted for tourists with hearing impairment and blindness, since they do not have Braille, nor auditory/visual signage. Regarding the professionals training, only Póvoa de Varzim Tourist Office has a professional trained in sign language. In Vila do Conde Tourist Office, despite the concerns expressed, there is no professional with any training related to accessible tourism. These two tourist sites stressed that the products and services provided in the cities are accessible, giving the example of the recent initiative of accessible beaches in Póvoa de Varzim and the accessible events created in Vila do Conde, always considering this public, which does not apply to the whole city.

According to Vaz (2013), barriers are considered as obstacles and/or impediments that limit or make it impossible to access any space, equipment, or service. The interviewed entities in the hotel sector showed that there is accessibility in their access. Hotel buildings are partially adapted to receive this type of tourists. The three hotels highlighted the presence of access ramps to the interior, as well as the existence of rooms/services adapted for tourists with reduced mobility. However, they do not have conditions to receive tourists who wish to stay with guide dogs, nor have tactile signs for visually impaired people. Regarding the lifts, ramps for access to hotel services, reception desks, room furniture and accessibility in general, it can be concluded that all entities show a high degree of accessibility. It is observed the absence of Braille, as well as the absence of professionals able to receive and assist tourists with reduced mobility, due to the lack of training adapted to Accessible Tourism (sign language).

After the interviews to Nau Quinhentista and Azurara Parque Aventura in Vila do Conde, it was found that the tourism destinations discussed in this research are not adapted to receive tourists with reduced mobility. According to Henriques (2015), a museum should contain a communicational, physical, and cognitive accessibility so that no visitor feels excluded, ensuring comfort and integration in it. The Nau Quinhentista, is only accessible at the main entrance due to the existence of a ramp for these tourists to access the Nau. After climbing the ramp, there is no type of accessible manoeuvre since the access is processed by steps. In addition, this tourist site does not have information in Braille and, if necessary, tourists will have to go to the Alfândega Régia (located right in front of the Nau). Even considering communication as an integrated process in tourism resources provides quick and safe learning and greater integration, the Nau's tour guides have no training in Accessible Tourism. Azurara Adventure Park also has accessibility in the main entrance that, despite being a ramp, the floor makes the access a little difficult. For people with visual and motor disability, this park can only offer tours and picnics, but for people with hearing disability they can offer all the activities in the park, except the tree climbing, because it is an activity that needs headphones. The lack of these accessible equipment components reports to the lack of interest by the City Hall of Vila do Conde, due to not putting as a priority its improvement.

The communication inherent to the human being is fundamental for human relationships to develop and for the maintenance of well-being and learning (Ferreira & Nunes, 2021). Although, in most of the entities interviewed, there are no professionals with training directed towards the segment of Accessible Tourism, it can be concluded that there is a lot of concern about this issue. However, no opportunities have been observed yet, created by the entities, to enable professionals to be more integrated in this segment. It is essential to recognize the several forms of communication and language, allowing human beings to express themselves and participate fully in everything that is within their reach within the community (Ferreira & Nunes, 2021).

Regarding the increase in stays/visits of tourist sites, these destinations have not undergone major changes or implementation of accessible activities and services. Meanwhile, the hotel sector, since the implementation of adapted services and rooms, has seen an increased interest from tourists with reduced mobility. Tabota et al. (2013) state that the elimination of architectural barriers and the availability of information, communication, and physical access, as well as the existence of adequate equipment and programs are essential.

The promotion of accessible tourism for all involves public authorities and private entities to ensure a better understanding about this segment and develop a competitive advantage for the tourism services they offer to customers in the regions they operate (Garcia et al., 2014). Betting on more accessible information about the products and services made available within the cities of Vila do Conde and Póvoa de Varzim was one of the means of promotion that the tourism sites highlighted. Websites allow all visitors, regardless of whether they have any functional limitation or not, to interact in a simple and fast way, making it possible to enjoy all the resources that are offered (Gonçalves et al., 2015). It would be important to improve social networks, the accessibility of cities and attract more tourists with reduced mobility, presenting more information throughout the city territory, to support these tourists in their itineraries.

In the hotel sector, entities consider the hotels' websites as the main means of promotion. It will be important to improve the digital media, to ensure accessibility outside and inside the hotel, promoting the services and products available inside these hotels and the accesses to the buildings. It was also considered important to reinforce accessibility in the areas around the hotel, such as restaurants, pharmacies, access ramps, among others.

All the interviewed destinations consider that accessible tourism businesses can receive tourists with reduced mobility. However, some are more suitable than others, thus making it essential to adapt them in terms of accessibility, providing better conditions and a greater profitability and growth of tourism demand (Garcia et al, 2014). The Vila do Conde Tourism Office mentioned the absence of investments in access infrastructures, which is determinant in the growth of accessibility. It would also be important for tourist sites to have a larger number of tour guides with specialized training, targeted at this type of public. It was highlighted that Braille, the existence of auditory and visual signage, and access ramps would be fundamental in all tourist businesses in the cities, to prevent tourists with reduced mobility from being marginalised.

Overall, the interviewees consider the cities of Vila do Conde and Póvoa de Varzim to be accessible and easy to get around. But not completely. As it is a market segment in constant change and growth, its valorisation should be gradual. In order to provide an increase in tourism demand, the tourist places consider it necessary to invest in the beaches, making them accessible, to invest in more car parks directed towards this type of tourists; the placement of access ramps at the entrances of all tourist establishments; to remove the containers from the pavements, making it easier for tourists to manoeuvre; to invest in an office/support post in both cities, to provide support to all types of disabilities that tourists may present; Invest in the accessibility of the Nau Quinhentista, placing more ramps inside the equipment and training the tour guides so that they can assist tourists with special needs - sign language training; provide information in Braille and auditory and visual signage in all tourist establishments and hotels; invest in supporting accessible adventure tourism activities; invest in digital media, in order to promote the cities and their accessibility.

All investments that meet people's needs are targeted improvements and needs diagnosed by everyone. Cities need to ensure accessibility, both physical and digital, to all contexts of life, recognizing the various forms of communication and language, order to allow human beings to express themselves and participate fully in community (Ferreira & Nunes, 2021).

5. Conclusions

Recognizing a tourism destination as being accessible implies that anyone, regardless of physical condition, can access the existing offer, namely products and services, as well as infrastructure without barriers, because tourism is a right of all and for all. Tourism services are a very important differentiator of success in terms of competitive advantages. Regarding the profile of the population under analysis, it was found that the tourists involved in the visits to the entities are mostly people with motor disabilities and in an age range of 50-65 years. The cities of Vila do Conde and Póvoa de Varzim are still in a development process, with a view to becoming accessible destinations. The specialization of human resources, being a factor highly valued by those who need special care, determined to be an evident barrier to participation in tourism by the segment under study, except for Póvoa de Varzim Tourism Office that has in its staff a person able to respond to visually impaired visitors. The tourism offices do not have, in their information provision policy, contents that meet the needs of visitors with reduced mobility, to ensure a safe tourist experience adjusted to their specific needs. The Hotel Industry is still characterized by the existence of many physical barriers that hinder the full enjoyment of tourism products. The policies adopted only aim at what is stipulated by legislation and the care in applying additional measures is not yet on the strategic agenda of the sector in the region. Additionally, the lack of civility and knowledge of society, as well as the lack of specialized training by professionals, are still the main problems that prevent tourists from visiting these cities. The availability of correct, precise, and updated information is a very important component for a visitor with reduced mobility, both when preparing the whole trip and during the experience at the destination. Through the data collected, the set of information provided by the interviewed entities does not fully meet the special needs of people with reduced mobility by the lack of updating and/or absence of relevant images that complement the written information. The research reinforced the growing importance of the accessible tourism market segment for the tourism industry; it showed that the tourism offer of Vila do Conde and Póvoa de Varzim cities is still not fully aware and adapted to receive people with special needs; the policies adopted do not consider or value this type of visitors; and, the information made available, as well as the training of the different collaborators, is not suitable for the needs of the target market.

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Aquatic Event(S) in the Cultural and Nautical Diversity of a Destination

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Abstract: Events are important drivers of attractiveness for tourist destinations. All types of events represent an opportunity for projection for the territory where they are developed. The holding of events has been a strong strategic bet to boost tourism and local economies. The impacts arising from the events affect not only the local community, but the entire territory. Therefore, the events sector has been playing a fundamental role in terms of the attractiveness and competitiveness of tourist destinations. The contribution is notable above all in the impetus given to the creation and development of new tourist products seen as a necessity for the holding of events and the territory where they are held. The development of events leads to investment in spaces conducive to practices associated with the realization of events and the improvement of infrastructure conditions, ending up being catalysts for a "territorial renewal". It can also lead to awareness of the protection of heritage resources through the promotion of cultural and tourist activities that design these spaces, contributing to a greater knowledge and attractiveness of these resources. In this sense, we intend to present a case study related to the event – "Wakeboard Open Days". Event related to nautical tourism and carried out geographically in the Central region of Portugal and in a territorial scope linked to the river Zêzere, Medio Tejo. The main objectives of this study are the approach to wakeboard combined with nautical tourism and the verification of the impacts of this practice in the territory where the event is held. To achieve both objectives, a quantitative analysis was carried out. From the preliminary results, some reluctance on the part of residents about knowledge of the wakeboard modality is identified, with practical implications for verifying social impacts, among others. Therefore, there is a need for greater interaction between all managers of the territory to increase the quality of the nautical tourist offer. This study will contribute to a greater perception of the need to expand knowledge about the impacts of this event on the territory, valuing it through fluvial-nautical practice.

Keywords: events, nautical tourism, wakeboard, territory, tourist destinations

1. Introduction

The promotion of territories through the holding of events is increasingly used as a way for regions to differentiate themselves in a dynamic of territorial competitiveness. Also, to boost your events or activities to achieve a greater impact on the tourist development of that territory.

The Central region of Portugal, where the Medio Tejo and the river Zêzere are integrated, the geographical area that we intend to present in this study, is a privileged space for the practice of aquatic modalities linked to the river resource.

The Medio Tejo region has taken advantage of this resource to promote wakeboard activity and specifically the "Open Days Event". This is an event promoted by Intermunicipal Community of the Medio Tejo. The international dimension event has boosted the region's tourism development. However, the development of the territory will have to be based on a joint and constant strategy between the various stakeholders of the territory.

The experience linked to events has shown that any event that aims to attract tourists in their relationship with the destination and with the residents, and with companies and a whole set of stakeholders involved, always ends up generating impacts. The perception of these impacts comes from the interaction of tourism with the various sectors of economic activity and, consequently, with various social, cultural, environmental aspects, etc.

At a time when the economy in Portugal is going through a difficult period, it is essential that tourist destinations innovate and develop cultural and tourist products so that they become differentiators in the competition between territories for the type of tourism they offer to their visitors.

One of the tourist products that has been developed is nautical tourism with the wakeboard event in the Central region of Portugal, Medio Tejo, known for its connections to the river (Zêzere river) and on a more touristy side associated with nautical tourism, with a modality such as wakeboard, already with great expression at an international level. As a tourist offer, it values not only the Medio Tejo region, but also boosts this product as a national and international reference in the wakeboard aquatic modality. This context, together with the intention to understand the impacts that the event brought to the region, justifies the choice of the theme presented in this study.

Events are used as a lever for the territory with the purpose of attracting more visitors and contributing to socio-economic development, and can cover various levels at the social, economic, sporting, urban scale. Events are public celebrations (Getz 1997). They serve for people to come together to celebrate, venerate, remember, socialize, and demonstrate (Yeomann et al, 2006). They are specific rituals designed and consciously created to mark special occasions (MacDonnell et al, 1999). In the case of nautical tourism, it can be characterized by tourists who relate to water, whether by sea or river, focusing especially on an activity that provides leisure (Gračan et al, 2018).

In events, when it comes to consolidating a positive image of the region, an integrated management is necessary, based on the destination brand management. The organization of events is a fundamental element to increase the attractiveness of the region with effects on the respective reputation and image of the destination (Guerreiro 2008). Also due to the contribution of sociocultural factors related to the preservation and recovery of traditions, infrastructures and old values that could otherwise fall into oblivion (Marques et al, 2021).

Events can leverage the promotion of the destination and attract tourists, and social, cultural, environmental, political, economic, and sporting factors are considered fundamental to achieve this attractiveness (Horne 2007).

On the one hand, studies (Gratton, Shibli and Coleman 2006), have demonstrated the importance of the relationship between the number of tourists and the economic impact attributed to a given event. On the other hand, other studies (Mathieson and Wall 1982), relate not only the economic impacts, but also the environmental, cultural, and social ones. In addition, tourist projection can be reinforced through nautical activities, making these a key part in the revaluation of territories (Romero de La Cruz et al, 2020).

Events related to nautical tourism must include entrepreneurs and public entities (municipalities, associations, among others), with the aim of promoting their products.

It is understood that in this study from these dynamics it is possible to perceive the central objective of this study, from a case study, centred on the event "Wakeboard Open Days". The main objective is to understand the practice of wakeboard combined with nautical tourism and to verify the possible impacts of this practice in the territory where the event is held.

There is a need for greater interaction between all the managers of the territory to increase the quality of the nautical tourist offer. In this sense, this study contributes to a greater perception of the practice of nautical tourism observed from the aquatic modality of wakeboard and to a better perception of the impacts of this event in the territory, valuing it through the fluvial-nautical practice.

2. Cultural and nautical diversity of a destination: The Medio Tejo Region

The Center region has a coast with beaches, both coastal and river, as well as several rivers, dams, and marinas. At the same time, it has a wide cultural and natural heritage with a diversity of resources and locations suitable for the practice of nautical activities. There is an immense territorial potential for the development of tourist products associated with nautical tourism. This territorial reality constitutes a growing opportunity for development and dynamism for the central-interior regions.

The Medio Tejo, Center region of Portugal, sub-region that integrates the NUTS III of the district of Santarém, in addition to presenting a forest and agricultural area, has five rivers that pass through this territory, namely, the rivers Tejo, Zêzere, Nabão, Almonda and Alviela. This region of the Medio Tejo includes the municipalities of Vila de Rei, Ferreira do Zêzere, Sardoal, Sertã, Abrantes and Tomar.

This region has an important cultural, natural, historical and architectural heritage. The region has good infrastructure, accessibility conditions and companies recognized for their nautical services. It is considered to add value to the territory and has been fundamental for the development of the territory, thus contributing to social progress, to the regional and local economy, as well as to the increase in nautical tourism activity.

Associate to nautical tourism, the cultural diversity of the territory can also contribute to generate an awareness of the preservation of heritage, both tangible and intangible, understanding that this is the heritage that distinguishes and affirms it individually (Toselli 2006). In fact, contemporary society involves actions aimed at the protection, conservation, interpretation and dissemination of the heritage and cultural diversity of each region, as they constitute an important challenge for the sustainable development of the territory.

The Castelo de Bode Nautical Station is a centre for activities linked to the Castelo de Bode reservoir for the development of a whole network of water activities associated with nautical tourism. It is understood that nautical tourism is promising for the development of the Center region, with special emphasis on the aquatic modality of wakeboard and a diversified set of tourist products related to nautical tourism, with the main objective of creating a tourist offer capable of make the Medio Tejo destination the biggest in terms of national and international attractiveness. For reasons of competitiveness between tourist territories, it is essential that destinations are prepared to adapt and update their portfolio of events (Sol et al, 2017). The Medio Tejo external market reached a very favourable peak (since 2020) as the practice of unique sports, which led to better levels of tourism, in nautical terms (Centro 2020).

The Medio Tejo region has a unique cultural diversity. A favourable context, given that society, which is increasingly diversified, it is essential to guarantee harmonious interaction between people and groups with both plural and dynamic cultural identities (Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, article 2, UNESCO 2002) .The sustainable management of cultural and nautical tourism is essential for tourist destinations that promote it, and it is crucial to value existing resources allied to the dynamics of cultural empowerment for the development of this territory (Lopes et al, 2022).

In this sense, the promotion of nautical tourism with a view to valuing and sustaining the cultural, natural, and scenic resources of the Medio Tejo, requires investments that focus on intelligent economic development and the reinforcement of activities linked to the networked water-river resource.

In this way, it will be possible to create favourable conditions for the settlement of people and ensure sustainable prosperity for the territory.

3. Methodology

The main objective of this work is to understand the impacts of the "Wakeboard Open Days" event, Zêzere river, Medio Tejo Center region (Portugal). To obtain a better understanding of the reality of cultural, social, economic, and environmental impacts, data were collected through an individual and anonymous questionnaire, consisting of closed-ended questions, with residents and participants in this study, present in four (4) river beaches of the Medio Tejo: Aldeia do Mato (Abrantes), Lago Azul (Ferreira do Zêzere), Trízio (Sertã) and Fernandaires (Vila de Rei).

In relation to cultural impacts, we tried to understand the attribution given, by degree of importance of the event for the territory, at three (3) levels: *i*) appreciation of traditional techniques and preservation of cultural heritage; *ii*) community involvement in the event and, *iii)* non-characterization of heritage and loss of local identity. Regarding the economic impacts, these were also given degrees of importance, at three (3) levels: *i*) job creation; *ii*) increased consumption of local products and *iii*) attraction of new investments and business development.

As for social impacts, the three (3) levels assigned are: *i*) decreased security; *ii*) improving the development of structures (accessibility, leisure, tourist entertainment, etc.), and *iii*) improving the quality of services. Finally, in terms of environmental impacts, the three (3) levels assigned are*: i)* dissemination of natural landscapes and environmental conservation, *ii*) environmental awareness and awareness, and *iii*) air, soil, and water pollution.

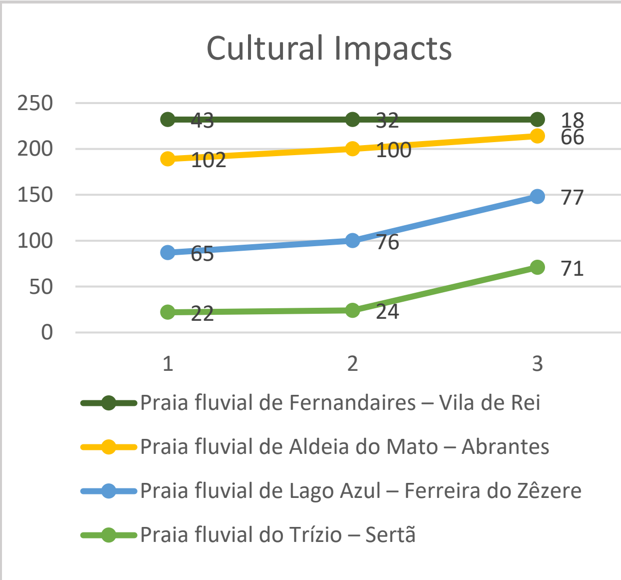
The data collection period of this study took place during the months of June and July (2021), in four (4) river beaches prepared with cable parks for the practice of the aquatic modality of wakeboard (river beach of Aldeia do Mato – Abrantes, river beach of Lago Azul – Ferreira do Zêzere, river beach of Trízio – Sertã and river beach of Fernandaires – Vila de Rei). Data collection took place during the "Wakeboard Open Days" event, from which 232 valid questionnaires were collected.

4. Results

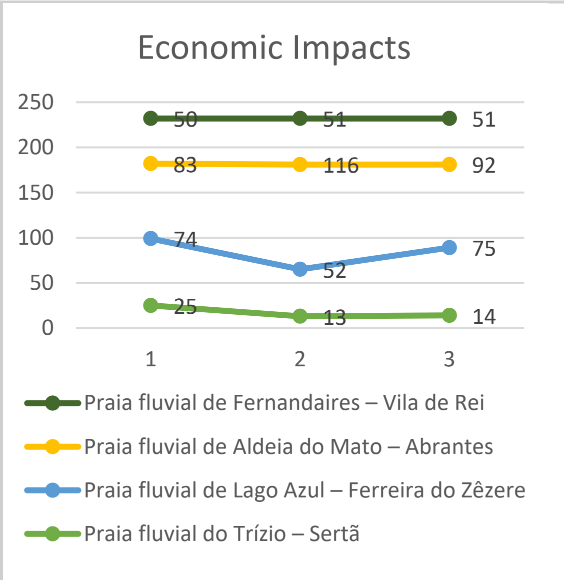
To analyse the cultural, economic, social, and environmental impacts of the "Wakeboard Open Days" event on the territory, the residents and participants of this study were asked about these impacts, at the above-mentioned levels. The results for the cultural impact (Graph 1), suggest in the logic of the residents and participants that on the river beach of Sertã, holding the event has benefits, however only 22% consider that through this event traditional techniques can be valued and contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage. Also, only 24% of respondents consider it important to involve the community in the event. 71% believe that this type of event contributes to the non-characterization of the heritage and loss of identity of the place.

On the river beach of Ferreira de Zêzere, 77% consider that the event contributes to the non-characterization and loss of identity of the place. Therefore, 76% consider community involvement essential, but only 65% believe that the event brings benefits to the territory, through the enhancement of traditional techniques and preservation of cultural heritage.

Graph 1



Graph 2



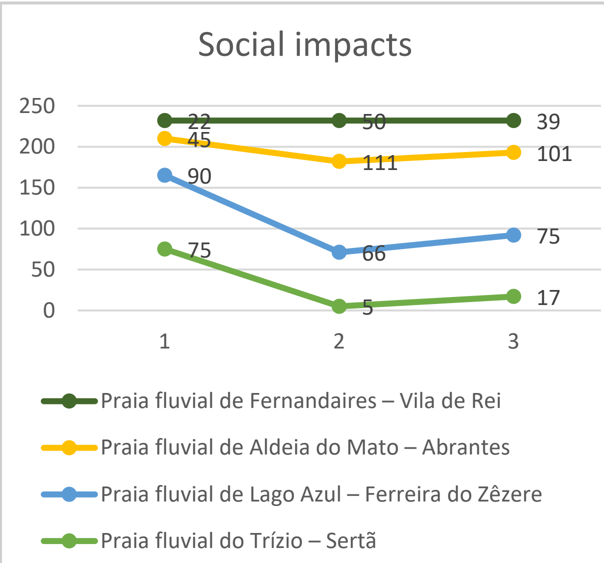
A curious result was obtained on the river beach of Abrantes, as most respondents, 102%, consider that the event presents appreciation benefits, as well as 100% also consider that community involvement is important. Already 66% observe that the event may contribute to the non-characterization of the place and to the loss of identity of the territory. On the river beach of Vila de Rei, a small percentage, 18% say that the event contributes to the non-characterization of the heritage and loss of identity of the place, 32% consider the involvement of the community important and 43% believe that the event can enhance the techniques traditions, as well as contributing to the preservation of cultural heritage. From the economic impacts (Graph 2), this study obtained interesting results in the four river beaches studied.

On Sertã river beach, 25% of respondents consider that the event is important for job creation, 13% believe that the event will increase the consumption of local products and 14% say that the event will attract new investments and business development for the territory. On the river beach of Ferreira Zêzere, the result is interesting, since 74% of the respondents believe that the event is important for job creation, 52% only mention that there may be an increase in consumption of local products, and that a considerable percentage, 75% also have the perspective that the event will lead to new investments and business development.

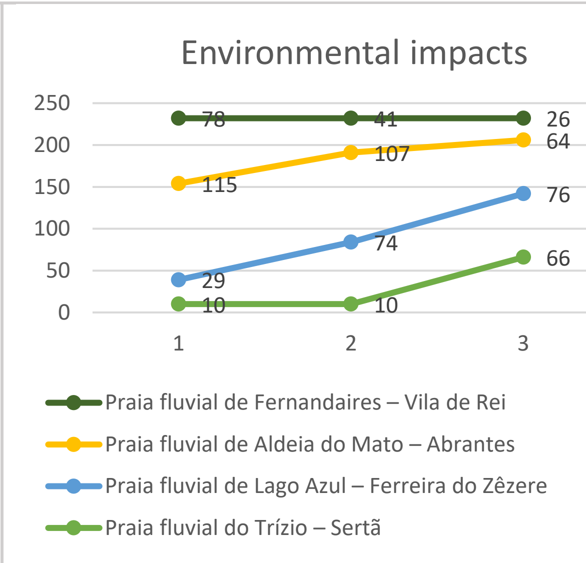
In this question, the same happens with the answers obtained in the river beach of Abrantes, since 92% have a similar perspective. 116% consider, therefore, that there is also an increase in the consumption of local products and 83% say that the event will contribute to job creation. The social impacts (Graph 3) revealed equally interesting results of future verification, related to safety. 75% of the respondents from the Sertã river beach consider that the event contributes to reducing the safety of the place. Only 5% believe that holding the event can contribute to an improvement in the development of structures (accessibility, leisure, tourist entertainment, etc.), with 17% mentioning that it can serve to increase the quality of services in the region in a global dynamic.

Similarly, on the river beach of Ferreira Zêzere, the results also point to a decrease in safety, with 90%. Already 66% believe that the event contributes to an improvement in the development of structures (accessibility, leisure, tourist entertainment, etc). A very representative percentage, 75% consider the increase in the quality of tourist services. On the river beach of Abrantes, only a small percentage, 45% consider there is a decrease in safety, 111% mention that the event contributes to an improvement in the development of structures (accessibility, leisure, tourist entertainment, etc). 101% refer to an increase in the quality of services in general. On Vila de Rei beach, only 22% say that the event takes place, reduces safety, 50% of respondents indicate the event's contribution to an improvement in the development of structures and 39% mention that it can increase the quality of services.

Graph 3



Graph 4



For the environmental impacts (Graph 4), on the Sertã river beach, 10% of the respondents consider that the event promotes the dissemination of natural landscapes and the conservation of the environment. Although 10% believe that the event can contribute to environmental awareness and awareness, 66% say that the event contributes to air, soil, and water pollution. The answers obtained on the river beach of Ferreira Zêzere indicate that 29% consider that the event promotes the dissemination of natural landscapes and the conservation of the environment, and the curious result obtained on this river beach is that 74% consider that the holding of the event provides environmental awareness and awareness and 76% point to an increase in air, soil and water pollution. A result obtained at Abrantes beach with a high percentage, 115%, is that the event promotes the dissemination of natural landscapes and the conservation of the environment. 107% environmental awareness and awareness and 64% air, soil and water pollution. In Vila de Rei beach, regarding the dissemination of natural landscapes and conservation of the environment, 78% of respondents attribute high importance to this level. 41% for environmental awareness and awareness and 26% for air, soil and water pollution.

5. Discussion

In this study, we started from the idea that events are fundamental for tourist destinations. It is since a tourist destination combines all the services, products and experiences existing in the place (Buhalis 2000). They generate positive and important impacts for destinations, by attracting more visitors and tourists, by contributing to the increase in consumption of the same at the place of the event, increasing the number of stays in the tourist destination, as well as counteracting seasonality (Getz 2008).

The present study, as already mentioned, aims to analyse the impacts (cultural, social, economic and environmental) of the event “Wakeboard Open Days”, river Zêzere, Medio Tejo, in the Center region (Portugal). The four (4) river beaches of the Medio Tejo studied resulted in relevant information for future discussion on the impacts in relation to this event.

The discussion about the context under study is important since some studies have pointed to destinations as winning bets through the holding of events with the aim of attracting more visitors, promoting the positioning of the destination in the tourist market (Getz and Page 2016). The events end up becoming catalysts for the tourist development of the territory.

From the point of view of holding the event “Wakeboard Open Days” about cultural impacts, it is evident the important importance attributed to the enhancement of traditional techniques and preservation of cultural heritage, highlighting the river beaches of Aldeia do Mato (Abrantes), with 102% followed by the river beaches of Lago Azul (Ferreira do Zêzere) and the river beach of Fernandaires (Vila de Rei), with 65% and 43%, respectively. With a lower percentage, comes with 22%, the river beach of Trízio (Sertã). Which means that events offer the opportunity for tourists to get to know the local culture and lifestyle of the places where they are held (Deng and Li 2014).

About community involvement in the event, the river beaches of Aldeia do Mato and Lago Azul have the highest percentages, 100% and 76% respectively. Followed by the river beaches of Fernandaires with 32% and Trízio with 24%. On the other hand, on the river beach of Lago Azul, respondents consider that the event contributes to the non-characterization of the heritage and loss of local identity, 77%, followed by a very close percentage, 71% for the river beach of Trízio and of 66% for the beach of Aldeia do Mato.

In fact, the participation of the local community in activities related to the aquatic modality, in areas favourable for its development, is very positive due to the adhesion of the community itself. The increase in volunteering and community cooperation may increase, contributing to the strengthening and appreciation of traditions (Kim, et al. 2015). Regarding the economic impacts on the territory, it is positive to consider the “leverage effect” (Nicolas 2015). The analysis showed that in terms of economic impacts, job creation was considered important on the river beach of Aldeia do Mato, with 83%, followed by the river beach Lago Azul, with 74%. For the river beaches of Fernandaires, 50% and Trízio, 25%, job creation is of lesser importance. The attribution of the same percentage degree of importance on the increase in the consumption of local products is attributed by the respondents of the beaches Aldeia do Mato, 116%, Lago Azul, 52%, Fernandaires, 51% and Trízio, 13%. As an economic impact arising from the events, they create visibility for new investments and create favourable conditions for the promotion of local commercial activities (Allen et al 2002).

There is a growing tendency for competent institutions to support the management of events, mainly through the creation of infrastructures for holding them in their places of operation, thus realizing their objective of capturing more and more events (Dredge and Jamal 2015), which promote investments in the territory where a particular event takes place. The attractiveness for new investments and development of companies in the territory was considered of extreme importance, judging by the percentage attributed by the respondents to the river beach Aldeia do Mato, 92%, followed by the river beaches Lago Azul, 75%, Fernandaires, 51% and with residual relevance, 14% for the river beach Trízio. It means that tourist activity, based on the holding of events, can bring several positive impacts to the destination.

The perception that visitors have of a tourist destination where an event takes place can influence their decision to participate or not in a particular event (Deng and Li 2014). The analysis of the social impacts revealed that the participants of this study considered a general decrease in security when the event took place. On the river beaches Lago Azul, 90% and Trízio, 75%, a high percentage of respondents considered that there was a decrease in safety. Also, the river beaches of Aldeia do Mato, 45% and Fernandaires, 22%, appear very close in terms of percentage. Regarding improving the development of structures (accessibility, leisure, tourist entertainment, etc.), the river beaches that stand out in terms of importance were Aldeia do Mato, 111% and Lago Azul, 66%. Fernandaires, 50% and Trízio, with only 5%. Respondents from the Aldeia do Mato river beach, also considered a considerable increase in the quality of services through this event, with 101%, followed by the river beaches Lago Azul, 75%, Fernandaires, 39% and Trízio, 17%. It means that the holding of the event can be a catalyst in the development and improvement of existing conditions and can also increase the tourist experiences of visitors during their stay at the destination (Allen et al 2002).

Finally, environmental impacts were also considered in this study. The dissemination of natural landscapes and conservation of the environment were considered highly important by respondents from the river beach Aldeia do Mato, 115%, Fernandaires, 78% and with less representation the river beaches Lago Azul, 29% and Trízio, 10%. Also, in relation to the importance of holding this event for environmental awareness and awareness, the river beaches Aldeia do Mato, 107%, Lago Azul, 74% and with a lower percentage the Fernandaires beaches, 41% and Trízio, 10%. Air, soil, and water pollution on the river beaches Lago Azul, 76%, Trízio, 66%, Aldeia do Mato, 64% and, finally, Fernandaires, 26% were also mentioned.

Tourist destinations increasingly face intense competition processes (Hildebrandt and Isaac 2015). This happens because more and more, visitors, before choosing their destination of choice, look for information about these destinations and compare these different destinations that have similar characteristics. Therefore, tourist destinations seek to differentiate themselves from the competition (Aarstad et al 2015). With this discussion under analysis, we sought to contribute to a better understanding of the cultural, economic, social, and environmental impacts existing in a tourist destination whose cultural diversity and nautical activity characterize it, and the results achieved were focused on a specific event "Wakeboard Opens Days", which can be replicated in other events of the same territorial scope.

6. Concluding remarks

Through this study it was evident the confirmation of the results on cultural impacts at levels *i*) the enhancement of traditional techniques and preservation of cultural heritage and *ii*) the involvement of the community in the event are the most representative on the river beach Aldeia do Mato (Abrantes). It was also confirmed that level *iii*) non-characterization of heritage and loss of local identity was the most representative for the river beaches Lago Azul (Ferreira do Zêzere) and Trízio (Sertã). This study made it clear that the economic impacts are perceived, firstly, at level *ii*) increased consumption of local products, followed by *iii*) attracting new investments and business development, and only then at level *i*) job creation.

These levels are referenced by respondents from the river beach Aldeia do Mato (Abrantes) and *iii*) attraction of new investments and business development, mentioned by the river beach Lago Azul (Ferreira do Zêzere).

It was also possible to confirm in terms of social impacts that levels *ii*) improvement in the development of structures (accessibility, leisure, tourist entertainment, etc), and level *iii*) increase in the quality of services were considered the most representative for respondents from the Aldeia do Mato, river beach (Abrantes) and level *i*) decreased safety for the river beaches Lago Azul (Ferreira Zêzere) and Trízio (Sertã).

This study also concludes that in terms of environmental impacts, levels *i*) dissemination of natural landscapes and environmental conservation and *ii*) environmental awareness and awareness were representative for the river beach Aldeia do Mato (Abrantes). Level *i*) dissemination of natural landscapes and environmental conservation, was for the river beach Fernandaires (Vila de Rei) and iii) air, soil, and water pollution for the beach Lago Azul (Ferreira Zêzere).

The conclusions of this study highlight the locations of the Medio Tejo, such as Abrantes, Ferreira do Zêzere, Sertã and Vila de Rei. In these locations, the river beaches have a cable park – an infrastructure equipped for the practice of wakeboard water activities. The “Wakeboard Open Days” event took place in these structures. Respondents from Abrantes, in relation to cultural impacts, show a greater concern for issues of valuing traditional techniques and preserving cultural heritage. They also mention that there is an increase in the consumption of local products, regarding the economic impacts related to the realization of this event.

As for the social impacts, they also mention the improvement in the development of structures (accessibility, leisure, tourist entertainment, etc.) and, about environmental impacts, they understand that the event contributes to the dissemination of natural landscapes and conservation of the environment. Respondents from Ferreira do Zêzere, on the other hand, point out as cultural impacts, the non-characterization of heritage and loss of local identity, and they understand that the fundamental economic impact for the region is the attraction of new investments and the development of companies.

However, as a social impact, they foresee a decrease in safety and at the environmental level, they mention the increase in air, soil, and water pollution. Respondents from Sertã point out as the most relevant cultural and social impacts, the non-characterization of heritage, loss of local identity and decreased security, respectively. Vila de Rei and its respondents believe that the dissemination of natural landscapes and conservation of the environment, as an environmental impact, is fundamental. It is understood that the main results confirmed in this study may provide important information related to the impacts of the "Wakeboard Open Days" event in the territory. It could also mean a work base for the managers of tourist organizations to readapt their strategies to promote the event, giving it differentiating and competitive characteristics, which contribute to the (re)conquest of promising markets for this territory.

The present study has some limitations related to the inclusion of other levels of importance related to the image of the nautical tourist destination, specifically with the event "Wakeboard Opens Days" and with the degree of satisfaction of residents and visitors, participants in the event, are understandable as relevant dimensions for the context of general deepening of the theme under study aquatic event(s) in the cultural and nautical diversity of a destination.

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Can Volunteer Tourism be a Sub-Segment of Wellness Tourism?

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Abstract: Wellness tourism is a segment of tourism that has been widely studied, including the motivations that undertake the trip. Throughout the literature review it was possible to observe that the motivations that are the origin of this type of tourism are diverse, highlighting, the achievement of physical and mental well-being, self-development and personal reward, relaxation and escape, exploration and reflection, and enjoyment of a new experience. Smith and Kelly, 2006 approach the concept from a broader perspective, encompassing several segments: new age tourism, nature tourism, adventure tourism, yoga tourism, spiritual and religious tourism, and voluntary tourism. Also, Ali-Knight (2009) and GWI (2018) consider voluntary tourism an integral segment of wellness tourism as well as thermal tourism, spa tourism, nature tourism, retreat tourism, and social tourism. In addition to the fact that the authors mentioned above consider voluntary tourism a sub-segment of wellness tourism, a study by Coghlan (2015) found, through a project of travel experience in the context of volunteering, in which various social activities were carried out, which can achieve a beneficial health outcome, in addition to an improvement in the well-being and mental health of participants. However, throughout the literature review, it was found that studies addressing the motivations of volunteer tourists are scarce, and none are known to address the relationship between the motivations of wellness tourists and volunteer tourists. In order to fill this gap, a qualitative approach was developed based on semi-structured interviews with individuals who have travelled in the field of voluntary tourism. Thus, we were able to compare the motivations recognized in these interviews with those verified in the literature review in the field of wellness tourism, and to realize that, from an altruistic perspective, the motivations of tourists from both segments are coincident. This finding allows us to consider that, from the perspective of motivations, voluntary tourism can comprise one of the sub-segments of wellness tourism. This study will contribute to increase knowledge about the motivations of wellness and voluntary tourism and understand the similarities between these types of tourism.

Keywords: volunteer tourism, wellness tourism, tourism motivations

1. Introduction

Wellness tourism is a segment of tourism that exhibits high growth rates, and in 2017 this rate was almost double, 6.5% (GWI, 2018) of the growth rate of global tourism. This segment of tourism comprises other segments more or less developed and with a reflection on the volume of visitors. Thus, within wellness tourism we find, among others, spa tourism, nature tourism, spiritual tourism, cultural tourism, retreat tourism (Diekmann and McCabe,2016; Dini and Pencarelli, 2021). We easily deduce that the main and constant objective to all the tourism typologies mentioned is to achieve well-being, and that the motivations that aim to achieve that well-being are transversal to the same typologies: relaxation, self-exploration (personal development), authentic experience, rest, escape, only referring to the most verified in the literature review.

Despite the aforementioned typologies being part of wellness tourism, a study developed by Coghlan (2015) also brings to the discussion the possibility that voluntary tourism can integrate the typology of wellness tourism. Such consideration is due to the fact that this study suggested that there may be very positive effects on the well-being of individuals as a result of the practice of charitable actions

Taking as a starting point the results of the study by Coghlan (2015) - in which the author assumes that, if charitable activities result in feelings of well-being for the individuals who participate in these activities, so too does voluntary tourism, which is based on charitable activities, will translate into feelings of well-being in its participants - it was decided to investigate, from the perspective of motivations, the possibility that voluntary tourism could integrate well-being tourism.

In this way, we intend to assess the possibility that the motivations of voluntary tourism tourists are really similar to those of wellness tourism tourists, and, from this perspective, it can be considered that voluntary tourism is part of wellness tourism. In this follow-up, a qualitative methodology was adopted, through the realization of seven semi-structured interviews with Portuguese volunteer tourists who carried out their volunteer activities on the African and Asian continent, in the last 2 years and 8 months.

We begin the paper with a review of the literature on the most relevant concepts, as well as the motivations of wellness tourists. Then, the research methodology is presented, and the results are analysed. Finally, the most relevant conclusions, limitations of the study and recommendations for future research are presented.

2. Conceptual framework of wellness tourism

Wellness tourism is a segment that has significantly contributed to the growth of the tourism industry (Kim, Chiang and Tang, 2017).

Concerns about health and well-being have assumed great importance in the ranking of tourist concerns. Increasingly, individuals seek to enjoy and imbue themselves with higher levels of well-being in their daily lives, and this desire has also been materialized through travel, where the option for wellness products and services gain prominence (GWI, 2017).

In this sense, the GWI (2017) defines wellness tourism as a trip that is undertaken with the objective of maintaining or improving the individual's well-being. The same entity mentioned, in 2018, that wellness tourism is “The active pursuit of activities, choices and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health” (GWI, 2018:4).

Kim, Chiang and Tang (2017) and Karn and Swain (2017) consider that the unsettling daily lives in which restlessness, confusion, pressure and, often, frustration at work, as well as agitation in the family's daily life prevail, or even the vicissitudes of social contacts, among others (Dwyer, Edwards, Mistilis, Roman and Scott, 2009; Heung and Kucukusta, 2013), lead individuals to yearn for breaks where moments of tranquillity and relaxation take on a special role. In addition, the holistic way in which individuals began to integrate moments of well-being in their lives has extended to tourism activities. Thus, for the realization of these moments, individuals have resorted to the vast offer of products and services provided by the tourist activity in the well-being segment (Arpasi, 2018). In the same sense, Karn and Swain (2017) and Silva and Umbelino (2017) consider relevant the frequency with which, given a wide range of travel possibilities, individuals decide for those trips that provide them with moments of relaxation and serenity and, they even offer them techniques and therapies for physical and mental rejuvenation.

3. The motivations of wellness tourists

The growing and fast trend of the wellness tourism segment has led many researchers to focus on the various aspects of the spectrum of this tourism typology, such as the concepts that are at the genesis of wellness, its main practices and activities, as well as the characteristics and motivations of individuals who participate in this tourism typology. Table 1 illustrates the various studies that have been developed around these themes, and, specifically, shows the main motivations of health and well-being tourists.

Thus, and after analysing the studies presented in the table, we realized that the motivations for novelty, contact with nature, well-being with the family, relaxation, socialization, cultural learning, gastronomy, relaxation, the opportunity to meditating, living new experiences, self-exploration, development, rest, escape and entertainment, are the ones that deserved the most attention from the respondents of the various investigations carried out in this area.

Table 1: The motivations of wellness tourism

Article title	Authors	Main motivations observed
Effect of Health and Wellness Values on Festival Visit Motivation	Yoo, Lee and Lee (2015)	The objective of the article was to understand the motivations that lead travellers to visit a tourist destination due to a festival, and to undertake an effective tourism marketing strategy that would be a catalyst to attract festival participants. The study included field research at the Goomeri Pumpkin Festival, a typical Australian festival where participants can enjoy nature, culture, traditions, and local products, which can be enjoyed and appreciated in the various events that take place during the festival. The study focused on establishing a relationship between the perception of the level of health and well-being and the motivation that these variables give to the desire to participate in the festival. The results pointed to high levels in the health and well-being variable, and high levels in the items: novelty, contact

Article title	Authors	Main motivations observed
		with nature, well-being with the family, relaxation, socialization, cultural learning, and gastronomy.
Analysis of the determinants on the predisposition to visit a wellness tourism destination. Typologies of potential tourists	De la Hoz and Leiva (2016)	This study aimed to understand the effect that the familiarity, motivation, and image variables have on the intention to visit a destination. The study also aimed to find out if tourists could be segmented by their psychological characteristics, namely, by motivations. Regarding the motivation variable, the study concluded that what most motivated tourists to choose the destination in question was relaxation. However, other variables obtained an above average vote, such as: health awareness, getting physical therapy sessions, socializing, enjoying recreational activities, obtaining improvements in quality of life, the reduced price of the activities, the attractiveness of the activities, and the opportunity to meditate.
Visitor Motivational Factors and Level of Satisfaction in Wellness Tourism South Corea	Lim, Kim and Lee (2016)	This study focuses on a tourist attraction for recreation and wellness in South Korea. The study aimed to analyse the differences between the motivations of wellness tourists and also to understand the differences in satisfaction among tourists who visit for the first time and those who are revisiting the destination. Among the 573 respondents, 211 (36.8%) were repeat visitors, and 362 (63.2%) were visiting the place for the first time. From the study, the following motivations for the first-time visitor can be concluded: “relaxation and rest”, “new experience”, “self-exploration” and “accessibility”. Regarding the motivations for the visitor who was revisiting the place, the following motivations were obtained: the tours and the experience; the convenience for walking; self-exploration; accessibility; and on-site comfort.
Spa-goers’ Characteristics, Motivations, Preferences and Perceptions: Evidence from Elounda, Crete.	Trihas and Konstantarou (2016)	This study aimed to identify and analyse the characteristics, motivations, preferences, and perceptions of spa users, to better understand the characteristics and expectations of a tourist looking for this type of spa tourism and wellness centre, thus providing a better understanding of the main characteristics of this type of behaviour and tourist expectations in a spa and wellness centre. It is concluded that the main reasons that lead tourists to visit a spa are: to relieve stress, relax, perform treatments that provide improvements in physical health, and other treatments in the field of beauty and aesthetics.
Indulgence or therapy? Exploring the characteristics, motivations, and experiences of hot springs bathers in Victoria, Australia	Clark-Kennedy and Cohen (2017).	This study intended, through analysis that involved descriptive statistics, to understand the motivations and experiences that lead users to spas in Australia. The most verified reasons that lead users to frequent the spas were: the attempt to remedy harmful behaviours for health, relaxation, escape from the tension and routine of everyday life, connection with nature and having some rest.
Investigating wellness tourists’ motivation engagement and loyalty in search of the missing link	Kim, Chiang and Tang, (2017)	The objective of this study was to verify the tourists´ motivation in the wellness tourism segment, and to understand how these motivations are related to the involvement and loyalty to the tourist destination. Four factors were studied to assess motivation - prestige and luxury; novelty and knowledge; self-development; relaxation and escape. The study confirmed the impact of tourists' motivation on engagement, which consequently leads to loyalty. The study concluded that wellness tourists seek novelty and aim to increase their levels of knowledge. It was also shown that tourists like activities related to relaxation and escape, so yoga and spa activities should be offered. The most important motivation for wellness tourism is self-development to achieve personal growth or learning experiences.

Article title	Authors	Main motivations observed
Clustering of Health and Wellness Tourists Based on Tourism Motivation	Ting et al. (2021)	The aim of this study was to segment health and wellness tourists according to their motivations. According to motivations, health and wellness tourists can be divided into the following push motives: knowledge and experience, social and health, and exploration and reflection. With regard to pull motives, health and wellness tourists can be divided into food and cultural activities, support and information facilities, natural and interpersonal environment. It can also be seen that health and well-being tourists can be divided into four types: those who seek trips to increase their knowledge and their health and well-being; those who prefer to enjoy the services and facilities; those who enjoy exploration and reflection activities; and those who enjoy travel nearby. Through this study it was also possible to conclude that health and well-being tourism also includes health and well-being provided by the sun, health and well-being provided by the forest, and health and well-being provided by the spring season.
Travel Motivations as Criteria in the Wellness Tourism Market Segmentation Process	Damijanić (2021)	This article aimed to segment wellness tourism tourists according to their travel motivations. The study concludes that motivations related to interest in learning new things, relaxation and reward are all very important for wellness tourists in general. It was also possible to determine nine motivations from the scope of Dann (1981), three of which were push motivations and six were pull motivations. Regarding the first classification, it was obtained - health trend, relaxation, reward, and novelty. On the side of pull motivations, the following motivations were found basic well-being, intangible well-being, and extra well-being as well as: cultural and natural heritage, entertainment, recreation, and landscape.

4. Concept of volunteer tourism

Voluntary tourism consists of travellers choosing destinations whose residents need their help, more or less, specialized, such as educational support, medical assistance, construction, environmental conservation, disaster relief (Callanan and Thomas, 2005; Guttentag, 2009) and historic restoration (Wearing and McGehee, 2013).

Volunteer tourism is a positive transfer of cultural, educational, and scientific benefits between host communities and participants (Sin, 2009; McGehee, 2014). Still, Hallmann and Zehrer (2016) define volunteer tourism as an activity where volunteers exchange their time, skills, and dynamism for an experience. In this sense, the genesis of volunteer tourism lies in the possibility that tourists can, while traveling, experience authentic situations and feel good about themselves for being able to help resident populations (Wong, Newton and Newton, 2014).

From a less altruistic perspective Han et al. (2019) mention that voluntary tourism is commonly recognized as being practiced by people who travel to other countries with the aim of carrying out activities that give them condescension to their own mistakes and shortcomings, in addition to allowing them to broaden their cultural and social knowledge. In this sense, Wong, Newton and Newton (2014) consider voluntary tourism as an alternative way of doing tourism.

Among the various types of alternative tourism that have gained interest and developed over the years, Wearing and McGehee (2013) and Germann Molz (2016) consider that voluntary tourism is the fastest growing alternative form of tourism.

Volunteer tourism has assumed extreme importance for tourism over the years and this is reflected in the amount of studies that have been carried out in this area (Kim and Cuskelly, 2017). Magrizos, Kostopoulos and Powers (2021) corroborate what was mentioned by the previous authors when they mention that studies on voluntary tourism have proliferated for the last 20 years.

According to Stainton (2016), initially, voluntary tourism was considered a very residual segment of tourism, however, currently voluntary tourism is on the same level as other types of tourism, and has come to comprise other smaller segments, such as tourism. medical volunteer, social volunteer tourism, environmental volunteer tourism, among others with a narrower and more specific scope.

5. Research methodology

The main objective of this study is to understand in a holistic and incisive way the motivations of the participants in voluntary tourism. This purpose leads us to opt for a qualitative approach using an interpretive paradigm, where we can understand the behaviour and, specifically, what makes the interviewees participate in these tourism trips. This option was validated by the conclusions of Pyke et al. (2016), who argue that the qualitative approach can contribute to a better understanding of the tourist experience in the context of wellness tourism.

7 interviews were carried out with known people, taking into account, however, that there was some diversity in terms of the scope of the volunteer activities carried out. Thus, from this point of view, the activities developed ranged from cooperation and technical assistance activities; training of trainers; building houses for the community; integration of the population in volunteer projects; ocean cleanup activities in the course of the oil spill; and non-formal teacher training.

Interviewee 1 (Int 1) is 53 years old and is a social policy technician; interviewee 2 (Int 2) is 39 years old and holds a PhD scholarship; interviewee 3 (Int 3) is 45 years old and is a statutory auditor; interviewee 4 (Int 4) is 42 years old and manages development cooperation projects; interviewee 5 (Int 5) is 55 years old and is a primary school teacher; interviewee 6 (Int 6) is 38 years old and is a secondary school teacher, and interviewee 7 (Int 7), is 71 years old and, although retired, was a primary school teacher.

The interviews were carried out in January 2022, through the zoom platform, and lasted between 15 and 25 minutes.

The interviews started with a question regarding the demographic data of the interviewees and then, they were asked which types of tourism their trips fit into. Within the scope of voluntary tourism, they were asked to describe the voluntary trips they had already taken, and the activities carried out during these trips. Finally, they were asked to share the motivations that led them to choose this type of tourism, and to describe the changes that took place in their behaviour or in their way of being, and to highlight the feelings of well-being, due to these trips.

Throughout the literature review, we exposed the main motivations of wellness tourists, reported in recent studies. Next, we will analyse the interviews with volunteer tourists, corroborate their content with the motivations of voluntary tourism found in the literature review, while we match each of the motivations of wellness tourism to the motivations of volunteer tourists, verified in the interviews. In this sense, the greater the correspondence between the motivations of wellness tourists, already verified - relaxation, self-exploration, socializing, cultural learning, authentic experience, escape, novelty, rest and meditate - and the responses of the motivations of volunteer tourists, the greater the degree of certainty with which we can say that voluntary tourism can be integrated into wellness tourism, from the perspective of motivations.

6. Results

In order to determine the motivations of volunteer tourists, Proyrungroj (2020) made an analogy with Dann's push and pull motives, where he matched the push factors to the intangible desires of tourists, and the pull factors to the tangible characteristics of tourist activities and the destination itself. We found that among the main motivations obtained in this study, the personal development and growth that refers to the motivation of self-exploration verified in the literature review of the motivations of wellness tourists, is one of the most evident reasons in the interviews with the volunteers. Thus, and in relation to this motivation, Int 2 mentioned that:

> *Living in a different country makes us (...), reflect on ourselves, on our limitations and get to know ourselves better. After the trips I've taken, I try to better understand the attitudes of emigrants and not make such hasty judgments as I used to.*

Int 3 said: “In the end, there is always a process of internal growth, but this type of travel is not always pleasant, but those who make them know what they are going for”; Int 1 said: “these were remarkable trips that raised awareness of change in areas such as consumption, nature preservation and international cooperation”; Int 5 said: "…I also put myself to the test and personally value myself, in being able to get out of my comfort zone and overcome the obstacles inherent to these trips"; Int 4 said:

> *They made me a much more impatient person with some things and people, but much more tolerant with some situations", and "by being aware of voluntary tourism, it also makes me develop different sensations and perceptions, more aware that what I do is not meant to change the world, but to change myself*

Int 6 mentioned "I value the life I have more and whenever I can contribute to helping others I feel more fulfilled".

Another motivation that stood out in the study by Proyrungroj (2020) was to feel immersive in the local culture. This motivation was also verified in the studies by O'Halloran (2020) and Proyrungroj (2021). In turn, the interviewees from volunteer tourism also found themselves in this motivation. In this context, Int 2 mentioned that: "Living in a different country makes us confront a history, a culture different from ours". And yet "in every trip there is a desire to know other countries, other cultures and understand them better" Int 1 mentioned: "these trips contributed to (…) the (reciprocal) sharing of cultures and knowledge"; Int 7 mentioned: "Getting to know new cultures and taking my own"; Int 4 mentioned: "knowing other cultures" and "it is a way of having contact with other cultures and thus learning more about them"; and Int 6 said:

> *All visits leave something, enrich and, in some way, change our way of seeing and/or being in the world. These changes are not always immediate or evident, but they are part of our sociocultural development.*

Authentic experience motivation was also verified in the study by Proyrungroj (2020). Likewise, Kontogeorgopoulos (2017) adds that the main motive of the volunteer tourist is to have an authentic travel experience. On the other hand, Magrizos, Kostopoulos and Powers (2021) consider that volunteer tourists are looking for an extraordinary experience where aspects related to personal growth and self-fulfillment are achieved. Regarding this motivation, our interviewee Int 4 mentioned: "realizing how other people live in other parts of the world, makes me leave my "backyard" and realize that there is much more world beyond it."; and Int 6 said: "Whenever we come into contact with something new, we are enriched. There is at least one more perspective to see reality."

A final motivation is related to socialization, or making new friends and helping others, as found by Proyrungroj (2020), and also observed by O'Halloran (2020) and Proyrungroj (2021). In this context, Int 5 mentioned that the trips he made as part of volunteering made him "appreciate more human relationships and the spirit of mutual help"; Int 1 said: "I intend to continue to carry out voluntary tourism trips as they are related to a set of values that I intend to preserve: solidarity, between help, cooperation"; Int 7 mentioned: "willingness to help"; and Int 6 mentioned that: "it will make me feel that I can make a difference in someone's life and obviously this difference will be reflected in my life as well".

Finally, it is important to analyse the main motivation of wellness tourism – the attainment of physical and mental well-being – which translates into the set of positive results obtained in achieving the more specific motivations mentioned above. Thus, and in addition to the name of the typology itself highlighting the purpose of those who participate in the activities included in it, through the studies reviewed in this investigation - Yoo, Lee and Lee (2015); Correa and Leiva (2016); Lim, Kim and Lee (2016), Trihas and Konstantarou (2016); Clark-Kennedy and Cohen (2017); Kim, Chiang and Tang, (2017); Tinge et al. (2021); Damijanić (2021), it is also possible to see that the main motivation - obtaining well-being - is explicitly found in all studies.
Likewise, the motivation – obtaining well-being – was found in the testimonies of some volunteer tourists. In this regard, Int 4 said: "By being aware of voluntary tourism, it also makes me develop different sensations and perceptions, more aware that what I do is not meant to change the world, but to change myself"; Int 6 mentioned: "they have contributed to my personal well-being as I am more attentive to the different sociocultural realities inside and outside our country". Int 7 said: "I intend to continue, yes! Because it makes me happy to know that I can help People who weren't as lucky as I was…". Still, Int 5 said:

> *All these trips contributed to my personal well-being, especially emotionally, because when I was surprised by such disparate realities of the country in which we live and I adapted to the environment, customs and traditions and, in addition, being able to convey empathy, knowledge and security to all trainees was, without a doubt, a pleasant overcoming.*

7. Conclusion

Wellness tourism is a tourism typology that comprises many tourism segments; adventure tourism, nature tourism, thermal tourism, retreat tourism (Diekmann and McCabe, 2016; GWI, 2018; Dini and Pencarelli, 2021).

As the name itself indicates, the main motivation of tourists who choose this type of tourism is to obtain physical and mental well-being. However, this main motivation is achieved by carrying out other more specific motivations, for example: relaxation, personal development, getting to know new cultures, socializing, among others.

Voluntary tourism has registered very high growth rates in the last two decades. What used to be a residual segment of tourism, now assumes the category of general typology, and has come to include other sub-segments, for example: voluntary medical tourism, voluntary social tourism and environmental tourism. This consistency gave it notoriety, which is substantiated in the large number of studies that have been developed in this area, of which we highlight those that studied the motivations of volunteer tourists. The similarities found by Coghlan (2015) between the motivations of voluntary tourism and wellness tourism, led us to analyse the motivations of voluntary tourism in the literature review and through interviews with volunteer tourists. Following these interviews, we were able to verify the similarity between some motivations of wellness tourism and voluntary tourism, namely: self-exploration, personal development and growth, immersion in the local culture, experiencing an authentic and extraordinary experience. , socialize and help others.

This finding of common motivations for both types of tourism make it evident how close the typologies are, from the perspective of motivations, leading us, therefore, to conclude that voluntary tourism can be integrated into wellness tourism. A sample that extended over a wider geographic space and, specifically, that acted in more critical scenarios of the human condition, would bring to the discussion greater representativeness and accuracy of the data and, consequently, would enrich the investigation. These results reflect revelations that may be representative for those responsible for marketing companies and other organizations that supply wellness products and services, which, by being aware of the similarities between the motivations of both typologies, will be able to develop marketing actions for this "new" market segment that participates in voluntary tourism, but due to common motivations, may become interested in and participate in wellness tourism.

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Sustainability and Holidays Plans in Covid Times: An Analysis of Portuguese Residents' Intentions

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Abstract: This study focuses on micro-environmental factors (Casado-Aranda et al, 2021) related to changes in consumers' travel behaviours, arising from COVID-19. It seeks to understand if risk perception associated with COVID had an impact on travel intentions of residents in Portugal and if there are changes, regarding more sustainable choices, in 2021 summer holiday's intentions. Data was collected through an online questionnaire between December 2020 and March 2021 (overlapping the first 3 months of the vaccination process, corresponding to 5% of the full vaccination of the Portuguese (Our World in Data, 2021) and reflects short-term effects (Miao et al, 2021) on the travel behaviours of residents in Portugal (n=610). Almost half of the participants (48,5%) responded positively to the probability of going on holidays in 2021. From these, the majority (64,2%) intended to travel only to domestic destinations, mostly justified by the willingness to help the country (54,5% of those who considered likely to go on holidays) and not as much as a risk perception associated to the pandemic (only referred by 26,8%). As for holiday's consumption intentions, residents expressed concerns that may have a positive impact on the socio economical sustainability of the destinations. In fact, from those who considered likely to travel, 71,6% referred that they will prefer national products, 64,5% will value more than before certified touristic services and 57,4% intends to shop mostly in small traditional business. In terms of environmental sustainability, 59,5% will have an increased concern in reserving touristic services environmentally responsible. Results emphasize the need for reflection on the effective positioning of sustainability issues concerning the tourism sector's future. COVID-19 has created an opportunity for tourism to review and relaunch itself, based on more responsible and sustainable approaches (Brouder, 2020; Casado-Aranda et al, 2021; Jones and Confort, 2020). It's important to understand to what extent consumers are willing to assume more sustainable behaviours in their future travel options. These results ask for future research regarding the importance of understanding the difference between tourists' stated intentions and effective actions when it comes to sustainable travel behaviour.

Keywords: COVID-19, sustainability, consumer behaviour, travel intentions

1. Introduction

This study focuses on consumer travel behaviour changes arising from COVID-19. It seeks to understand whether the perceived risk associated with COVID has impacted the travel intentions of residents in Portugal and whether there are changes, regarding more sustainable choices, in summer holiday intentions in 2021. Tourism and travel consumers incorporate the tourism sector micro-environment (Casado-Aranda et al, 2021), and this consumers' behaviour is considered a microenvironmental factor of tourism performance that is influenced by COVID. In this context, the restrictions imposed and the perception of risk associated with SARS-COV-2 act as determinant elements (Donaire et al, 2021) of consumer behaviour changes in relation to travel and tourism.

Regarding sustainable travel behaviours they are related to consumption attitudes and actions that contribute positively to the sustainable development components (environment, economy and society), including paying carbon offsets, less polluting transport options (using the train to get to the destination, using electric transport/bike/public transport on the destination), sustainable accommodation, select sustainable tourism providers (Juvan and Dolnicar, 2016,) but also reduce food waste (MacInnes et al, 2022), purchase green and local products, give preference to local and traditional businesses, get involved on activities that promotes natural and cultural heritage, respect local communities, among others (UNWTO/UNDP, 2017)

The effects of COVID on the tourism sector in Portugal are evident when analysing the available official statistics (INE, 2021) and have followed the sharp falls seen worldwide (UNWTO, 2022). The year 2020 was marked by a 73% reduction in international tourist arrivals worldwide, and the economic contribution of tourism (measured in tourism direct gross domestic product) went from US$ 3.5 trillion, in 2019, to US$1.6 trillion in 2020 (UNWTO, 2022). Comparing the data from 2019 with 2020, in Portugal, the overnight stays decreased 63.2% (from 70.16 million in 2019 to 25.8 million in 2020); guests decreased 61.6% (from 27.1 million in 2019 to 10.4 million in 2020) and the net rate of bed occupancy from all types of accommodation has reduced 49 p.p. (INE, 2021; INE, 2020). Regarding the domestic and international markets, the falls were relatively greater in the latter, that is, between 2019 and 2020, the international market fell 76.2% in guests (compared to 39.20% in the domestic) and 75.1% in overnight stays (25.6% in the domestic). Despite the decrease, it was the domestic market that took the lead in overnight stays (53% of the total) and guests (63% of the total). Analysing the overnight stays in Portugal, by urbanization level of the destination, in 2020, the demand for densely populated areas decreased by 8%, in 2020, while the medium and the sparsely populated areas experienced an increase in overnight stays of 2.5% and 6%, respectively (INE, 2021; INE, 2020). The type of accommodation chosen also changed, with hotels showing a 51% drop in the Net rate of bed occupancy (from an average annual value of 52% in 2019 to 25.5% in 2020) while rural accommodation, characterised by smaller establishments, saw a drop of only 12.5% (from an average annual value of 24.1% in 2019 to 21.1% in 2020).

These behaviours may presume changes in the travel options of domestic tourists in Portugal during the pandemic, which induce more sustainable behaviours. To understand in a more precise and detailed way the behaviour of the Portuguese in relation to their travel and tourism options, namely from a sustainability point of view, this study is developed. The use of a quantitative questionnaire allowed the identification of clusters, following a common methodology in studies dealing with the central themes of this study (Donaire et al, 2021; Karl et al, 2020; Neuburger et al, 2020; Osti and Nava, 2020; Sánchez-Pérez et al, 2021), that characterise differentiated travel and tourism behaviours during the pandemic. The differentiation of this study focuses on the inclusion of sustainability behaviours as factors that determine the different clusters.

2. Covid-19 and changing consumer behaviour

The pandemic caused by COVID-19 and the consequent institutional measures and restrictions imposed at national and international levels had a direct impact on people's movements. If on the one hand the fear of contact with the virus affected people's willingness to move, on the other hand the restrictions and constraints imposed drastically eliminated much of the movement, both near and far. This situation has marked all types of travel, including those related to holidays and tourist travel.

The impact of the pandemic caused by COVID-19 provokes changes in tourist travel behaviour that can be analysed in temporal terms - in the short and long term (Miao et al, 2021). Specifically in the short term (proximal behaviour), such as the one studied in this paper, four patterns of behaviours are identified: Abstinence behaviours termed "Fright-and-flight", associated with the cancellation and postponement of travel and other leisure and tourism activities, motivated by fear of contracting the virus; disruptive or disruptive travel behaviours "Invincible me" associated with those who choose to maintain their usual leisure and travel behaviours, not complying with mask wearing and social distancing protocols; "Corona light" rational travel behaviours revealing travel choices that mitigate the tourist's perceived risk of exposure to the virus; and, "Binge" compensation behaviours that occur after the lifting of severely limiting restrictions on people's movement, leading to exaggerated behaviour to make up for "lost" time and missed leisure and travel experiences (Miao et al, 2021).

According to Zhang, et al. (2020), most of the research studies on the impact of illness on tourist travel have focused on the trip planning phase (pre-trip), but changes in travel behaviour can also occur during the trip and in the post-trip phase (Page, 2009). Indeed, it is particularly important for tourism companies and destinations to understand how tourists act, which attitudes remain unchanged, and which new attitudes become a reality of the tourists' behaviours assuming themselves as a new requirement, which imposes itself to the destination, to companies and tourism businesses and the service provided.

Analysis of studies that focus on travel behaviour during the pandemic identify behavioural changes at different stages of travel and in the different options associated with travel. The Spanish population, in a questionnaire applied between 30 April and 12 May 2020 (Sánchez-Pérez et al, 2021), revealed a greater propensity for more local and individual travel, using the car as the preferred mode of transport. Also, in the study by Lopes et al (2021), tourists visiting the city of Porto, in the north of Portugal, in the summer of 2020, revealed to have reduced the use of public transport due to the fear of catching the virus. In terms of travel organisation and planning, respondents revealed a decrease in using the services of tourism intermediaries but are more motivated to contract more insurance (as, Sarman et al., 2020). The perception of COVID risk vis-à-vis travel attitudes shows differences between men and women, with women, and especially older women (Karl et al, 2020), being the most likely to change their travel plans due to perceived COVID risk (Sánchez-Pérez et al, 2021; Neuburger and Egger, 2020). Neuburger and Egger (2020) further reveal that perceived risk to COVID has more evident effects on younger people and people who have less travel experience, and these are the ones who manifest a higher intention to change or cancel travel plans. However, in a study of tourists visiting Munich before the pandemic (Karl et al, 2020), the frequency of travel was not an influential factor in changes in travel behaviour.

The perception of risk also manifested itself in the choices of holiday destinations. Preferences focused on natural settings, seen as healthy and low-density environments, usually less massified, such as mountain destinations (Osti and Nava, 2020) or natural spaces (Donaire et al, 2021). In contrast, coastal destinations, especially the most popular beaches (Osti and Nava, 2020; Donaire et al, 2021) large urban destinations (Donaire et al, 2021) and cultural cities (Osti and Nava, 2020) were the most affected by holiday behavioural changes during the pandemic. Natural areas proved to be the best option for domestic tourism in Spain, as well as for international tourists from closer origins (such as the French market). The proximity aspect is also evidenced in the study by Lopes et al (2021), with Spanish tourists representing the main provenance of international tourists visiting the city of Porto, in Northern Portugal, in the summer of 2020, even overlapping with domestic tourists.

The effect of the pandemic on travel and tourism brought about behavioural changes with different and opposite impacts on the environment and sustainability. Some of the studies already mentioned (Donaire et al, 2021; Osti and Nava, 2020; Sánchez-Pérez et al, 2021) describe new attitudes that can lead to a more sustainable tourism, especially when they indicate that natural and rural destinations have become more sought after, as well as smaller accommodation establishments, some also rural. In fact, the choice of these destinations can contribute to a more effective profitability of local small businesses and a dynamization of previously less sought-after areas. However, the growth of individual holidays and the choice of own car (whether for domestic trips or between nearby destinations, in border countries) are less environmentally friendly choices.) This dichotomy is also fostered by the pandemic, when on the one hand, by restricting the movement of people, promotes improvements in air quality (Zambrano-Monserrate et al, 2020) and water quality, but on the other hand, with the imposition of mask use, sanitation and testing, contributed to the increase, on a global scale, of the production of a multitude of new waste (Rume and Islam, 2020).

3. Sustainable behaviours in future travel experiences

The impacts of the pandemic on tourism have reinforced the political and institutional discourse regarding the importance of more sustainable development of the tourism industry. The United Nations (UN, 2020, p. 4) underlines the importance of "building a sustainable and responsible travel experience that is safe for host communities, workers and travellers" to accelerate the tourism sector recovery. Also, it considers that the current crisis caused by the pandemic is an opportunity to rethink tourism and transform the way it relates to natural resources, territories, communities and the economy, aiming at a more sustainable tourism. In fact, one of the priority areas for achieving that is "Fostering sustainable and inclusive green growth" (UN, 2020, p. 23).

Simultaneously, also the scientific community deepens the (new) challenges of tourism sustainability associated with the new times and the new difficulties imposed by the pandemic. In line with the afore mentioned UN indications, Casado-Aranda et al (2021) identify the six new trends on which the new tourist behaviour will be based, namely: sustainability, interest in place, technology and city intelligence, luxury services, hygiene protocols and tourist emotions.

As far as (new) consumption behaviours are concerned, it is important to understand if current behaviours associated with travel and tourism, besides having adjusted to the challenges, impositions and limitations determined by the pandemic, also present attitudes associated with environmental awareness and a concern regarding aspects related with sustainability. Ali et al (2021) and Severo et al (2021) study the impact of the pandemic on environmental awareness (EA), sustainable consumption (SC) and social responsibility (SR) and in both cases, it is shown that there has been a growing concern for socio-environmental issues and the consumption of environmentally sustainable products. Severo et al (2021) developed a comparative study with Baby Boomers (born before 1965) and generations X (born from 1965 and 1981) and Y (born after 1981), residing in Portugal and Brazil. Ali et al (2021) find that the variables Generation and Religiosity determine the relationship between COVID-19 and its impact on sustainable behaviours. Women exhibited relatively higher environmental awareness, sustainable consumption and social responsibility, confirming that their behaviour is more environmentally friendly compared to other genders. In turn, Eichelberger et al (2021) look specifically at tourists' responsible behaviour and whether (and how) it has been triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. From the application of an interview with 19 residents in Austria pro-sustainability behaviours associated with travel and tourism choices are identified, when they indicate that they currently prefer short-distance tourist destinations, within the country or in neighbouring countries. Furthermore, preference is given to regional destinations which is accompanied by consumption that stimulates local economies through the purchase of regional products and the choice of local, traditional restaurants. Also, in terms of accommodation, they stated a preference for small and medium-sized family hotels over chain hotels. In relation to travel and means of transport used, some interviewees mentioned avoiding air travel for short distances and others defended the option of travelling by train or, in case this is not possible, paying a C02 compensation fee to compensate for any air travel.

These behaviours are in line with some of the results described in the previous point and, although they are not choices directly intended to be more environmentally responsible, they do contribute to the effect. Considering that tourists play a key role in the development of the tourism industry, their choices may also contribute to its more sustainable development. In a context where it is important to recover tourism dynamics and activities and to do so in a more environmentally responsible and socio-economically balanced and sustainable way, it becomes crucial to diagnose the current context in terms of travel and tourism behaviour. Considering that they already show pro-sustainability practices, in which stages of the tourist trip do they occur (Page, 2009)? In which elements of the trip (destination, transport, accommodation, food, entertainment, shopping, among others) are they most evident? And also, where is there the greatest resistance to the adoption of more sustainable practices?

The study by Eichelberger et al (2021) is the first to show this intention, focusing on the behaviour of tourists, in the current pandemic context, and understanding how they can contribute to a more sustainable tourism, naturally influenced by what they live and experienced due to COVID. It is also in this context that the current study is developed but differing in methodological terms. In this study a quantitative methodology was adopted and is described below.

Previous literature research has presented clusters analysis in order to validate tourist segmentation. Equally, clusters analysis as far as tourists' perceptions and behaviours arising from COVID-19 are concerned are flourishing (Donaire et al, 2021; Karl et al, 2020; Neuburger et al, 2020; Osti and Nava, 2020; Sánchez-Pérez et al, 2021). However, despite this boom related to tourists' segmentation during pandemic times, the study of COVID's impact on travel intentions and behaviour changes, regarding more sustainable choices, has not yet been conducted or published. Table 1 presents a synthesis of the existing literature on tourists' behaviour changes frame worked by COVID-19 pandemic, using clusters analysis to identify different profiles and, therefore, better understand tourists' decision-making processes.

Table 1: A synthesis of the existing literature

Authors	Main aim of the study	Identified clusters
Sánchez-Pérez et al (2021)	To examine consumers' evaluation and expected behaviour changes that may arise in the wake of COVID-19 and to develop a market segmentation.	The true believers The cautious travellers The prophets of doom
Neuburger and Egger (2020)	To examine risk perception regarding travel during the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 and how it influences travel behaviour in the DACH region.	The Nervous The Reserved The Relaxed
Karl et al (2020)	To explore the interplay of risk types, tourist attributes and destination characteristics. It examines if travel risks linked to nature, health, terrorism, criminality, political instability are more salient for tourists' destination choice, and how risk perceptions influence tourists in the key stages of the decision-making process.	Risk adverse Risk resilient tourists Natural risk resilient Natural risk adverse
Osti and Nava (2020)	To investigate how preferences and loyalty for different types of destinations (seaside, mountain, city) change during health emergencies.	Pessimists Optimists with reservations on cities Optimists Precautious Mountains
Donaire et al (2021)	To describe the behaviour pattern of international tourists in summer 2020 in Spain, and to determine the most important factors explaining spatial and temporal differences.	Loser destinations Winner destinations Mid-distance origin Near origin Far origin

4. Methodology

4.1 Survey instrument

A questionnaire with closed and open-ended questions, the adult residents in Portugal, was developed to evaluate the intentions of with their holiday traveling during the year of 2021. The questionnaire asked information about the probability of traveling, type of destinations and also characteristics of the holiday trip with longest duration, namely about the planning, the means of transport, accommodation and meals.

The questionnaire also included a group of questions about how the residents considered that the pandemic would influence the adoption of more sustainable choices in the preparation of theirs trips and during their traveling in 2021. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with a set of sentences (Table 2) in a 5-point Likert scale.

Table 2: Variables used to measure the intention of adopting a more sustainable behaviour in the 2021 trips

I will choose smaller scale accommodation company.
I will be more reluctant to travel by plane.
I will preferentially shop from small scale and traditional business on my holiday trips.
I will give preference to national products/services, to help the country.
I will give greater consideration to tourist services that are certified (for example, Clean&Safe, environmental certificates).
I will give greater consideration in booking tourist services that are environmentally responsible.
I will give more preference (than previously) to booking ecological accommodation.

4.2 Data collection

Following previous studies, data was collected using a snowball approach (Sánchez-Pérez et al, 2021), through an online questionnaire, shared through various channels (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Whatsapp, e-mail) and with the primary recipients being asked to forward the questionnaire. The survey between December 2020 and March 2021 (overlapping the first 3 months of the vaccination process, corresponding to 5% of the full vaccination of the Portuguese population (Our World in Data, 2021) and reflect short-term effects (Miao et al, 2021) on the travel behaviours of residents in Portugal (n=610). The sample satisfies the condition of more than 200 to 400 valid cases (Hair Jr. et al., 2013, cited by Severo et al, 2021). A summary of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents is presented in table 3.

Table 3: Socio-demographic profile of the respondents (n=610)

	N	%
Gender		
Female	424	69,5
Male	183	30,0
Undifferentiated	3	0,5
Age		
18-24	256	42,0
25-34	103	16,9
35-44	90	14,8
45-54	100	16,4
55-64	34	5,6
65 or more	27	4,4
Highest level of education achieved		
Less than secondary school	54,0	8,9
Secondary school or equivalente	195,0	32,0
Higher education degree (except PhD)	340,0	55,7
PhD	20,0	3,3
Other	1,0	0,2
Household income per month		
No income	91	14,9
<500€	30	4,9
500€ - 999€	154	25,2
1000€ - 1999€	209	34,3

	N	%
Gender		
2000€ - 2999€	83	13,6
3000€ - 3999€	29	4,8
4000€ or more	14	2,3

4.3 Data analysis

Chi-square tests were conducted to test for relationships between socio-demographic characteristics and the travel intentions. Cluster analysis was performed to develop a typology for the intentions for sustainable tourist behaviours. The clusters were calculated using the 7 variables presented in table 1. It was applied a Wards's (1963) hierarchical cluster analysis with squared Euclidean distance. Like Karl et al (2020), the validity of the segmentation obtained was tested using multiple discriminant analysis. After these procedures, the resulting clusters were compared based on socio-demographic characteristics and traveling plans, using chi-square tests (as in Seabra et al 2013; Karl et al, 2020). In the cluster analysis only the respondents that replied positively to the probability of traveling on holidays in 2021 were considered (n=296).

5. Results

Almost half of the participants (48,5%) responded positively to the probability of going on holidays in 2021. There is a significant relationship between age and the likeliness of traveling in 2021 ($\chi^2(16)=41{,}971$; $p<0{,}001$), with the respondents with 55 years old or more responding less frequently positively (34,4%) and the age groups 25-34 and 35-44 being the groups with more frequency of positive replies (57,3% and 60%, respectively).

From the respondents who responded positively to the probability of traveling on holidays in 2021, 64,2% only consider domestic destinations, also with statistically significant differences between age groups (($\chi^2(4)=16{,}270$; $p=0{,}003$)). The respondents in the age group 35-44 years revealed a higher tendency to travel only in Portugal (81,5%) and the respondents with 25-34 years old a lower tendency to choose only domestic destinations (49,15%). Respondents that intended to choose only national destinations mostly justified this choice by the willingness to help the country (54,5% of those who considered likely to go on holidays) and not as much as a risk perception associated to the pandemic (only referred by 26,8%). Figure 1 represents the responses to the questions about the intention to adopt a more sustainable behaviour while traveling (Table 2). It stands out the question concerning more reluctance to flight, as we can see that most respondents did not consider that they would hesitate in traveling by plane. Only 23% replied positively to this question.

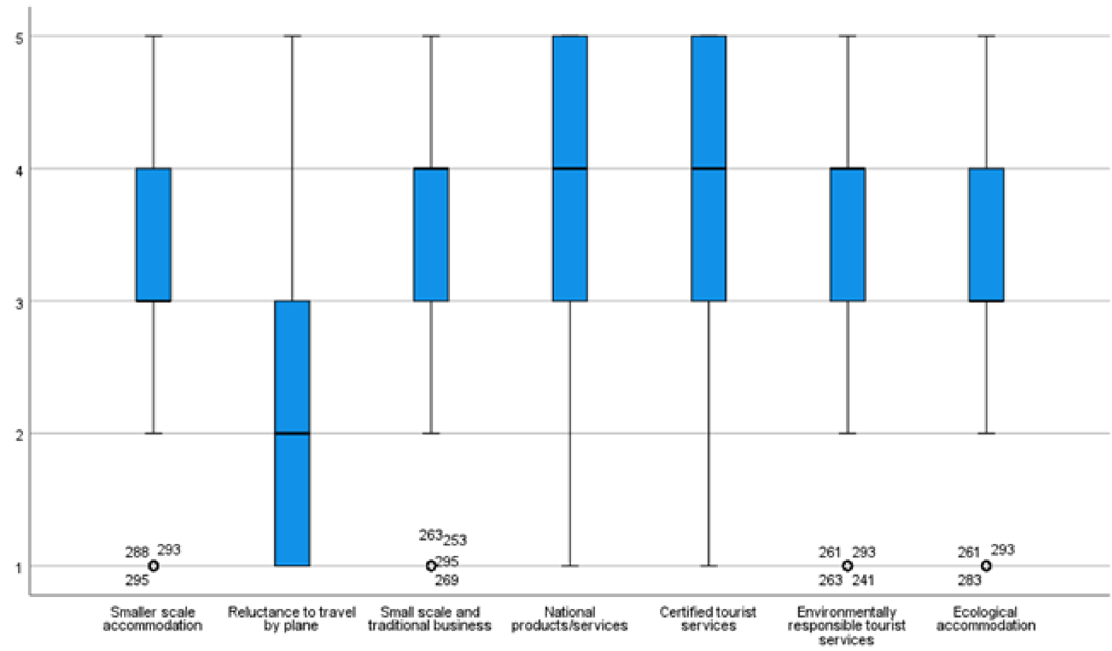

Figure 1: Impact of the pandemic in the intention to adopt more sustainable behaviour while traveling

Conversely, most respondents revealed the intention to change the behaviour with respect to consuming preferably national products and services (71,6%), to giving greater consideration to tourist services that are certified (64,5%), to giving greater consideration in booking tourist services that are environmentally responsible (59,5%) and to preferentially shopping from small scale and traditional business (57,4%). A considerable number of respondents expressed the intention of giving preference to ecological accommodation (48,3%) and to smaller scale accommodation companies (44,3%).

The results from a final cluster solution, extracting three distinct tourist types, are presented. The discriminant analysis of this cluster solution resulted in a high percentage of correctly classified cases (93%). The results show that three different tourist groups can be identified. These segments can be named *open to change* (i.e. high levels of agreement to sentences about the intention to adopt more sustainable behaviour; n=87), *resistant to change* (with low levels of agreement with the intention of adopting more sustainable behaviours; n=73) and *hesitant to change* (i.e. somewhere between the two previous groups; n=136). This information is presented in Figure 2.

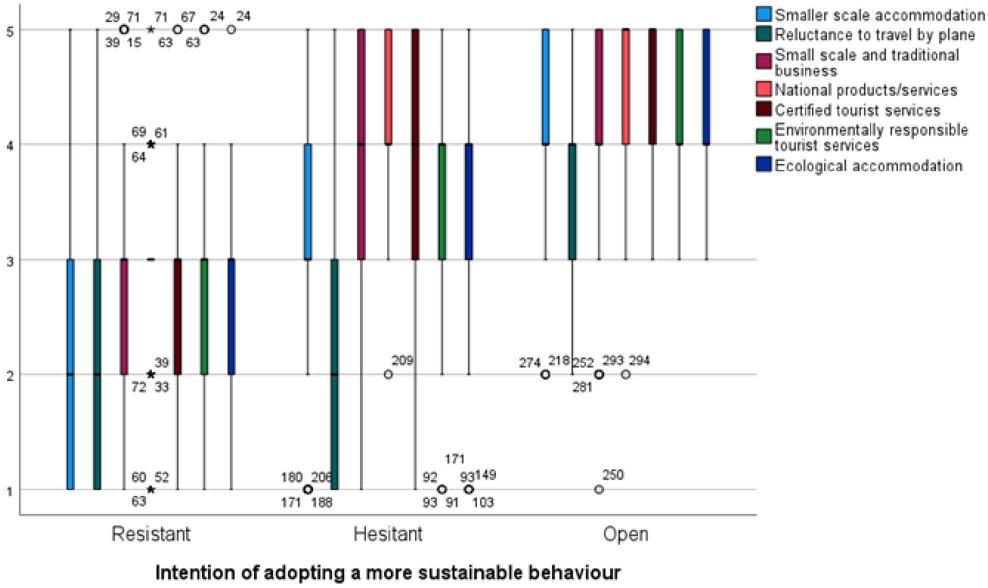

Figure 2: Description of intention of adopting more sustainable behaviours by segment

The results indicate that there are significant differences between the three segments with respect to openness to adopt a more sustainable behaviour as a tourist with respect to some socio-demographic characteristics (Table 4), namely gender, age and education level. Just the income did not influence the intention of adopting a more sustainable behaviour. In the three segments, there are more women than man, but the percentage of female respondents increases with the more openness to change behaviour, with 58,3% of females in the "Resistant" group, 68,1% in the "Hesitant" one and 77% in the "Open" group.

Table 4: Results of the analysis of influencing intention to adopt more sustainable behaviour typology

	χ^2	df	p
Gender	6,361	2	0,042
Age	15,719	8	0,047
Education level	10,218	2	0,006
Income	4,563	8	0,803
Domestic vs intern. destinations	6,189	2	0,045

In the case of the education level the data suggest that the more educated are more reluctant to change, since 79,5% of the "Resistant" respondents have some higher education degree, considerable more than in the "Hesitant" group (58,8%) and in the "Open" one (58,6%). With respect to age, the age groups with more differences in the segments are 25-35, corresponding to 30,1% of the "Resistant" tourists, 20,6% of the "Hesitant" ones and 10,3% of the "Open". The "Open" group is the one with more percentage of the tourists with less than 25 (42,5%) and of the tourists with 55 or more (12,6%). There is a higher percentage of "Resistant" tourists (42,5%) that considered international destinations in 2021 (39% - "Hesitant"; 25,3% - "Open").

5.1 Discussion

Approximately half of the respondents still not considerate probable to travel in holidays during the year of 2021 and this was especially frequent in the elder age groups, which is consistent to previous studies in which it was identified a relationship between age and risk perception in the pandemic context (Neuburger and Egger, 2020). Most of those who considered likely to travel in 2021 plan to do it to domestic destinations, emphasizing the fact that domestic tourism can provide relief for national tourism industries, affected by the measures to contain the spread of the Covid-19 (Arbulú et al, 2021). Respondents demonstrated intention to adopt some changes in their consumer patterns, as tourists, especially in terms of giving preference to certified and national products/services. Conversely, they generally did not show much openness to reduce the traveling by plane as a consequence of the pandemic, which differs from the conclusions obtained by Sánchez-Pérez et al (2021), for the more pessimist segment of their study.

In this work, there were identified three segments with respect to the intention on adopting more sustainable behaviours while traveling in 2021, as a consequence of the pandemic: those that are open to adopt more sustainable behaviours, those who are not and those that are somewhere in between. There were statistically significant differences between these groups with respect to age, gender and education level. Female respondents were more frequent in the group more open to become more sustainable tourists, which is in line with previous studies that revealed that women tended to show higher levels of risk perception and intention of changing travel behaviour (Sánchez-Pérez et al, 2021; Karl et al, 2020; Neuburger and Egger, 2020; Lepp and Gibson, 2003). The Resistant group had significantly more respondents with a higher education degree that the others, which seems to contradict previous works that concluded that the education can have an effect in the perceptions and attitudes concerning sustainability (Felgendreher and Löfgren, 2018). The Resistant group also had more frequency of respondents with the intention of traveling abroad, a fact that could partially explain the lower intention to change behaviours, which seems to be connected with the idea or helping the country.

6. Conclusions

The change in travel and tourism consumption during the COVID is an undeniable reality, strongly documented by official statistics (national and international) and by scientific studies published in the last two years. Due to the restrictions on people's mobility, the limitations imposed on access to certain destinations, spaces and tourist establishments and the perceived risk of catching the SARS-COV-2 virus people have changed their traditional ways of travelling. These changes take place in the pre-travel phase (including changes in the means used to plan the trip - with the use (or not) of intermediaries - but also in the different choices in terms, for example, of destination, means of transport, type of accommodation) and during the trip, at the chosen destination.

At the same time, COVID-19 has created an opportunity for tourism to review and relaunch itself, based on more responsible and sustainable approaches (Brouder, 2020; Casado-Aranda et al, 2021; Jones and Confort, 2020). According to Casado-Aranda et al (2021) the new normal will place greater importance on more sustainable and inclusive forms of tourism based on the circular economy that rewards the social and environmental well-being of all tourism stakeholders, including residents, tourists, tourism organisations and businesses. Regarding tourists' role, they have the potential to contribute to economic, environmental, socio-cultural and institutional sustainability (Eichelberger et al, 2021) so, it is important to understand to what extent consumers are willing to assume more sustainable behaviours in their (future) travel options.

The identification of a behaviour pattern that will distinguish profiles of tourists regarding sustainability provides empirical evidence and practical implications for destinations when managing tourism aiming its sustainable development. By understanding different profiles of tourists' behaviour intentions, within the pandemic framework, regarding their consciousness and propensity for a more sustainable tourism experience, tourism supply and destination development policies can adjust themselves to these needs.

Future research lines of previous studies stress the need for further evidence from longer research periods in order to better understand the impact of COVID-19 (Sánchez-Pérez et al, 2021) or to carry out longitudinal studies or data collection at multiple points of time during the pandemic framework (Neuburger and Egger, 2020). The obtained results in this study emphasize the need for reflection on the effective positioning of sustainability issues concerning the tourism sector's future and it is also important to put forward a longitudinal study that will allows us to confirm (or not) them. These results ask for future research regarding the importance of understanding the difference between tourists' stated intentions and effective actions when it comes to sustainable travel behaviour and collecting further evidence on a longitudinal basis or at varied moments in the medium term will be advisable to confirm them.

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Developing a Smart Destination: Insights From Slovakia

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Abstract: Incorporating smart tourism into development priorities is the key aspect for tourism destinations and therefore, it should be approached accordingly. In theory, smart tourism development is considered as a factor in achieving sustainable competitiveness of tourism destinations. The application of smart destination shifts the destination development; however, the progress is under-researched so far. The efficient destination management requires tools for measuring smart tourism development. For that reason, the aim of this paper is to apply the methodological framework for measuring smart tourism development in a selected Slovak destination (the Banská Bystrica region). We have applied the methodology based on the Valencian Network of Smart Destination Indicators. The methodology was adapted to the availability of the input data at a regional level in Slovakia and tested in the Banská Bystrica region (NUTS 3). The obtained findings reveal that the Banská Bystrica region is aware of the need to implement smart solutions to improve the quality of life in the region for its residents, as well as visitors. The paper provides recommendation on what data needs to be collected and how these data can be obtained at a regional level in order to assess smart tourism development. The research conducted has further applicability in different destinations and on different levels. However, it is limited by the availability of the input data, which can determine the applicability of the indicators in Slovakia.

Keywords: smart tourism, indicators, smart destination development, Valencian Network of Smart Destination Indicators

1. Introduction

The dynamic environment associated with technological development, climate change and growing uncertainty has a major impact on tourism development (Gajdošík, 2017). These factors influence visitor behaviour in tourism and increase competition between tourism businesses as well as tourism destinations. At the same time, the need for flexibility and resilience in tourism development is gaining more and more prominence (Wang et al., 2016; Xiang, Fesenmeier, 2017; Jovicic, 2016). The concept of smart tourism development was created in response to these changes, while prioritizing information technology and the need for a sustainable approach. The development of information technology makes it possible to make smart decisions based on the information obtained and analysed in real time, thus optimizing processes in businesses and tourism destinations. At the same time, information technology is a driving force for innovation and the factor in competitiveness and sustainable development. The smart development of tourism thus becomes a tool for achieving sustainable competitiveness (Gretzel et al., 2016; Khan et al., 2017; Buhalis, 2019; Ivars-Baidal et al., 2021, Chung et al. 2021). The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2009) has particularly emphasized the adoption of intelligent tourism development as a way of promoting and offering ethical, clean, environmentally friendly and high-quality tourism products. However, achieving sustainable competitiveness requires tools to assess and measure the smart development of tourism. Therefore, this paper aims to present a methodology for monitoring of the smart destination development on a regional level. The approach of the Valencian Network of Smart Destination Indicators is adapted to the availability of the input data at the regional level and applied in one of the destinations of Slovakia, in the Banská Bystrica region. The Banská Bystrica region has prepared a concept for smart tourism development, which should become operational in 2022. The destination management organization takes measures to develop tourism in connection with this concept, so it is a suitable candidate for researching the development of smart destinations. The article addresses the following research questions: (RQ1) Which indicators are suitable for monitoring of the smart destination development on the regional level? (RQ2) What is the current state of smart destination development in the selected region?

2. Theoretical framework of developing a smart destination and its measuring

The concept of smart destinations, inspired by smart cities discourse (Boes, Buhalis, Inversini, 2016; Ivars-Baidal et al., 2017; Tran et al.,2017; European Commission, 2018; Ivars-Baidal et al., 2021; Gretzel, 2021; Chung et al., 2021), has gained recognition as a useful destination management approach to meet the needs and impacts of digitalisation on tourism. Smart tourism development is based on sustainable development goals (UN, 2015) and has become an important concept on how to meet these goals. It is widely used in the planning and construction of smart cities, which arise in response to increasing urbanization and the problems caused by sustainable urban development (Gretzel, 2021). In order to respond to the growing demand of visitors in tourism and due to the fact that traveling is an important part of people's lives, the representatives of several cities also focus on smart tourism development (Boes, Buhalis, Inversini, 2016). Smart cities have thus become smart tourism destinations. While smart cities focus on the needs of local people, smart destinations also focus on visitors who, through technology and data, build closer relationships with residents, businesses, local authorities and tourism attractions so that they can better communicate and get to know the destination (Gretzel et al., 2016). However, other types of tourism destinations can also be smart. Recreational destinations are often an alternative to already crowded urban centres (Coca-Stefaniak, Seisdedos, 2020).

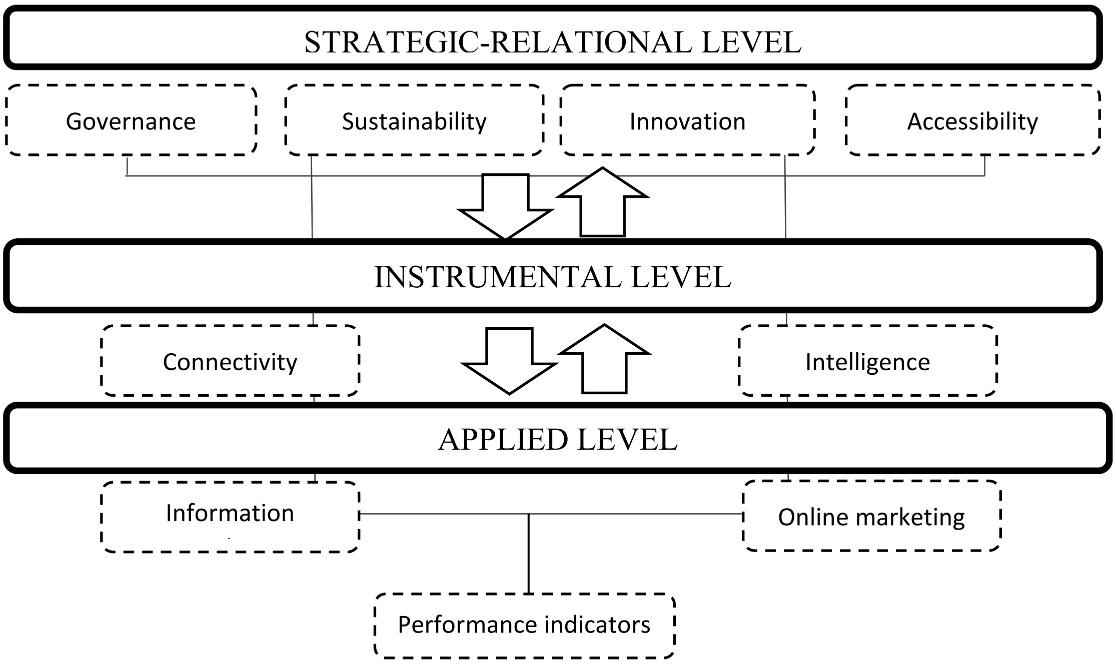
Mehraliyev, Choi and Köseoglu (2019) point out that although the definition of smart tourism development has not been formally settled, the concept of smartness is generally consulted in tourism on two levels: the use of technology and ensuring sustainability (Buhalis, Amaranggana, 2013; Boes et al., 2015; Lamfus et al., 2015; Lopez de Avila, 2015). The term smart is associated with the development of information, communication and smart technologies. At this level, smart technologies are perceived as effective tools for destination management, attractions, organized events and hospitality. The second aspect is related to sustainability in terms of "smart" people dealing with primary supply. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2009) has particularly emphasized the adoption of smart tourism development as a way of promoting and offering ethical, clean, green and high-quality services. The ecosystem of smart tourism development proposes and emphasizes the interrelationship between technologies and sustainability rather than accentuating them specifically.

We can define a smart tourism destination as "an innovative place that uses the latest information technologies to ensure the sustainable development of tourism, make it easier for visitors to stay, increase the quality of their experience and improve the quality of life of local people" (Xiang, Tussyadiah, Buhalis, 2015). The smart tourism destination is also seen as an innovative location built on the infrastructure of state-of-the-art technologies guaranteeing sustainable tourism development. It is accessible to everyone, supports the integration of visitors into the environment, increases the quality of experience and, at the same time, improves the quality of life of local people (Segittur, 2020). Although, in theory, the smart destination development brings significant benefits, its contribution to real changes in tourism destinations has not yet been sufficiently assessed (Ivars-Baidal et al., 2021).

Smart destinations are missing a comprehensive model of indicators that consider the performance of destinations in a variant range which they are expected to take into account, such as connectivity, big data sharingness, technology utilization, accessibility or sustainability (Gunn, 1988; Werthner et al., 2013; Lamfus et al., 2015; Gretzel et al., 2015). It is appropriate to use them to evaluate the smart development of tourism destinations as well as specific criteria related to tourism development.

The Valencian Network of Smart Destination Indicators (Ivars-Baidal et al., 2021) is based on the evaluation of smart cities (Giffinger et al., 2007), sustainable tourism destinations (European Commission, 2016) and the competitiveness of tourism destinations (WEF, 2019). This model is one of the latest and most applicable on the regional level. The structure of The Valencian Network of Smart Destination Indicators is presented in Figure 1. At the strategic-relational level, smart destination is based on governance, public-private collaboration and coordination in administration with purpose to achieve a sustainable tourism development. The instrumental level is built on digital connectivity, sensorisation and big data, which provide predisposition for information and intelligent system. This system contributes to the interaction between the physical and digital worlds, a key factor of smart tourism. Lastly, the applied level generates smart solutions for marketing and management of destinations and also tourist experience enhancement (Ivars-Baidal et al., 2021).

The system applies 72 indicators, which reflect 9 main criteria (Governance, Sustainability, Innovation, Accessibility, Connectivity, Intelligence, Information system, Online marketing, Evolution of tourism activity). The value of the indicators is obtained by a primary survey of the representatives of tourism management organizations on a scale 0 - 100. In 2018, this approach was applied in the standard UNE 178502: 2018 Indicators and tools of smart tourism destinations.



Source: Ivars-Baidal et al., 2021.

Figure 1: Smart destination model structure: Levels and dimensions

The purpose of the paper is to contribute to the academic discussion and to test the applicability of selected smart destination development indicators at the regional level. The paper does not seek to propose new indicators, it only presents the methodology for monitoring smart destination development on a regional level, based on the available indicator system.

3. Research approach

Smart destinations are of interest to technology and consulting firms, academic research and attract public investment (Johnson, Samakovlis, 2019). Nevertheless, theoretical research does not consider the real contribution of smart tourism development to destination development. It is therefore important to clearly specify the concept of smart destination and assess the real effects of implementing smart projects (Femenia-Serra, Ivars-Baidal, 2020). To address the first research question (RQ1), we compiled a set of indicators in eight dimensions, based on the secondary and primary data. Once this was done, we consulted the selection of indicators with the regional tourism organization in the Banská Bystrica region. The preliminary set of indicators was pre-tested with the selected organization in 2021. After the preliminary test, the indicators were refined, reformulated and adjusted to the regional level, according to the observed results and feedback provided by the organization's managers. Feedback from the organization included suggestions on how to modify some indicators or delete those that could not be identified, mainly due to unavailability of data from the statistical office and the public sector bodies. Indicators, for which there was no adequate and up-to-date information, were discarded. Following this process, we compiled a final set of 70 indicators (Table 1).

Table 1: Smart destination indicators

Dimension 1: Governance
1.1 Implementation of a strategic tourism plan
1.2 Coordination mechanisms between local administration departments for smart destination project development
1.3 Implementation of a smart destination project
1.4 Existence of a smart destination coordinator (responsible technician)
1.5 Existence of an annual operations plan for the destination
1.6 Mechanisms to facilitate public-private partnership
1.7 Development of E-Government/open government strategies

1.8 Implementation of quality management systems with a destination approach
1.9 Development of tourism impact awareness campaigns aimed at the residents
1.10 Application of ROI analysis on tourism initiatives
Dimension 2: Sustainability
2.1 Implementation of urban planning regulations adjusted to sustainability principles
2.2 Implementation of specific plans for sustainable tourism development
2.3 Public promotion of sustainable mobility (transport)
2.4 Enhancement of energy efficiency strategies (public lighting)
2.5 Collection and treatment of waste
2.6 Efficiency in water supply, purification and re-use of wastewater
2.7 Implementation of tourism indicators for sustainable destination management
2.8 Development of sustainability awareness campaigns targeted at the residents
2.9 Creation of climate change adaptation programmes
2.10 Use of ethical codes in tourism (regulation of activity, governance, impacts)
2.11 Legal provisions and environmental or quality certifications implemented in tourism resources
2.12 Companies awarded with environmental certifications (standards)
2.13 Development of sustainability awareness campaigns targeted at tourists
2.14 Surface of green areas per de facto population
Dimension 3: Accessibility
3.1 Accessibility of tourism resources and attractions
3.2 Information services technically adapted to the needs of people with disabilities
3.3 Compliance of content accessibility with the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) (https://www.w3.org/WAI/)
3.4 Initiatives for promoting accessible tourism
3.5 Public transport system technically adapted to the needs of people with disabilities
3.6 Existence of a dynamic inventory of tourism resources, companies and accessible services for tourists
Dimension 4: Innovation
4.1 Existence of innovation support programmes in the tourism sector
4.2 Implementation of innovation management systems in companies and public bodies
4.3 Development of innovation projects in collaboration with universities and R&D institutions
4.4 Promotion of collaborative innovation between agents (events and joint activities)
4.5 Local entrepreneurship
4.6 Educational level of the population and job opportunities in highly innovative sectors
Dimension 5: Connectivity
5.1 Internet connection quality at the destination
5.2 Free Wi-Fi availability in tourist information office(s)
5.3 Free Wi-Fi availability in tourist points of interest (POI) (main attractions)
5.4 Proportion of tourism businesses providing free Wi-Fi to tourists
5.5 Implementation of sensors for data collection at the destination
Dimension 6: Intelligence
6.1 Implementation of a barometer to measure the level of the business owner confidence
6.2 Analysis of tourism demands (trends, markets) – business intelligence
6.3 Development of social media networks and website traffic analysis
6.4 Implementation of a digital platform for data integration and information management
6.5 Existence of community management (professionalised)
6.6 Existence of open data on tourism activity (available online to everyone)
6.7 Mechanisms for monitorization and constant evaluation of points of interest (POI) situation

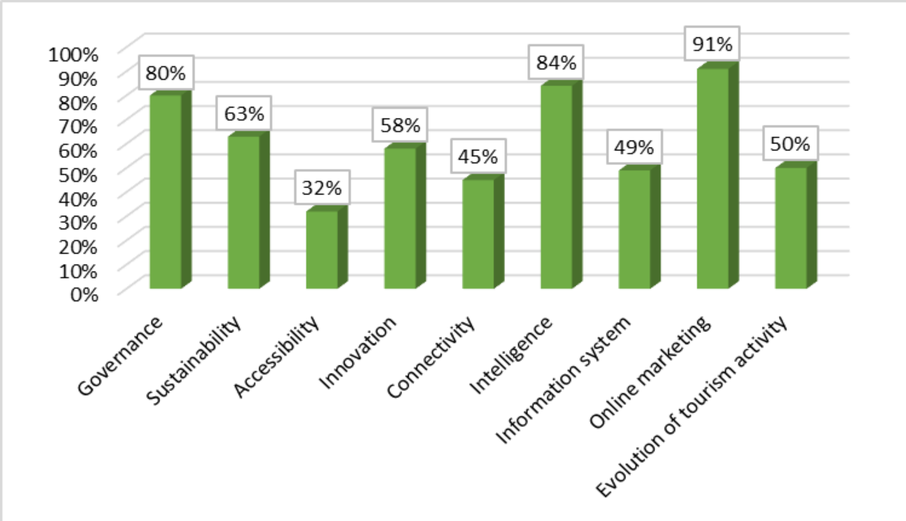
6.8 Implementation of georeferencing systems for tourist resources
Dimension 7: Information system
7.1 Existence of digitised promotional material
7.2 Existence of a 24/7 information point (touchscreen or similar)
7.3 Implementation of virtual assistance
7.4 Adaptation of DMO website to any device
7.5 Active presence on social media by DMO to provide information
7.6 Destination certified by the quality mark
7.7 Availability of information on connectivity and public Wi-Fi networks
7.8 Implementation of sensors in tourist signage
7.9 Existence of an official destination mobile app
Dimension 8: Online marketing
8.1 Development of brand monitoring and reputation analysis
8.2 Implementation of social media plan
8.3 Development of SEO positioning and actions
8.4 Investment in online advertising - SEM
8.5 Implementation of CRM & email marketing strategy
8.6 Existence and application of an online marketing plan
8.7 Investment in social media advertising
8.8 Commercialization through own website (DMO site)
Dimension 9: Evolution of tourism activity
9.1 The level of visitors' satisfaction with the tourism demand
9.2 Evolution of accommodation occupancy rate in tourism
9.3 Evolution of tourism expenditure at destination
9.4 Level of seasonality of tourism demand

Source: Own elaboration based on Ivars-Baidal et al., 2021.

To address the second research question (RQ2), the set of indicators was sent to the DMO. The representatives of the DMO evaluated the performance of their organization with all indicators, expressing the performance with percentage value ranging from 0 (non-compliance) to 100 (full compliance with the indicator). Most indicators consist of several sub-indicators, while others are one-dimensional. The Valencian Network of Smart Destination Indicators provides a detailed guide for destination management organisations where the data are obtained from first-hand information. In comparison with other approaches, this one is supported by providing evidence of specific data, attached documents and information that proves their fulfilment degree. In addition, according to the Smart destination model structure (Figure 1), the analysis of indicators was furthermore performed at three levels: strategic-relational, instrumental and applied.

4. Results

The performed analysis allows evaluation of the degree of fulfilment of selected indicators, i.e., the current level of smart tourism development in the selected region in the examined dimensions (Figure 2). These results show the activity of the DMO in all indicators and the aggregated results for each dimension. The level of smart tourism development in the region is expressed as a percentage, which is displayed on the scale from 0% to 100%. The results were obtained from the data provided by the DMO representatives and the analysis of secondary sources. When evaluating the indicators, the DMO representatives needed to demonstrate how they achieved the final evaluation of the indicators. The research team verified these results, thus ensuring the objectivity of the results.



Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 2: Level of smart destination development: Aggregated mean (%) by dimension

The overall average of all indicators in the nine surveyed dimensions is 63%, which proves that smart tourism development in the surveyed region is on the rise, but there is still much room for improvement. The standard deviation reaches the level of 43.51, which shows a large variability between the examined groups of indicators. The dimensions with the highest fulfilment rate are online marketing, intelligence and governance, with an average of 85%. The lowest performance rate is shown by the dimensions accessibility, connectivity and information system (an average of 44%).

According to the Smart destination model structure (Figure 1), the analysis of indicators was performed on strategic-relational (Table 2), instrumental (Table 3) and applied level (Table 4). Each level is composed of several dimensions: the strategic-relational level includes the indicators for governance, sustainability, innovation and accessibility; the instrumental level is made up of connectivity and intelligence indicators; and the applied level consists of the indicators for information system and online marketing.

Table 2: Aggregated mean for the strategic-relational level of Smart destination model structure

Governance	**80%**
Implementation of a strategic tourism plan	100%
Coordination mechanisms between local administration departments for smart destination project development	100%
Implementation of a smart destination project	0%
Existence of a smart destination coordinator (responsible technician)	100%
Existence of an annual operations plan for the destination	100%
Mechanisms to facilitate public-private partnership	100%
Development of E-Government/open government strategies	100%
Implementation of quality management systems with a destination approach	0%
Development of tourism impacts awareness campaigns aimed at residents	100%
Application of ROI analysis on tourism initiatives	100%
Sustainability	**63%**
Implementation of urban planning regulations adjusted to sustainability principles	62%
Implementation of specific plans for sustainable tourism development	100%
Public promotion of sustainable mobility (transport)	75%
Enhancement of energy efficiency strategies (public lighting)	15%
Collection and treatment of waste	70%
Efficiency in water supply, purification and re-use of wastewater	0%
Implementation of tourism indicators for sustainable destination management	75%

Development of sustainability awareness campaigns targeted at residents	100%
Creation of climate change adaptation programmes	100%
Use of ethical codes in tourism (regulation of activity, governance, impacts)	0%
Legal provisions and environmental or quality certifications implemented in tourism resources	80%
Companies awarded with environmental certifications (standards)	0%
Development of sustainability awareness campaigns targeted at tourists	100%
Surface of green areas per de facto population	100%
Innovation	**58%**
Existence of innovation support programmes in the tourism sector	100%
Implementation of innovation management systems in companies and public bodies	0%
Development of innovation projects in collaboration with universities and R&D institutions	100%
Promotion of collaborative innovation between agents (events and joint activities)	100%
Local entrepreneurship	50%
Educational level of the population and job opportunities in highly innovative sectors	0%
Accessibility	**32%**
Accessibility of tourism resources and attractions	0%
Information services technically adapted to the needs of people with disabilities	0%
Compliance on content accessibility with the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) (https://www.w3.org/WAI/)	0%
Initiatives for promoting accessible tourism	60%
Public transport system technically adapted to the needs of people with disabilities	54%
Existence of a dynamic inventory of tourism resources, companies and accessible services for tourists	80%

Source: Own elaboration.

Looking at the resulting values of the strategic-relational level indicators for the governance dimension, we observe exceptionally good results in the implementation of the strategic plan for smart tourism development, in the cooperation between the private and public sectors, and in planning of the development of smart tourism with regard to residents. On the contrary, the region has not designed and applied a smart tourism development project, and no quality management system is in place. However, the implementation of a smart destination project is planned. It will be part of the SMART concept of the Banská Bystrica region and during its preparation it will be decided whether some principles need to be implemented in the Sustainable Tourism Strategy in the Banská Bystrica region by 2030. The DMO has not yet applied for a quality system registration as the original intention was to build Green Destination. This, however, is perceived as inadequate by the DMO representatives. According to the previous attempts, Destination of Excellence cannot be applied in the region.

In terms of sustainability indicators, the destination takes a responsible approach to the development of sustainable tourism. The DMO is implementing strategic plans for the development of sustainable tourism, developing campaigns aimed at raising the residents' and visitors' awareness of sustainability, and the region has a sufficient amount of green space. On the other hand, there are no strategies in the region to improve energy efficiency, or to regulate the collection and treatment of waste as the DMO has no competence to do so. It was impossible to obtain the data on efficiency in water supply, purification and re-use of wastewater, as the statistical office refused to provide this information to the DMO. There are no ethical codes on tourism (regulation of activity, governance, impacts) in Slovakia and the DMO does not know whether the members of the organization have environmental certifications.

The innovation dimension indicators have achieved good results in programs for innovation in the tourism sector, development of innovation projects in collaboration with universities and R&D institutions and in promotion of collaborative innovation between agents. The DMO does not have information about awarding of innovation certificates to companies in the region but within the ECO-TANDEM project, which is currently underway, companies will be awarded. According to the data from the statistical office, less than 10% of local workforce (active workers) are entrepreneurs and company owners, less than 20% of local population hold a university degree, less than 15% of local population work in innovative companies or organizations and less than 3% of local population work in high technology sectors or research and development activities.

The accessibility dimension is the one with the lowest indicator value (32%). Within these indicators, we observe one that shows better results – the existence of a dynamic inventory of tourism resources, companies and accessible services for tourists. Public transport system is technically adapted to the needs of people with disabilities at 54%. The DMO seeks to improve the accessibility of destination attractions, in particular through accessible local travel guides and the implementation of accessibility awareness campaigns among companies and residents of the region.

Table 3: Aggregated mean for the instrumental level of Smart destination model structure

Connectivity	45%
Internet connection quality at the destination	100%
Free Wi-Fi availability in tourist information office(s)	0%
Free Wi-Fi availability in tourist points of interest (POI) (main attractions)	100%
Proportion of tourism businesses providing free Wi-Fi to tourists	25%
Implementation of sensors for data collection at the destination	0%
Intelligence	**84%**
Implementation of a barometer to measure the level of business owners´ confidence	0%
Analysis of tourism demand (trends, markets) – business intelligence	75%
Development of social media networks and website traffic analysis	100%
Implementation of a digital platform for data integration and information management	100%
Existence of community management (professionalised)	100%
Existence of open data on tourism activity (available online to everyone)	100%
Mechanisms for monitorization and constant evaluation of points of interest (POI) situation	100%
Implementation of georeferencing systems for tourist resources	100%

Source: Own elaboration.

The instrumental level of the model contains the dimensions of connectivity and intelligence. The Internet connection quality at the destination is at a very good level, as well as free Wi-Fi availability in tourist points of interest. However, less than 95% of hotels, hostels and camping sites, less than 50% of restaurants/bars/cafes, and not all of the tourist information offices offer free Wi-Fi to their visitors. On the other hand, at least 70% of tourist apartments/villas/rentals offer free Wi-Fi to their guests. The DMO has no impact on the implementation of the sensors for management and efficiency improvement. These outcomes reflect the existing constraints on the integration of the physical and digital spheres for more integrated management of smart destinations and improved visitor stay.

The region shows very good results in most indicators related to intelligence dimension, with the exception of the tourism demand analysis and the implementation of a barometer to measure the level of confidence of business owners in the region. Satisfaction surveys among visitors to the region are so costly that their regularity is unrealistic. Surveys are conducted once every 4 years and selected products offered by the organization are evaluated every year.

Table 4: Aggregated mean for the applied level of Smart destination model structure

Information system	**49%**
Existence of digitised promotional material	70%
Existence of a 24/7 information point (touchscreen or similar)	0%
Implementation of virtual assistance	50%
Adaptation of DMO website to any device	100%
Active presence on social media by DMO to provide information	100%
Destination certified by the quality mark	100%
Availability of information on connectivity and public Wi-Fi networks	0%
Implementation of sensors in tourist signage	20%
Existence of an official destination mobile app	0%

Online marketing	**91%**
Development of brand monitoring and reputation analysis	100%
Implementation of social media plan	100%
Development of SEO positioning and actions	100%
Investment in online advertising - SEM	100%
Implementation of CRM & email marketing strategy	80%
Existence and application of an online marketing plan	100%
Investment in social media advertising	100%
Commercialization through own website (DMO site)	50%

Source: Own elaboration.

Finally, the applied level of the model includes the dimensions of information and online marketing. It should be noted that both dimensions mainly depend on the destination management organizations, while the other examined dimensions depend, partially or completely, on the activities of various local government departments. The information dimension demonstrates good results in the activities of the DMO on social networks and in the adaptation of the DMO website to any device. Although the DMO itself does not have its own information office, most of the information offices in the region are certified by the quality mark. On the other hand, the information system dimension indicators show gaps in information provision. There is no 24/7 information point in the region, there is no official destination mobile app and the DMO website does not offer connectivity information at the destination. However, the DMO effectively uses the Outdoor Active worldwide platform, which also has its own application. The implementation of the integrated transport is going through the approval process within the transport service plan. It is assumed that it will take at least 2 years until it is fully implemented in the region.

The online marketing dimension is the dimension with the highest value of indicators (91%). It shows excellent values in all indicators, except for the implementation of CRM and email marketing strategy, as well as commercialization through own website. The DMO offers the option to subscribe to the newsletter but does not issue it on regular basis, and the DMO website does not provide the possibility of direct booking of accommodation.

Finally, the activity performance indicators aimed at measuring the year-on-year development of the main tourism performance indicators reflect the positive trend in the recent years, with an increasing year-on-year visitor spending in the region and a high level of visitor satisfaction. It is important to point out that the year-on-year occupancy rate in all types of accommodation facilities increased each year until the COVID-19 pandemic, when it began to decline. The pandemic also affected seasonality, which was previously reduced, but has deepened lately as a result of the pandemic.

5. Conclusions

Regional monitoring of smart tourism development has been under-researched so far. The study presents the regional monitoring system applied to one of the selected regions in Slovakia, based on The Valencian Network of Smart Destination Indicators. The aim was to apply the methodological framework for measuring smart tourism development to a selected Slovak destination (the Banská Bystrica region). We have addressed two research questions: (RQ1) Which indicators are suitable for monitoring of the smart destination development on a regional level? (RQ2) What is the current state of smart destination development in the selected region?

The used smart tourism development evaluation system has only been used in selected regions of Spain so far (Ivars-Baidal et al., 2021). The author proposes that the model should be applied in other countries in order to develop and improve the system of indicators. We believe that the findings of our study can contribute to the assessment of the adequacy of the system of indicators at the regional level and can thus contribute to its improvement. The selected model can be applied to all regional management organizations in Slovakia and based on the results of individual dimensions, evaluate the DMO, which can be afterwards used as a benchmark for other DMOs. Since the definition of smart tourism development is not generally unified, we cannot claim to what extent smart tourism in the Banská Bystrica region is developed, but through the used model we can evaluate in which dimensions it lags or makes progress. The model can serve as a useful tool in creating, implementing and monitoring smart destination development strategies. It can also serve as a benchmark for international comparison of destinations that implement a smart tourism development strategy.

Limitations. The data used in the model were obtained mainly by the primary survey, and supplemented by the secondary sources. In Slovakia, it is challenging to obtain the data for the indicators that are in the competence of the local government and the statistical office, and their analysis is time-consuming. Providing primary data is time consuming for the DMOs, but it is not expensive. The advantage is that the data are relevant and reflect the real state of smart destination development. Due to availability of data at a regional level, after compiling we have 70 indicators instead of the 72 original indicators. The two indicators were excluded because it was not possible to obtain the necessary data from the Statistical Office. The potential for smart destination development may vary across the regions. Therefore, monitoring the smart destination development will require the use of various indicators, which are available and fit the specificities of the destination.

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Developing Hospitality Management Core Competencies Framework

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Abstract: Developing a unique set of Core Competencies should be of primary concern to any business operating in the hospitality industry. This paper presents a framework for competency development, which is based on the views of both educators and industry professionals. By integrating knowledge from a variety of contexts and countries around the world, a set of generic core competencies has been derived via a systematic classification process. Specifically, forty competency statements have been posited taking the form of questions given to both educators and industry professionals. Subsequently, the responses have been analysed and, using taxonomy, a framework of seven core competency categories has been developed. The competency categories involve aspects of Human Resource Management (HRM); Professional Image; Operational Knowledge; Leadership; Communication; Information Management; and People Relationship Management. Specific competency items include essential capabilities for the hospitality industry such as: communicating effectively with clients and customers, identifying and solving problems, making decisions under pressure or in a crisis situation, and understanding the factors that influence the profitability of the hospitality enterprise. The proposed framework is meant to serve as a basis for developing a set of core competencies suitable for creating a sustainable competitive advantage for the hospitality industry. Further, the framework would be useful to educators, professionals and graduate students as a guide for cultivating a set of key competencies for success in the hospitality sector.

Keywords: hospitality management, strategy, core competencies, sustainable competitive advantage, education

1. Introduction

Developing a set of unique core competencies would be key to creating a sustainable competitive advantage and thereby reach success in the hospitality industry. This is necessary especially in today's challenging times for the hospitality industry. As a result of COVID-19 and the ongoing restrictions to international mobility, the Travel & Tourism sector suffered losses (WTTC 2021) of almost USD 4.5 trillion, with its global contribution to GDP declining by 49.1% compared to 2019 to reach only USD 4.7 trillion in 2020; relative to a 3.7% GDP decline of the global economy. Domestic visitor spending decreased by 45%, whilst international visitor spending fell by an unprecedented 69.4%. In 2020, 62 million jobs were lost, representing an 18.5% decrease, having a negative effect particularly on SMEs of the industry (IMF2021).

Despite the negative effects from Covid 19, an opportunity emerges for education and HR development. The current situation with such a highly volatile business environment could also be viewed as a catalyst for innovation and competency development. Definitely, the hospitality industry and especially the hotel business is going through major changes nowadays. Some companies such as Airbnb adapted to these changes by developing a new set of competencies and thereby manage to survive and prosper even during the terrible pandemic. Therefore, identifying such key competencies would be crucial for designing effective educational programs and success in the new landscape that is evolving in the hospitality industry.

2. Literature review

2.1 Competencies in general

In an attempt to define the concept of competence, Nath and Raheja (2001) proposed that competencies look at attitudes, skills and knowledge of a person through observable and measurable behaviours and outcomes. The U.S. Department of Education (2001) defined competencies as a bundle of skills, abilities, and knowledge that can be used as currency out in the workforce. "A competency suggests both the possession of knowledge and the behavioural capacity to act appropriately. To develop competencies, you must be both introduced to knowledge and have the opportunity to practice your skills" (Quinn et al, 2003). Sisson and Adams (2013) suggested that competencies are the activities, related knowledge, attitudes, and skills that directly affect performance and can be measured against specific standards.

Gamble et al (1994) highlight the changing emphasis of European management skills from traditional craft skills to management skills, the outcome being a more business-oriented hospitality manager as a team facilitator rather than someone with traditional skills. Guerrier and Lockwood (1990) explore managerial competencies and argue that there is a need for specific research into the knowledge and competencies which hospitality employees require in order to be effective in their work. This exploration of important managerial competencies is provided by O'Driscoll et al (1991) and Hay (1990). Tas (1988) identifies the most important competencies for hotel general manager trainees and relates these competencies to curriculum design in order to determine appropriate training and educational programs for schools of hotel and restaurant administration.

Job competencies are activities and skills judged essential to perform the duties of specific positions. Successful managers use leadership skills to facilitate work, influence co-workers and coach others, as well as for solving problems, negotiating contracts and other matters (Tas et al, 1996). Hotel managers may, of course, use their abilities in any of the domains simultaneously or sequentially in solving problems. Meaningful education and training programs to develop management competencies should consequently include opportunities for new managers to develop and practice a broad range of problem solving-skills.

Boyatzis (1982) defines competency as "an underlying characteristic of a person in that it may be a motive, trait, skill, aspect of one's self-image or social role, or a body of knowledge which he or she uses". That definition tends to focus on the qualities required for effective performance rather than on individual performance (Miller 1998). Competencies are a combination of observable and applied knowledge, skills and behaviours that create a competitive advantage for an organization. They focus on how an employee creates value and what is actually accomplished (Jauhari & Misra 2004). Tas (1988) defines competence as the performance of duties based on one's ability to accomplish specific job-related tasks and assume the role connected to the position.

Of special importance is the study of Kay and Russette (2000) found that a number of essential competencies fall under all five of Sandwith's (Sandwith 1993) Competency Domains (i.e. leadership, interpersonal, conceptual – creative, administrative and technical). Leadership and interpersonal skills are essential competencies essential to more than one functional area and management level.

The complex nature and diversity of managerial work confirms there are many variations of the meaning of the word "competency" in the managerial literature (Wallace & Hunt 1996; Miller 1998; Hoffmann 1999). Competency generally refers to the knowledge, skills, performance abilities and motives required to perform a job effectively and efficiently (Perdue, Woods & Ninemeier 2001; Quinn et al, 2003). Other supporters of that view (Barrow 1991; Marginson 1993) also contend that many generic competencies such as problem solving and critical thinking are context-bound as they depend on the individual situation and circumstances surrounding the application of these skills (Wallace & Hunt 1996). Others refer to an individual's underlying characteristics, such as any underlying characteristics leading to successful performance (Karpin 1995). Woodruffe's view of the myriad of definitions of competency may have merit. He argues that competency appears to be an umbrella term to cover almost anything that might directly affect job performance (Woodruffe 1993). As Miller (1998), suggested while disagreement remains as to what constitutes a competence, it is generally agreed that a universal definition which could apply to all situations is difficult to specify due to the inherent nature of the concept.

A major problem that exists in the hospitality industry, and the lodging and foodservice sectors in particular, is high employee turnover (Birdir 2002; Ghiseli, La Lopa, & Bai 2001). Operations managers, human resource professionals, and hospitality educators strive to reduce turnover numbers by identifying valid job competencies in future managers, improving hiring practices, and recruiting from educational programs known for producing future hospitality managers with strong industry potential (Enz 2004; Milman & Ricci 2004). There is a general suspicion that entry-level employees are not adequately being prepared for hospitality management positions through formal educational programs. As a result, employee turnover could occur when new hires are not able to respond to the demanding needs of the industry.

Therefore, clarifying job competency expectations that practising hospitality managers have for college and university graduates could be useful for hospitality professionals and hospitality educators. The relationship of educational factors to potential industry success remains an important and understudied area of the hospitality literature (Dittman 1997; Hsu et al, 1992). In lodging and foodservice operations, the general manager is ultimately responsible for the operation of the hospitality establishment and the supervision of employee

(Walker 2004). These managers, as well as other functional managers, are the appropriate individuals to assist in the identification of such job competencies. Competency development studies should therefore rely on the needs of the industry and the possibilities that the educational system provides. Further, it would be interesting to see the relationship between competencies development and career success which is explored in the subsequent section.

2.2 Developing competencies in the hotel industry

Since the first college-level program in hospitality management was established at Cornell University in the 1920s, educators have sought industry leaders' advice and feedback regarding the essential competencies that graduates needed for career success (Kay & Russette 2000). The question of which competencies employees need in order to be effective has been asked by different management groups, and the answers seem to have changed over time from technical skills to personal characteristics (Tas, LaBrecque, & Clayton 1996). Some experts have attempted to identify the skills needed by hospitality managers.

The kind of abilities, knowledge, or competencies managers need to be effective has been asked among different management groups over the past 20 years. The answer appears to have changed over time from technical abilities to personnel-management characteristics (Tas et al, 1996). In the late 1970s and early 1980s, researchers found that managers need to concentrate more on technical matters. Studies of the late 80s and early 90s found that education was also important.

Katz (1974) argued that technical, human, and conceptual skills are required by all managers. The extent to which a manager needed each skill related to the level of managerial responsibility. Mariampolski, Sears, and Vaden (1980) recommended that restaurant management program should emphasize technical and human skills. Research conducted by Buergermeister (1983), and Tas (1988) identified competencies needed by entry-level hospitality managers. Buergermeister (1983), declared that providing quality service and demonstrating ethical and professional behavior were important competencies for entry-level foodservice managers. Buergermeister (1983) asserted that the most critical competencies for all beginning managers were effectively supervising and communicating with personnel, maintaining effective communication with clients, customers, and community, realizing profit as an important goal, and treating customers as a top priority. In a pioneering study Tas (1988) identified important competencies essential for management success from a hotel industry perspective including managing guest problems, professional and ethical standards, professional appearance and poise, effective oral and writing communication, positive customer relations and positive working relationships.

Nearly forty years ago, Tas (1983) found that a selected group of hotel executives in Nevada generally regarded courses in food and beverage purchasing, housekeeping, human relations, food production, front office operations, hotel law, and security techniques to be valuable. In 1980, a study published by Mariampolski et al related that important entry-level technical skills considered essential for a restaurant manager's success included food production, purchasing, and report preparation. Human relations skills rated as important in that study pertained to staffing and employee relations.

Knight and Salter (1985) surveyed hospitality educators and foodservice trainers to investigate traits that a good manager should possess. The results revealed that good hospitality managers should have excellent communication skills. Downey and Veau (1988) suggested that the characteristics required by hospitality graduates included technical skills, analytical skills particularly related to finance, marketing, law, and interpersonal skills (Lefever 1989). Jonker and Jonker (1990) indicated that potential hospitality managers must have good oral skills, computer skills, technical skills, and guest relations.

Rutherford (1987) examined the importance of different job responsibilities for hotel chief engineers in 1987 and found that communication, organization, leadership, and training were more important than technical skills. The study of required competencies in the hospitality industry, particularly in the hotel industry, was dynamic during the 1990s (Chung 2000). Hsu, Gilmore, and Walsh (1992) stated that the essential competencies required to prepare graduates for a successful career in the hospitality industry included customer satisfaction, supervision of personnel, communication skills, ethical and professional standards in work, decision-making, and positive working relationships. According to Dana (1992), maintaining effective communication with personnel and service quality were essential competencies for managers. Hansson (2001) suggested creativity as a quality necessary for hotel operations and management. A survey of industry, alumni, faculty and students conducted by Enz, (2004) determined what they considered as the factors needed to succeed in the industry. They found the top skills identified by the respondents as being necessary to success were leadership, ability to identify a problem, and organizing and writing skills. Harrison (1996) declared that interpersonal skills were ranked as the highest domain of workplace competencies for middle-management employees.

Tait, Richins, and Hanlon (1993) studied managers and decision-makers within three sectors: tourism, sport and recreation. Their results confirmed that communication ability and interpersonal skills were rated as the most important competencies by all three sectors. Karpin (1995) found substantial gaps between the skill range and education of Australian managers and those deemed necessary to accommodate future management needs. The Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA) (Cairney et al, 1998) also found that employers require graduates with transferable skills, including strong written and oral communication skills, interpersonal skills, teamwork, and problem-solving skills.

The tourism and hospitality literature emphasize a need for “global”, “entrepreneurial” skills and “vision” to enable managers to meet 21st century challenges (Su, Miller & Shanklin 1997). Others reveal that tourism and hospitality management education should focus on leadership skills to equip future managers for the demands of an ever-changing business environment (Kay & Russette 2000).

The importance of general management knowledge and skills was identified in studies conducted by Okeiyi’s team (1994), Ashley et al (1995) and Breiter and Clements (1996). Okeiyi’s team (1994) conducted a study to determine the importance of food and beverage competencies expected of hospitality management graduates from the point of view of practitioners, educators, and students. In this study, human relations and managerial skills were rated as more important than technical skills. Ashley et al (1995) asserted that the top 10 areas of general management knowledge included: people skills; creative-thinking ability; financial skills; written and oral communication skills; developing service orientation; total quality management; listening skills; problem-identification and problem-solving skills; customer-feedback skills and individual and system-wide computer skills. The study also identified four competencies covering creative thinking and problem solving, communication, adapting to change, and teamwork as crucial for an effective program. Breiter and Clements (1996) investigated the perceptions of hotel and restaurant managers toward the importance of managerial skills related to success in management. The results indicated that leadership, managerial communication, and employee relations were the most important skills required by hospitality managers.

In the mid-1990s, Tas and his colleagues studied the important competencies for property management managers. Researchers grouped managerial competencies into five areas: conceptual-creative (the cognitive skills), leadership (the ability to turn ideas into productive action), interpersonal (skills for effective interaction with other), administrative (personnel and financial management of the business, and technical (knowledge and skills essential to producing the product service). The highest-rated competency statements fell into the interpersonal, leadership and conceptual-creative areas (Tas et al, 1996).

Chung (2000) conducted a similar study in Korea. He divided competencies into six dimensions and investigated their contribution to the career success of alumni graduated from universities offering hotel management programs and who have or had working experience in Korea. The findings revealed general management skills as having the same importance as technical skills. All competency dimensions including “management employees and job”, “management analysis techniques”, “innovation”, “adaptation to environmental changes and procurement knowledge”, “problem identification and communication” and “operational techniques and knowledge” related to career success in the hotel industry in Korea. The competencies covering directing and supervising the work of others, enhancing socialization and interpersonal relationship with employees, selecting and assigning personnel, taking a chance of more job enlargement, and maintaining professional appearance and poise were the most influential competency attributes to career success. The results also indicated gender, years of employment, educational levels, age, functional areas, and position were significant in discriminating between several competencies.

Kay and Russette (2000) conducted a study to determine the specific competencies required within food and beverage, front desk, sales division, and entry and middle management levels. Eighteen competencies were important for all six combinations of functional area and management level. They grouped those 18 competencies into four domains: leadership, interpersonal, technical and creative. The results revealed that "leadership" competencies were paramount to all managerial functions. They further subdivided the "leadership" domain into customer-centered, role-modelling, ethical, and trust. The competencies related to the "customer-centered" domain were dominant over the other three competency domains. In this study, for the first time, "working knowledge of product-service" and "adapting creatively to change" were rated as essential competencies for all managers.

In Taiwan, it was a phenomenon to study competencies required for people serving in the hospitality industry. Wang (2001) conducted a study to determine the professional competencies needed for the front-house employees of the food and beverage department. The results revealed that language skills, and professional appearance and poise were two basic prerequisite qualities. Wang (2001) administered a survey to realize the competencies required for chain restaurant managers. She found that 46 competencies were evaluated as "most essential", and there were 27 competencies rated "quite important" for managers. Additionally, crisis management was identified as the most important component of managers' activities, and the most desirable competency required for prospective managers was marketing management skills.

Tesone and Ricci (2005) conducted a study with senior hiring executives who represent various sectors of the hospitality and tourism industry in Orlando, Florida. This study revealed that hospitality managers hire primarily for attitude and secondarily for specific knowledge and skills. In addition, the hiring executives prefer interpersonal interactive abilities over productivity and concrete work processing skills. The practitioner participants in the study noted knowledge, skills, and attitudinal qualities that indicate worker success in the industry. More specifically, dominant skills and abilities were noted in the areas of teamwork, communications (listening skills, verbal and writing skills, and empathy with others) and guest/customer services. Other job-related requirements were found in general knowledge, professional image, comprehension of performance standards, and realistic job/career expectations.

Jauhari (2006) conducted a study to examine the link between industry competency requirements and the current provisions for hospitality management education in India. He identified the need for collaborative development between the educational providers and industry, especially in relation to the ongoing development of managers in the workplace. In addition, the study revealed that a gap exists in terms of ensuring that the needs of industry are met by the ongoing skills development of the workforce.

The main objective of management education is to provide industry with high caliber graduates equipped with the most relevant management competencies (Christou 2002). A review of the literature indicates that generic and transferable skills including leadership, communication, critical thinking and human resource management are essential to career success (Gustin 2001). Also, Gustin (2001) found in the USA that encouraging and teaching critical thinking skills resulted in students being better prepared to meet the demands of a complex business environment. Also, in Australia, Moscardo (1997) claimed that developing problem-solving skills, creative and flexible-thinking competencies are critical in building management competencies for hospitality management students.

Consolidating the findings of the above studies, a framework of key competencies for the hospitality industry is proposed in the next section. The framework includes forty competency items which capture aspects of human resource management, leadership, information technology, interpersonal communication, human relations, and operational knowledge.

3. Findings

3.1 Developing a hospitality management competency framework

As shown in the literature review the hospitality industry requires a multitude of competencies that are essential for prosperity and success. These competencies need to be consolidated in a comprehensive framework. Such a framework would then be useful to educators as well as to industry professionals for cultivating the right environment for developing such competencies.

Table 1: Competency items

Survey Competencies	References
Acting in an ethical manner HRM	Kay and Russette, 2000; Chung et al 2003
Maintaining professional appearance and poise	Tesone and Ricci, 2005
Directing and supervising the work of others	Hsu et al 1992; Dana, 1992; Chung, 2000
Defining and setting up quality standards for employees.	Ashley et al 1995; Chung, 2000; Chung et al 2003
Communicating effectively with other employees	Dana, 1992; Ashley et al 1995; Chung, 2000
Communicating effectively with clients and customers	Ashley et al 1995; Chung, 2000
Managing guest problems with understanding and sensitivity	Tas, 1988; Baum, 1990; Kay and Russette, 2000
Forecasting future trends	Chung, 2000
Developing positive customer relations	Jonker and Jonker, 1990; Kay and Russette, 2000
Making decisions under pressure or in crisis situation	Wang, 2001; Chung et al 2003
Using financial analysis techniques	Downey and De Veau, 1988; Ashley et al 1995; Chung, 2000
Analyzing factors that influence the controllability of profits	Buergermeister, 1983; Tas 1988; Baum, 1990; Ashley et al 1995; Chung, 2000
Identifying and defining problems of operation	Baum, 1990; Enz et al 1993; Ashley et al 1995; Chung, 2000
Working knowledge of product-service	Kay and Russette, 2000
Adapting to changing circumstances	Ashley et al 1995; Chung, 2000; Kay and Russette, 2000
Identifying and defining problems of guest relations	Ashley et al 1995; Chung, 2000
Recognizing and solving customer problems	Ashley et al 1995; Kay and Russette, 2000
Enhancing socialization and interpersonal relationships with employees	Downey and De Veau, 1988;
Developing Innovative ways to work	Ashley et al 1995; Chung, 2000
Selecting and assigning personnel	Chung, 2000
Taking a chance of more job enlargement	Chung, 2000
Building model and creative thinking	Hansson, 2001; Ashley et al 1995; Chung, 2000
Communicates effectively both in writing and orally	Tas, 1988; Tas et al 1996; Tesone and Ricci, 2005
Interacts smoothly with wide variety of people	Tas, 1988; Okeiyi et al 1994; Tas et al 1996; Kay and Russette, 2000
Follows hygiene and safety regulations to ensure compliance by organization	Tas, 1988; Baum, 1991;
Motivating employees to achieve desired performance	Tas, 1988; Baum, 1991
Maintains professional and ethical standards in the work environment	Tas, 1988; Baum, 1991
Using past and current information to predict future departmental revenues and expenses	Tas, 1988; Baum, 1991
Analyzing weekly, monthly, and annual financial and statistical reports	Tas, 1988; Baum, 1991
Appraising employee performance	Tas, 1988; Baum, 1991
Effectively manages life-threatening situations (e.g., fire, bomb threat, serious illness)	Tas, 1988; Baum, 1991
Using front-office (computer) equipment effectively	Tas, 1988
Working as a member of a team	Tesone and Ricci, 2005
Anticipating guest wants and needs to provide service	Chung et al 2003; Tesone and Ricci, 2005
Knowing the realities involved in this type of work	Tesone and Ricci, 2005
Knowing the basic terminology used in the industry	Tesone and Ricci, 2005
Managing time to ensure productivity	Chung et al 2003
Providing employees access to information	Chung et al 2003
Staying informed about industry practices and new developments	Chung et al 2003
Promoting respect and appreciation for diversity and individual differences	Chung et al 2003

Based on the most prominent studies selected from the literature forty competency items are proposed as shown on table 1. Further, the identified competency items are classified in several categories as shown in figure 1.

Figure 1: The proposed hospitality management competency framework

The *HRM* competency category is comprised of "Acting in an ethical manner", "Defining and setting up quality standards for employees", "Selecting and assigning personnel", "Appraising employee performance", "Making decisions under pressure or in crisis situation" and "Anticipating guest wants and needs to provide service". The particular items are drawn from the studies depicted on the right-hand side column of table 1. For example, "Acting in an ethical manner" as a competency is supported by the findings of Kay and Russette, 2000 and Chung et al 2003. This refers to developing a skill in responding to a number of situations where the hospitality professional does not harm in any way employees, customers or the environment. Such a competency development would promote the creation of an ethical culture which would prove to be vital for prosperity and long-term success.

The second competency category *Professional image* is comprised of "Maintaining professional appearance and poise", "Maintains professional and ethical standards in the work environment". Further, the third competency category *Operational Knowledge*, draws from "Working knowledge of product-service", "Follows hygiene and safety regulations to ensure compliance by organization", "Knowing the realities involved in this type of work", "Knowing the basic terminology used in the industry", "Identifying and defining problems of operation", and "Providing employees access to information".

The fourth competency category *Leadership* is constructed based on the items "Directing and supervising the work of others", "Adapting to changing circumstances", "Developing Innovative ways to work", "Taking a chance of more job enlargement", "Building model and creative thinking", "Effectively manages life-threatening situations", "Managing time to ensure productivity", "Motivating employees to achieve desired performance" and "Staying informed about industry practices and new developments".

The fifth competency category *Communication* draws from the item: "Communicating effectively with other employees", "Communicating effectively with other employees", "Managing guest problems with understanding and sensitivity", "Developing positive customer relations", "Communicates effectively both in writing and orally" and "Working as a member of a team".

The sixth competency category *Information Management* is comprised of "Using financial analysis techniques", "Analyzing factors that influence the controllability of profits", "Using past and current information to predict future departmental revenues and expenses", "Analyzing weekly, monthly, and annual financial and statistical reports", "Analyzing weekly, monthly, and annual financial and statistical reports" and "Using front-office (computer) equipment effectively".

Finally, the seventh competency category *People Relationship Management* is comprised of "Identifying and defining problems of guest relations", "Recognizing and solving customer problems", "Enhancing socialization and interpersonal relationships with employees", "Interacts smoothly with wide variety of people", and "Promoting respect and appreciation for diversity and individual differences".

4. Conclusions and recommendations

This paper examined the issue of competency development in the hospitality industry. Based on an extensive literature review it was shown that a multitude of competencies are necessary for success in hospitality. Specifically, forty competency items were identified based on the findings of the most prominent studies in the area. As a result, a hospitality management competency framework is proposed for developing a set of skills to improve the chances for success in the industry. The forty competency items, were organized into seven competency categories namely: Human Resource Management (HRM); Professional Image; Operational Knowledge; Leadership; Communication; Information Management; People Relationship Management.

Cultivating a set of essential core competencies would be beneficial to a variety of stakeholders in the hospitality industry. Specifically, the proposed framework would be especially beneficial to educators when designing their curricula. In the same manner, the framework would be useful to hospitality industry professionals for designing and delivering effective training programs. Further, governmental agencies related to human resource development could utilize such a framework in order to support relevant training programs. Moreover, the proposed competency categories would support a successful career development for hospitality management graduates.

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Remembrance Tourism: Maarjamäe Memorial Versus The Estonian Victims of Communism Memorial

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Abstract: The people of the Republic of Estonia experienced severe oppression and terror during the latter half of the 20th century following their forced annexation into the Soviet Union. Additionally, the Soviet military can rightfully be credited with decisively driving Nazi Germany out of Estonia, during World War II. These related, but conflicting results, has resulted in two different memorials, and two radically different perspectives, located within 500 meters of each other, in the Estonian capital city of Tallinn. This research examines the impact of such confrontation in ideals and remembrance, through the promotion (or lack of), funding, and maintenance of history, through memorials in public space. This research addresses these questions through a comparison of two Memorials located within sight of each other, the Maarjamäe Memorial and the Estonian Victims of Communism Memorial, in Tallinn, Estonia. The comparison of the two Memorials highlights the challenges involved in the construct of remembrance, as well as the related construct of nostalgia, within markets such as Estonia that has two distinct ethnic groups, Estonian, and Russian, and how their respective views of the constructs shape the success or failure of such tourism attractions. The findings of this research will be of benefit to other regions with a similar past, when it comes to remembrance and reflection through tourism.

Keywords: tourism, memorialization, remembrance, Estonia, Russia, Post-Soviet

1. Introduction

The people of the Republic of Estonia experienced severe oppression and terror during the latter half of the 20th century, following their forced annexation into the Soviet Union (Waldstein, 2007). At the same time, the historical reality is that the Soviet military can rightfully be credited with decisively driving Nazi Germany out of Estonia, during World War II. These related, but conflicting events, has resulted in two different memorials, and two radically different perspectives, located within 500 meters of each other, in the Estonian capital city of Tallinn. The positioning of these memorials exists within a country with a population of approximately two-thirds ethnic Estonians, and one-third ethnic Russians. Thus, a challenge resulting from the events of the 20th Century in Estonia has been how one should look back on this period, and to what extent nostalgia for the past has continued to reinforce ethnic divides.

With Estonia's return to independence in 1991, Estonians could overtly focus on what defined Estonian culture. The challenge that also resulted was how would Estonia's past be incorporated into these cultural freedoms? The concept of how one should market and promote Estonian culture and heritage would come into conflict with how nostalgia in general, and how nostalgia and tourism specifically, could or should be represented. This research examines the impact of such confrontation in ideals and remembrance, through the promotion (or lack of), funding, and maintenance of history, through memorials in public space.

Following the end of World War I, in 1918, the independent Republic of Estonia was established, which lasted until the Soviet/Nazi occupations, in 1939, with present day re-independence occurring in 1991. During the Soviet period, the Maarjamäe Memorial (Dragicevich et al. 2016) was designed and sculpted by ethnic Estonians, between 1960 and 1975 (See figure 1). Since the end of the Soviet period, the monument has received little support in terms of maintenance and has been the source of rumours as to its demolition (Cavegn, 2018). In contrast, the Estonian Victims of Communism Memorial, which was completed in August 2018, and is dedicated to those who were deported, imprisoned or executed by Soviet authorities and was funded by the Estonian Repressed Persons Assistance Fund and the Estonian state budget (BNN, 2017). The latter Memorial also includes a memorial wall for Estonian military officers killed during the communist period (Tambur, 2018) (see figure 2).

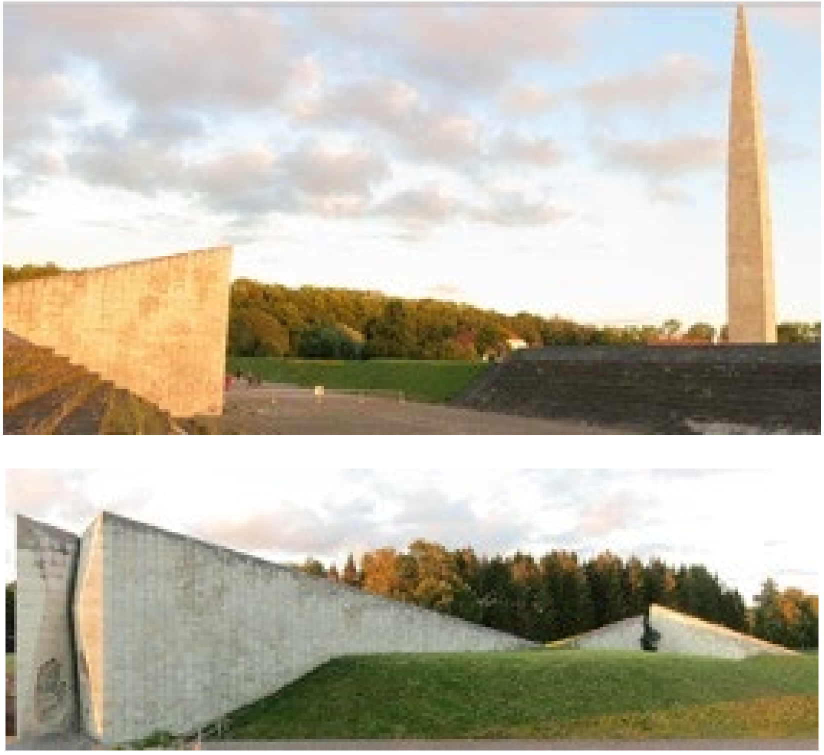

Figure 1: Maarjamäe Memorial (Source: Author, 2020)

Figure 2: Memorial to the Victims of Communism (Source: Author, 2020)

2. Research aim

The focus of this research is to examine the impact that these two Memorials can, and will have, on how members of the public, both within, and outside of Estonia, remember the relevance of the events of Estonia's 20th century. The two Memorials are viewed within the context of how the voice of nostalgia is, or is not, part of the tourism perspectives and experiences of tourists with respective to the Memorials. As will be discussed, there exists a contested Estonian past, particularly the second half of the 20th Century, and the roles that these two Memorials have played as instruments of this past will be presented. This analysis will also focus on the comparison and contrast of the how ethnic Estonian and ethnic Russian populations within Estonia help and hinder the shaping of this past.

The layout of the remainder of the paper is as follows. The background literature looks at the role that Memorials play in the context of nostalgia and remembrance within former Soviet Republic of Estonia, by way of a high-level review of Memorials erected during the Soviet period. An analysis of the controversies relating to memorials erected in Estonia's capital city Tallinn, during the initial period of independence between the World Wars, and their existence during the Soviet period will then be reviewed.

The subsequent section will compare and contrast the two aforementioned Memorials, physically located within a few hundred metres of each other, and the implications to the ongoing tensions between the ethnic Estonian and ethnic Russian populations in Tallinn. The analysis is based upon citations within published, historic texts as well as travel guides and tourism ephemera. The paper then places the role of Memorials within the larger context of how different ethnic groups remember, or wish to be able to remember, conflicting views of history, and the role that Memorials continue to have in contemporary society. The paper concludes with a discussion of Memorials and Nostalgia and the role they play in changing political, social, and economic environments.

3. Nostalgia and Estonia

The extent literature that has researched the role of nostalgia in Estonia has seen a growth in publications since Estonia's return to independence in 1991. Of major events since 1991, the most studied has been the conflict between ethnic Estonians and ethnic Russians during Estonia's period of annexation into the Soviet Union (Jeffries, 2004). An area of conflict and tension that arose was how the ethnic Russian population was to be part of the re-independent Estonia (Küün, 2008). There were issues raised about citizenship as Estonia excluded what they labelled 'Soviet Immigrants'. These were people that moved to Estonia after June 1940, with the vast majority being ethnic Russians. Thus, approximately one third of the population of Estonia in the early 1990s was not automatically granted citizenship (Onken, 2007).

What these events have in common, and how they have an impact on the concept of nostalgia and tourism in Estonia, is that Estonia has taken a path of dealing with the past, but also forgetting it (Järä, 1999). The position taken has been often to ignore these events, and related criticisms, and redirect attention back to Estonia's and Estonians' suffering, that has been misunderstood outside Estonia (Lauristin et al. 1997). The challenge of taking this position with respect to tourism, specifically foreign tourism, is that other countries, particularly in this case Russia, shaping the narrative about Estonia's past if the attractions and memorials do not adequately present multiple perspectives to this past. This also represents a potential issue for Russian tourism to Estonia, as Russians represented the second largest group of tourists to Estonia after the Finns in 2019 (https://www.stat.ee/news-release-2020-016).

4. Memorials in Estonia

The end of World War II represented two different realities in Estonia. In September 1944, Estonia's capital city Tallinn was either; (1) Liberated from fascism and Nazi occupation by the USSR; (2) Was occupied by USSR until 1991. The creation of memorials to Soviet war heroes and key victories of World War II became ubiquitous in the capital cities of each of the Soviet Republics. The so-called Bronze Soldier has received the most attention in terms of Soviet era memorials in Estonia. The Memorial (official name "Monument to the Liberators of Tallinn") was the most celebrated in Estonia, due to its central location in the capital city Tallinn. The site of the memorial was used as a meeting place to highlight Soviet power, commemoration of Red Army victories, and other anniversaries (Kaasik, 2006).

Although created by an ethnic Estonian, and depicting an ethnic Estonian soldier, the statue represented to many Estonians, the forced incorporation of Estonia within the Soviet Union. Unlike the numerous statues of Lenin that were removed within the early years after re-independence, the Bronze Soldier was not relocated from its existing spot to a military cemetery until 2007 (Smith, 2008). The ensuing riots, including deaths, that followed the move, were blamed on supporters and sanctioned agitators from Russia (Kuczynska-Zonik, 2016). The Russian press saw the relocation of the statue as a continuation of official anti-Russian provocations by Estonia's government (Vihalemm & Keller, 2011). The movement of the Bronze Solider was viewed as another overt step to downplay the role that the Soviet Union played in the liberation of Estonia from the Nazis (BBC News, 2007).

In fact, as noted by Bruns and Kangropool (1980), the Bronze soldier commemorated the role played by both the Soviet troops from Leningrad as well as the Estonian Rifle Corps, who although may have consisted of a number of ethnic Estonians, was created to serve the Soviet Union, not Estonia. The fact that the official name of the memorial was changed to "Monument to the Fallen in the Second World War", and not the original intent to memorialize those who fought to free Tallinn, increased ethnic Russian concerns, as the statue became a meeting place of ethnic Russians in Estonia, particularly on dates of personal relevance (i.e. weddings) or collective remembrance (i.e. May 9th, the end of World War II).

For Estonians the Bronze soldier, although intended to commemorate those who died in defeating Nazi Germany, also commemorated the period that saw the Soviet Union reoccupy Estonia (Kõresaar, 2011). Due to the controversies in 2007 a law was passed, the 'Law on Forbidden Structures', which would allow the removal of all statues and memorials in Estonia that depicted Soviet soldiers (Mark, 2008). With the reality of ongoing tensions as to the role of memorials in Estonia, the next section of this research compares and contrasts two exemplars of memorials that have received a great deal of tension, arguably manifested by the aforementioned conflict in remembrance by Estonian and Russian speakers in Estonia.

5. Maarjamäe Memorial

The first memorial was designed, constructed, and dedicated during the Soviet period in Estonia, and continues to exist today. The Maarjamäe Memorial (also known as the Maarjamäe War Memorial) is located on the eastern border of Estonia's capital city Tallinn on the north coast of the country. The official stated purpose of the Maarjamäe Memorial as described on the official "visit estonia" (https://www.visitestonia.com/en/maarjamae-memorial,) website is described as;

> *…the Maarjamäe Memorial (designed by architect A. Murdmaa and sculptor M. Varik) stands on Pirita Road between the Lasnamäe plateau and Tallinn Bay. It was erected to those who had fallen defending the Soviet Union. The memorial is made up of both architectural and landscaping elements. At its centre stands a 35-metre obelisk, but the ensemble also includes the graves of the crews of the Avtroil and Spartak minesweepers, dolomite-lined walls, grass-covered slopes, the pathways between them and a bronze sculpture of a flock of birds.*

The first step in trying to place the Memorial within the context of Estonian nostalgia and tourism was to demonstrate the evolving nature, and branding, of the Maarjamäe Memorial. The goal was to provide additional descriptions of the Memorial, and to examine materials published during the Soviet period. The first, was a tourist souvenir guide sold in Soviet Estonia;

> *…Monument to fighters for the Soviet power in Estonia…Many school leavers (graduates) and newlyweds come here to mark the beginning of a new stage in their lives (Gryaznov, 1982, pg. 32).*

A second example, also a Soviet Estonia tourist guide described the Memorial as;

> *…dedicated to the memory of those who fell in the battles for Soviet power (Kallion, 1979, pg. 61).*

Not surprisingly there was lesser confusion as to the nature and purpose of the Maarjamäe Memorial, from the Soviet or Russian point of view during the Soviet period. In contrast, tourist guides that have been published since Estonia's return to independence have described the Memorial somewhat differently. Thus, to provide greater insight into how the positioning of the Maarjamäe Memorial, in terms of remembrance within Estonia, one of the most popular travel guide publications in Estonia, 'Tallinn in Your Pocket' was reviewed.

The section of the texts relating to the Maarjamäe Memorial were reviewed following the recommendation of Oswald (2007) to help clarify how constructs such as brand identity, brand personality, and associations the brand are communicated in relation to its history and in relation to the current social, political, and cultural environment in Estonia (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2008).

The perspective of the Maarjamäe Memorial often mirrored the conflicting views of the ethnic Estonian and ethnic Russian population in Estonia;

> *…the pointed obelisk…a cement filled park similar in its imposing style to other large complexes created in the USSR in the 1960s and 70s. The spire was put up in 1960 in memory of Russians who died in 1918, while the surrounding inspirational concreate and iron figures were added in 1975 to honour Soviet soldiers killed trying to fend off the Nazis in 1941 (Tallinn in Your Pocket, April/May, 2009, pg. 58).*

The potential politicization of this definition of the Memorial lies in the fact that the description is included in a section labeled "Soviet Tallinn", rather than the more generic "Statues and Monuments" category which was the case a decade later in the same Guide;

> *…The memorial is made up of many parts: the spire, in memory of Russians who died in 1918, the concrete and iron figures honouring Soviet soldiers killed trying to fend off the Nazis in 1941, the graves of the crews of the Avtroil and Spartak minesweepers, grassy slopes and pathways, and a*

> *bronze sculpture of a flock of birds entitled "Perishing Seagulls", a symbol of the two political powers of the time (Tallinn in Your Pocket June/July, 2019, page 26).*

The fact that the Maarjamäe Memorial has suffered from neglect and deterioration since Estonia's return to independence has not been ignored. As noted by Martínez (2018), the Memorial area is viewed as something that is different, or representative of the other. The fact that the majority of the ethnic Russians in Estonias were born in Estonia, results in the further criticism from Russian populations within and outside of Estonia. Martínez (2018) further highlights that this separation of the Memorial as not being representative of an Estonian Memorial, results in a lessening of the site as a place of remembrance and mourning.

6. The Estonian Victims of Communism Memorial

The second memorial of study, the Memorial to The Victims of Communism, officially opened in Tallinn in 2018 (https://www.memoriaal.ee/en/). This Memorial was an addition to a growing number of Memorials in the world that are dedicated to the Victims of Communism. These Memorials are located in both countries that fought against Communism, such as Victims of Communism in Washington, DC (https://www.victimsofcommunism.org/memorial), and those that once were ruled by Communist governments such as the Gloria Victis Memorial in Hungary (http://gloriavictis.hu/en/memorial.html).

There has been controversy as to the purpose of such Memorials particularly by countries that continue to be governed within a Communist system such as China and Vietnam (Nordlinger, 2014). From the first announcement that such a Memorial was to be built in Tallinn, and specifically the chosen location, as it was to be located within approximately 500 meters from the Maarjamäe Memorial (see figure 3), there were protests raised in the Russian press, as there was an ongoing concern that Estonia was continuing to equate Nazism and the Soviet Union (Moscow Times, 2015). The concern for the Maarjamäe Memorial was heightened with the building of the Memorial to the Victims of Communism, as there were voices to tear down the former as the latter was being built (Cavegn, 2018).

Figure 3: Relative location of the Two Memorials (Source: https://www.google.com/maps/)

Due to the recency of the establishment of this Memorial, there existed less published material, but the official website for the Memorial, (https://www.memoriaal.ee/en/) is entitled Estonia's Victims of Communism 1940-1991. The site allows people to search the database of those listed as Victims of Communism. The site is offered in Estonian, English, and Russian, although the search for names can only be made using the Estonian or English spelling of the name. The website states that the intent of the Memorial is to highlight that;

> *…Estonia lost every fifth person of its population of slightly over a million as a consequence of the terror imposed by the occupying regime. A total of over 75,000 people from Estonia were murdered, imprisoned or deported. The Memorial to the victims of communism is dedicated to all of them! (https://www.memoriaal.ee/en/)*

The inclusion of the word 'Victims' in the name of the Memorial stoked controversy. The Memorial states that the Memorial remembers "those who perished, who were extrajudicially repressed or groundlessly convicted by the Soviet Union's occupying regime and were released, and also persons who were subject to deportation but whom the occupation authorities did not succeed in deporting." (https://www.memoriaal.ee/en/)

The use of the term "groundlessly convicted by the Soviet Union" implies that supporting Nazi troops could be considered "groundless", an anathema to many in Russia, while to ethnic Estonians, there was never a case of fighting with the Germans in World War II but rather the fight was against Communism (Feest, 2007). Estonian authorities contest the concerns that the Memorial is anti-Russian, in that although the site does not overtly state that the Memorial is solely focused on ethnic Estonians, a search of the database includes dozens of ethnic Russian names. The reality is that the ethnic Russian names included in the Memorial classified as victims, were considered victims because they cooperated with the Germans, or served in the German army. This furthered ethnic Russian issues that Estonia has never truly acknowledged its role in World War II (Melchior & Visser, 2011).

In terms of how the Memorial to the Victims of Communism has been described in tourist guides and books, the first inclusion in the aforementioned Tallinn In Your Pocket, was in November 2018, which had a picture of the Memorial on the cover, and states;

> *… newly-opened striking memorial is dedicated to all Estonian people who suffered under the terror inflicted by the Soviet Union. There are two parts to the memorial - 'Journey' and 'Home Garden'. 'Journey' consists of name plaques of all the victims. Apple trees and honeybees are the symbols of the 'Home Garden', marking a place for the victims yet to be identified. Estonia was occupied by the Soviet Union from June 17, 1940 to August 20, 1991. More than 75,000 Estonians were murdered, imprisoned or deported over this period. Estonia lost one of every five persons from its population of slightly over one million. (Tallinn In Your Pocket, October-November 2018, pg. 32).*

The June-July 2019 edition included the same description under a "Statues and Monuments" section, while beginning with the Winter 19/20 edition there was no longer a "Statues and Monuments" section, just the larger "Sightseeing" category. A major change occurred with the Summer 2020 edition (pg. 25), as the same description for the Memorial to the Victims of Communism again appears, but the Maarjamäe Memorial was no longer included in the guide.

7. Memorial comparisons

As reviewed, both of the Memorials had a stated purpose. Beginning with the plan, approval, creation, and commemoration events that have occurred at the Memorial to The Victims of Communism the two Memorials have been conflated within the ethnic Estonian, ethnic Russia tensions within Estonia. The fact that funds were made available to create the new memorial while the condition of the Maarjamäe Memorial continued to deteriorate, was viewed in the Russian press, as revisiting the issue of the aforementioned Bronze Soldier as Estonia further silencing the role played by the Soviet Union/Russia in the liberation of Estonia and the defeat of Nazi Germany (Melchior & Visser, 2011).

From the planning of the Maarjamäe Memorial in 1960, to the opening of the Memorial to the Victims of Communism in 2018, the meaning and purpose of the former has changed. As the Maarjamäe Memorial has been allowed to decay, while the Memorial to the Victims of Communism has become the site of remembrance for a number of Estonian anniversaries such as Independence Day in February, commemoration of deportations in June, as well as an annual ceremony as more names are added to the memorial wall, further lessens the potential for the Maarjamäe Memorial being part of those ceremonies, even though, as noted, the two Memorials are in sight of each other.

The concerns that have been raised in the Estonian ethnic Russia press, as well as the press from Russia specifically, are that the meaning, and intent, of the Maarjamäe Memorial has been allowed to change, and literally decay. These views were countered in the Estonian press as since there had been changes in the social order from the former Soviet period, that memorials and monuments should reflect that change.

8. Discussion and future study

As noted by Walder (2014), the continued attempts by both individuals and groups to redefine the history and identities of their countries, within the guise of nostalgia, is often predicated on the removal of unpleasant occurrences of the past. As reviewed, there is little evidence to suppress the existence of atrocities and violence inflicted upon the people of Estonia during Soviet period. There is also a potential concern with the creation of single perspective memorials such as the Victims of Communism Memorial, and the concurrent limitation, or destruction of, those memorials that commemorate any Soviet/Russian role in the preservation of Estonian culture, or support provided to Nazi Germany during World War II. Furthermore, the existence of a large ethnic minority within a country such as the Russian population in Estonia, who have a differing view of the past, or the importance of memorials to their culture, may have an impact on the overall country identity to tourists outside of these groups.

Kattago (2008) stated that both social and political celebrations related to those that have died for a cause can change over time. The result is that memorial messages will also change from their intended purpose. With respect to nostalgia, and tourism, what does the fact that the Memorial to the Victims of Communism seems to solely focus on the remembrance and commemoration of Estonians within a country with a third of the population of ethnic Russians. The fact that the Maarjamäe Memorial continues to be listed as a site to be visited, in the major Estonian tourism guides and websites, particularly within the category of "Communist Estonia" highlights that outward nature of tourism marketing, indirectly voicing the need to maintain this Memorial.

Nostalgia, as an influence upon how visitors interpret a country and its people, through the existence of the two Estonian Memorials reviewed, highlights a continued area for study. To what degree does the influence of the official view of the past have on the creation of new memorials and the maintenance or neglect of existing memorials? What is the impact upon placing memorials with such conflicting positions on the past within such proximate distance of one another? What are the long-term consequences upon tourism, in this case visitors from Russian speaking countries, and what will be the future impact of such memorials in the preservation of certain ethnic groups to the exclusion of different ethnic groups?

Although this research examined only one geographic location, and two examples of commemorative structures or edifices, based on a limited range of tourism related materials, it none the less provides some insight into the role of brand identity, and brand management, from a longitudinal perspective. The research also helps to advance the call for additional research methodologies in terms of better understanding of linkages between Nostalgia and Tourism as represented by longitudinal studies of how memorials, monuments, and other historical remnants can be utilized, or exploited, beyond the original intent of their creation. As monuments and memorials can be intertwined with public memory, an increased challenge is how they are used when there are multiple memories and multiple, in this case, ethnic groups use them to support or suppress differing views.

It is suggested that there remains value in future studies that compare and contrast the findings of this form of research with other countries that have similar large ethnic minorities, such as Ukraine, Latvia, and Georgia. A continued examination of how their respective tourism sectors have benefited from, or been hindered by, the existence of such conflicting forms of remembrance, would be of interest.

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Shaping the new Normal: Portuguese Hotel and Event Managers' Reactions to COVID-19

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Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic has created a worldwide crisis, which has had an impact on all economic sectors, having transformed social and consumption patterns. This crisis has been particularly difficult for the tourism industry, with uncertainty and the emergence of new consumer profiles and demands prompting swift reactions from policymakers and stakeholders. Focussing on two sub-sectors of the Portuguese tourism industry – hospitality and events – this paper aims to identify the most relevant concerns and Crisis Management Strategies adopted in each of these sectors in the early stages of the pandemic, putting forward a multi-layered analysis, juxtaposing the different challenges faced by managers and how they were approached. Based on previous studies and on 14 semi-structured interviews with hotel and event managers, the authors adopted an exploratory qualitative approach as to record and categorize the interviewees' perceptions, having established the transversal importance of resilience, flexibility, and technology for each sector's recovery. Moreover, taking into account the singularity of each setting, the authors were also able to identify more specific sectorial categories, which have had an effect on both the decision-making and future outlooks for both the hospitality and events industries. Overall, despite being hopeful, hotel and event managers anticipate different recovery challenges, with the first highlighting the importance of soft skills, and the latter emphasizing the need to regain the public's confidence, at the same time they will have to rethink their offer as to better address current needs and concerns.

Keywords: COVID-19, crisis management, events, hospitality, operations

1. Introduction

Described as unprecedented and severe, particularly given its "intensity, geographical scope, duration and degree of uncertainty" (Hidalgo *et al.*, 2022, p. 1), the COVID-19 pandemic has had overwhelming global effects, having been particularly detrimental to the tourism industry.

Considered to be "one of the main sectors of the economy to experience the damaging consequences of a disruptive event"(Aldao *et al.*, 2021, p. 930), the tourism industry has traditionally been very vulnerable to crises and disasters, ranging from health and environmental calamities to political instability and terrorist attacks (Aldao *et al.*, 2021; Berbekova, Uysal and Assaf, 2021). However, the structural complexity of the industry and its different subsectors, as well as the interconnectedness with different areas and players, make it "extremely difficult to monitor all possible interactions among variables and to design forecast models" (Aldao *et al.*, 2021, p. 930) that can help assess and rationalise the full extent of impacts and assist with both crisis management and recovery.

In line with current research highlighting the need for more studies on the effects of the pandemic in tourism "at both a micro and macro level" (Zopiatis, Pericleous and Theofanous, 2021, p. 275), this paper aims to reflect on current Portuguese hotels and event companies' state of the art by analysing and categorizing managers' initial concerns towards the pandemic, as to determine its main impacts, as well as their outlook on recovery and future prospects. Based on interviews, the paper relies on a purposive sample and content analysis to provide an inside perspective, that, on the one hand, establishes transversal concerns and strategies that can better inform managerial practices, and, on the other hand, reflects on more specific, sector-based repercussions, and how these might become catalysts for future transformation and interaction with guests/audiences.

Following a brief background section, authors will put forward a comprehensive analysis of the interviews carried out in which they will categorize Portuguese hotel and event managers' initial concerns and responses, as well as their future expectations. In addition to finding common ground, this analysis will establish significant differences between the two analysed subsectors, particularly given their specific scope and the enforced restrictions and support.

2. COVID-19 in the Portuguese hospitality and events subsectors

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought tourism services to a halt, having "caused financial and economic predicaments attributed to internal lockdowns and border closures."(Torres, Ridderstaat and Wei, 2021, p. 89). In addition to health concerns and government imposed social distancing and confinement (with a direct impact on international mobility), with regards to tourism, the pandemic has resulted in a steep decline of market demand, having dramatically disrupted hospitality and tourism and events.

2.1 Hospitality

Previous studies focusing on crisis management and the effects of pandemic outbreaks in hospitality have identified key emerging dimensions within this scope, most particularly: 1) Operations – referring to managerial changes, decision-making, costs, and overall organizational structure (Kukanja, Planinc and Sikošek, 2020; Lai and Wong, 2020; Le and Phi, 2021); 2) Marketing – with public awareness, safety and customer loyalty being the main focus (Chan, Gao and McGinley, 2021); 3) Human Resources – focussing on staff retention, turnover and motivation (Kukanja, Planinc and Sikošek, 2020; Lai and Wong, 2020); and 4) Health and Safety Procedures – both for teams/staff and for guests (Lai and Wong, 2020; Le and Phi, 2021). Concerns with Customer Relationship Management (CRM), and governmental assistance, though less evident in the literature, were also considered relevant by some researchers (Kukanja, Planinc and Sikošek, 2020; Lai and Wong, 2020; Silva *et al.*, 2021).

As the pandemic progressed, there was, however, a slight shift towards more specific issues, with certification (Chan, Gao and McGinley, 2021), CRM and technology (Sigala, 2020) becoming more expressive. Regarding the latter, the introduction of digital solutions, particularly self-service technology, mobile apps, artificial intelligence and robots (Kim *et al.*, 2021; Liu and Yang, 2021) was perceived as increasingly relevant. Ongoing research also draws attention to the transformational potential of the ongoing crisis, particularly when it comes to reshaping the servicescape and the increasingly importance of sustainable tourism (Sigala, 2020; Palacios-Florencio *et al.*, 2021; Zopiatis, Pericleous and Theofanous, 2021).

2.2 Events

Regarding the events industry, the available literature highlights the devastating effects of the pandemic within this scope (Farmaki *et al.*, 2020; Aldao *et al.*, 2021; Palrão, Rodrigues and Estêvão, 2021), with authors such as Canhoto and Wei (2021, p. 9) going insofar as describing it as "an existential crisis, with cancelations and huge uncertainty".

Drawing from previous crises and official reports pertaining to event cancellations, successive postponements and governmental support aimed specifically at the events and entertainment industries, as well as the nature of the pandemic itself (i.e., the need to limit social gatherings and contacts), the most immediate concerns identified in the literature were related to: 1) Operations – mostly associated with decision-making and the need to cancel or postpone events; 2) Financial viability – as mass cancelations became the norm, having resulted in a long-term economic crisis that effected companies' cashflow (Madray, 2020; Sigala, 2020; Palrão, Rodrigues and Estêvão, 2021); and 3) Human Resources – with most companies being forced to reduce workforces and cancel contracts with outside workers (Madray, 2020; Drewes, Daumann and Follert, 2021). Moreover, as different rules and restrictions were being recurrently adjusted, health and safety and technology also became prominent dimensions. The first mostly due to the gradual shift to online settings (Palrão, Rodrigues and Estêvão, 2021), and the latter given the need to comply with sanitation and social distancing rules (i.e. limiting audiences, equipping rooms with hand-sanitizer dispensers and enforcing the use of face masks) (Drewes, Daumann and Follert, 2021; Khorasani, 2021).

Nevertheless, despite these findings, this subsectors' interdependence with other sectors, makes it hard to effectively establish the effects of the crisis, particularly at a local level. The available studies focus mostly on mass and sports events, making it necessary to further develop studies focusing on other types of events. On the other hand, in addition to the expected repercussions, this subsector is currently undergoing a transformation prompted not only by the crisis and the shift towards digital and hybrid events, but also in what concerns consumer demands. Behaviours and consumption patterns have changed, as people feel less comfortable in attending gatherings (Palrão, Rodrigues and Estêvão, 2021). As a result, more and more companies are currently rethinking their business models and offerings, in order to better meet public demands, particularly when it comes to the use of technology, and the development of creative and meaningful experiences.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data collection and analysis

The present study adopted a qualitative-based research approach with data being collected through 14 semi-structured interviews, conducted via Zoom.

The interviews were conducted in May 2021, with 6 event managers and, in December 2020 with 8 hotel directors (Table 1) and lasted an average of 40 minutes. The interviewees were selected based on convenience sampling methods (Robinson, 2014) trying to ensure the representation of different types of events (social, cultural, corporate), markets (international/national, regional/local), and in the case of hotels, geographical location (urban/city, countryside) and business model (independent, national hotel group, international chain).

Table 1: Participant's profile

Interviewee	Type of Events/ Type of Hotel	Business Market/ Business Model
I1	Social	National/International
I2	Corporate	National/International
I3	Cultural	Local/regional
I4	Cultural	Local/regional
I5	Corporate	National/International
I6	Social	Local/regional
I7	Urban/city	National Hotel Group
I8	Urban/city	National Hotel Group
I9	Countryside	National Hotel Group
I10	Countryside	Independent
I11	Countryside	Independent
I12	Urban/city	Independent
I13	Countryside	National Hotel Group
I14	Urban/city	International Chain

The interview scripts were based on the literature review, and despite having a common structure, were adapted to each of the subsectors analysed. All interviewees were asked about their perceptions and main concerns at an early stage of the pandemic, the strategies adopted to face the challenges that arose, and the perspectives for the future/recovery.

The data collected were analysed using WebQDA, a collaborative qualitative analysis software, which facilitates the organisation of data and the creation of relational maps crosscutting different categories and keywords (Souza, Costa and Moreira, 2010). In addition to giving the researchers full and flexible control over the analysis, the software was considered appropriate given its increasing use in qualitative studies in tourism (Costa *et al.*, 2017; Silva *et al.*, 2021).

Initially, the data from each subsector were analysed separately, according to pre-defined dimensions (stemming from the literature review), having then been crosscut as to identify new categories and subcategories (emerging from the retrieved data). Drawing from this segmented analysis, in this paper, the authors revisit these categories as to further refine the analysis and identify which concerns and strategies were shared by both sub-sectors, and which reflect a more specific and sectorial perspective (Table 2).

Table 2: Analysed categories and subcategories by subsector

CATEGORIES	SUBCATEGORIES	
	EVENTS	HOSPITALITY
Crisis Management/ Response	Health & Safety	
	Operations	
	Marketing & Sales	
	Human Resources	
	CRM – Customer Relationship Management	
	Decision-making	
	Sustainability	
	Community Involvement	
	Participants' Experience	
	Corporation & Stakeholders' Engagement	
Recovery/ Future	Events Recovery	Future/ Recovery
	Events Typology	
	Events Sustainability	
	Stakeholder Cooperation	
	Habits/Behaviours	

The results will be presented by category of analysis, highlighting both the convergent and divergent effects of COVID-19 on the two subsectors and reflecting on the common challenges faced by managers, as well as specific, context-based issues and how they were perceived.

4. Findings

Regarding shared concerns, both subsectors highlighted the importance of CRM, particularly considering the implications resulting from the partial or total reduction of service provision, i.e., managing/cancelling service reservations, refunds and ensuring future earnings and revenue.

As for the management of commercial relationships, the interviewees from both sectors alluded to a new way of looking at business and the relationship with their clients, considering that the previously established paradigms had changed, as corroborated by the following statements: "We started to have cancellations and [because] the hotel had a rather rigid cancellation policy, we realized we would have to adapt. We would have to do something, because this was not being well received by the customer" (I7); "There were some difficult cases we had to deal with, but, in general, we managed to retain all the customers" (I1).

Another shared initial concern was Human Resources, particularly when it came to safeguarding jobs and salaries, as well as maintaining team cohesion when working from home. In order to address these issues, companies resorted to state funding and relief programs, particularly lay-offs and furloughs, as evidenced in the interviews: "Our priority were Human Resources, what could we do [to support workers]. Because if we closed, there would be legal issues arising; closing down implies the suspension of labour contracts." (I1); "[Our priority was] maintaining jobs, of course!" (I10); "It is very important that we take care of our own, not only of those outside the company [e.g., suppliers; clients]." (I14).

Adding to these dimensions and stemming from these concerns, several changes were implemented at both organizational and operational levels. These changes had a significant impact on procedures, which, on the one hand, must comply with sanitary standards and, concomitantly, inspire confidence in all stakeholders. Initially, the need to comply with sanitation and safety standards was a challenge for managers, who had to implement all the necessary measures and act with caution – "What we did was implement and interpret what was defined by law and adjust [that] whenever necessary" (I1); "We set some rooms aside, disinfected them, and continued to disinfect everything, including the drapes" (I13). However, these procedures varied and were contingent to the type of organization and their specific context, as is the case of the hotel manager who stated: "We are part of an American hotel chain, so our safety procedures and our culture are very linked to hygiene and safety in the workplace. Our culture already covered 90% of the measures." (I14). An event manager, however, considered there was an exaggerated interpretation of the risks, arguing that: "We live, in fact, under fear, which, in many cases, is not justified. I mean, viruses have always existed, and we will have to continue to live with them" (I2).

Managers from both subsectors also allude to the decision-making subcategory, considering it to be a key skill, not only because of the conjecture itself, but also due to specific, context-based structural reasons. This category is also highlighted by the interviewees when they make references to operational issues, the underlying day-to-day uncertainty and the need to constantly adapt procedures, as to comply with new legal requirements and mandates. As mentioned by hotel managers: “We had to relearn how to work, because we could not anticipate reactions” (I7); “We had to keep trying, making experiments, testing different solutions and products in different segments. If something didn’t work, well... too bad. We had to think of something else.” (I11). As a result, flexibility became a key asset, having made procedures more agile – “You need to be attentive and change at a moment’s notice, that is, something that would traditionally take two days to change, would have to be changed immediately” (I13); “We don’t have long or medium-term data, so we are working on a 15-day management basis, in which we implement different procedures as we go.” (I14).

Uncertainty and unpredictability have become staples of hospitality and events amidst the pandemic. As a result, flexible products and activities have become the norm in both subsectors. However, according to the interviewed managers, this need to be flexible partially stemmed from the ambiguity of official policies, which were often contradictory – “There were differences between what was being announced publicly and the decrees being issued. It was very confusing. Then, the information issued by the Directorate-General of Health was also ambiguous and open to different interpretations.” (I1); “In these situations, you need to take immediate decisions, there’s no room for hesitation.” (I2). The legal limitations brough about by sanitary regulations and the ensuing restrictions, also gave rise to a feeling of inequity, particularly in the events subsector. As highlighted by a corporate events manager: “There isn’t much of a difference between going to a play or attending a conference in an auditorium. So, there is a certain feeling of injustice. Why can they still hold their events, while we must remain confined?” (I5).

In sum, operations of the two subsectors were highly influenced by the new procedures and legal requirements, with the use of protective gear emerging as a necessity and making its way into both hotel and event spaces. Furthermore, enforcing social and physical distancing was also vital, which resulted in the introduction of phased services as to avoid large gatherings of people. The uncertainty and the development of the pandemic also resulted in different operational rhythms and periods of inactivity for hotels and longer periods for the events sector. This situation has enhanced the role played by flexibility and adaptability, as these have become the basis for a new paradigm of organizational management and customer service.

Within the scope of these subsectors and the shift currently taking place, technology emerges as a resource that can help solve problems and enhance service, both by supporting activities and promoting innovation. In terms of support, one of the interviewed event managers mentions the fact that "It was not usual to work remotely." (I5). In a way, the pandemic gave rise to new outlooks and new ways of using technology, something that is perceived as a "great advantage [particularly] in terms of organization, because we found new, easier, and more agile ways of monitoring projects; we started doing it with immense ease and we were able to monitor ten projects in one day, which would have been impossible to do in person." (I3). In fact, technology was an option from the onset, particularly for event managers: "The first question was basically to check what solutions there were to change a face-to-face event into a virtual event." (I2). In fact, event managers consider that "the major transition was the migration to the online format" (I4), with technology proving to be an important means to "maintain team cohesion, reorganizing work, in virtual and digital terms, i.e., to keep the whole team working and to follow up projects." (I2).

These new methods and procedures have not, however, taken away the concerns regarding organizational sustainability, particularly when it comes to economic viability. This was a primary concern, of which managers from both subsectors were very much aware from the start. According to one of the hotel managers "there is the possibility that we may not break even and balance the books (…) in 2022, yes (…) but this year, if we can just break even, great. If we can't, it's very worrying, because it will be the second year of heavy losses.” (I8). Besides the economic aspect, there is also some apprehension regarding the human resources that, in the meantime, have moved on to other activities – "The sector is going to resume its activities in the same way, all the people who are linked to events are going to be there; however, a lot of people who have since moved on to other sectors and activities, might come back or not. Some are looking forward to it, but others are not willing to return. Everyone is a little apprehensive about what is going to happen" (I1); "I believe that workers will not be willing to rely solely on one source of income, i.e., those working in the wedding business, for example, have put down roots in other markets, working with different targets, and they are going to keep that source of income and invest in it. I don't believe, at least not one hundred percent, that everyone will return to work exclusively in weddings.” (I6).

On the other hand, the health constraints imposed by the pandemic are also changing the habits of both providers and audiences, bringing about new challenges: "It's not very easy to get the public to come back to the venues. People are a little afraid, habits have been lost and the fact that we have to change showtimes doesn't make it any easier." (I4). For hotel managers, the recovery will be felt "as soon as customers have the confidence to travel again.” (I7), an idea that is shared by an event manager that stated: "while there is no freedom of movement (…) and accessibility, [it] will take a long time. Those of us working in the segment of corporate events and incentive travel will only see some light at the end of the tunnel in 2022 or 2023." (I2). The rates of vaccination against COVID19 are also perceived as important for the recovery of these sectors, not only for customers in the domestic market, but also for the foreign market – "I think all of this will only change then. From the moment the client has the confidence to travel again.” (I7); "We have already noticed the effect of the announcement the vaccination process in the United Kingdom; we have already registered an increase in reservations.” (I9).

In the events sector, recovery, albeit at a slower pace, is expected to be more disruptive, since "it is an area in which technology will play a pivotal role, as part of the investment that was made in the organization of face-to-face events will necessarily be transferred to a new digital world; there will be a transfer from face-to-face events to hybrid and virtual settings" (I2). It is expected that this change will be more apparent in the corporate events sectors. As put by a representative of this particular segment: "I believe that virtual events will become more expressive than they were to date. (…) That's why we, for example, have a solution consisting of an online platform where we can have sessions, exhibitions and develop networking actions." (I5).

Regarding the future, as stated by I2: "We have to be able to live and face these situations, with the help of science and technology; in fact, the world has changed, it will change, but there are lots of events that can be held in hybrid or online formats. Then there are obviously many events that can continue to be held face-to-face, because there are things that will never replace the face-to-face experience, it is impossible!”. As far as face-to-face events are concerned, the interviewees consider that "there will be a need to host smaller events, but in a larger number" (I3); as well as "to reduce the number of participants, with fewer events taking place within the meetings industry" (I2). In sum, drawing from the data, and as illustrated in Table 3, according to the perceptions of managers, even though most concerns are shared by the two subsectors, the strategies implemented vary slightly according to the specificities of each sector.

Table 3: Analysed categories and subcategories by subsector

<table>
<tr><th>Sub-sector
Dimension</th><th>HOSPITALITY</th><th>EVENTS</th></tr>
<tr><td>CRM
Customer Relationship Management</td><td colspan="2">• Importance of CRM
• New ways of looking at business</td></tr>
<tr><td>HR
Human Resources</td><td colspan="2">• Major concern
• Importance of state funding and relief programs</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Operations</td><td colspan="2">• Introduction of several changes, with significant impact on procedures (e.g., health & safety)
• Adaptations varied according to the type of organization and specific context</td></tr>
<tr><td>• Lower inactivity periods</td><td>• Higher inactivity periods</td></tr>
<tr><td>Decision-Making</td><td colspan="2">• Impact of uncertainty and unpredictability
• Flexibility and adaptability recognised as key assets</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Technology</td><td colspan="2">• Pivotal role of technology</td></tr>
<tr><td>• Technology as a facilitating tool</td><td>• Technology as trigger for service and business models innovation/ change</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Future Perspetives</td><td colspan="2">• Different paces of recovery, according to organization type and market
• Mild expectations about the future
• Emergence of new challenges (due to habits change)</td></tr>
<tr><td>• Mostly dependent on customer confidence upturn</td><td>• Expected to be more disruptive
• Variations according to events typology</td></tr>
</table>

In this context, the different periods of inactivity experienced by the two sectors had a significant impact on the strategies and perceptions of managers, who also anticipate different paces of recovery and challenges for the future. In both sectors there is a clear concern with the human component, whether related to human resources, customers, or business partners. In the hospitality sector, technology essentially facilitated the initial response, whereas in the events sector, it played a more pivotal role, having induced significant changes in the business models and services provided, with managers foreseeing a relative continuity in hybrid event models.

5. Conclusion

Drawing from the main research findings it can be concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic and its immediate repercussions have generated a great deal of concern, having left indelible marks on the analysed subsectors, particularly when it comes to the operations and decision-making dimensions.

Even though managers are moderately confident about recovery, anticipating medium-term positive results, they also consider that this recovery is contingent on society in general feeling confident enough to travel and being able to experience different services. On the other hand, at the time of the interviews, vaccination rates were steadily rising, which is also perceived by managers as an indicator that people are committed to resuming their lives, which will include travelling and attending events.

The experience of managing operations in a pandemic has also prompted new paradigms in both sectors. In line with what is argued by Lai and Wong (2020) and Le and Phi (2021), sanitation and cleanliness will continue to be key, with managers highlighting the importance of complying with the mandated health and safety procedures, even when they are faced with ambiguous information.

In addition to operations, and in accordance with the studies of Kukanja et al. (2020), Lai and Wong (2020), and Le and Phi (2021), the uncertainty that characterized this period has also prompted concerns with human resource management, with interviewees alluding to governmental support and layoffs as instrumental measures in assuring economic sustainability. After safeguarding jobs and overall income, managers were able to focus their actions on motivating and training teams, as to ensure they were equipped to deal with ongoing challenges and procedures (as suggested by Drewes et al., 2021, Kukanja et al., 2020, Lai and Wong, 2020, and Madray, 2020). Nevertheless, both groups are apprehensive regarding the number of available workers and their willingness to return to both subsectors.

The findings also complement the work of Chan et al. (2021), Kukanja et al. (2020), Lai and Wong (2020); and Silva et al. (2021), in that managers from both subsectors transversally underlined the importance of CRM when reacting to a crisis. These concerns have prompted a change in paradigm when it comes personal relationships, and people's ability to adapt, particularly given the market's volatility, with constantly changing needs and demands. In addition to flexibility, adaptability and resilience from both managers and staff (whose importance is supported by the work of Zopiatis et al. (2021), technology was also key, particularly to support operational and managerial procedures (in line with the conclusions put forward by Sigala (2020)).

In fact, besides helping keep bonds within teams, technology also acted as a facilitator in stakeholder and customer interaction and is expected to play an increasingly important role in the future, particularly when it comes to cultural and corporate events and overall servicescape. In the events subsector technology has emerged as an important resource in facilitating problem-solving and innovation, with the pandemic having resulted in hybrid and online events being increasingly perceived as new event typologies.

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Understanding the Concept of Industrial Tourism: A Systematic Review of the Literature

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Abstract: Industrial Tourism can be seen as a type of tourism that includes visits to industrial sites of the present, past or future, therefore including sites that are no longer active in their industrial function, industrial companies currently in operation, sites of future industrial facilities and places whose theme is related to industry (namely industrial technology centers, museums, industrial tourist routes, schools, and industrial laboratories). Thus, Industrial Tourism can include all kinds of tourist activities whose main reason for the visit is related to industrial knowledge, material and/or immaterial heritage. However, there is still a lack of conceptual clariry in the literature that may preclude the affirmation of this research topic that has received a reduced, but increasing, attention from the tourism studies community. The paper aims to contribut to a better understanding of the concept of Industrial Tourism and how it has evolved over time. For that it performs a systematic literature review considering 86 papers published in journals indexed in the two major bibliographic bases - Scopus and Web of Science, between 1996 and 2021. The analysis shows the heterogeneity of definition and approachs to this type of tourism. It also identifies two main approaches to the study of Industrial Tourism. The first sees the tourism phenomenon through the use of elements from the industrial past; The second, adresses it through the visit to active industries, which will allow tourists to experience firsthand the production processes of the products they consume.

Keywords: industrial tourism, concept, literature review, active industry, industrial heritage

1. Introduction

Industrial Tourism is based on the tourist exploitation of industrial heritage (Abad, 2017), and can take place in deactivated productive units (e.g., company museums) or in working productive units, which become educational and tourist attractions due to their specificity (Moral-Moral & Fernandez-Alles, 2019). Studies on industrial tourism are still quite scarce, alghouth growing slowly, and usually focus on the first type of industrial tourism (deactivated productive units). The last type of industrial tourism has been relatively underexlored, and analyses that adopt the perspective of the industrial company that is opening its doors to visitors are particularly scarce (Montenegro, 2020, Montenegro & Sousa, 2021).

In order to better understand the phenonmenon and its impacts it is of utmost importance to clarify the concept of Industrial Tourism. In fact, the existing studies have been adopting different concepts and approaches. This conceptual blurness can hinder the development of empirical research on the topic and make it difficult to compare results achieved in different contexts.

This paper aims to contribute to the scarce literature on industrial tourism in operating production units, by analising the evolution of the concept over time and unvailing the different perspectives present in the literature. Therefore, it maps the literature on Industrial Tourism, analyzing the evolution of the concept of Industrial Tourism and the type of studies that have been developed. The article uses a Systematic Literature Review methodology. The literature was collected from the two main bibliometric databases: "Web of Sience" and "Scopus". Eighty-six articles were identified, covering a 25-year period of research. The analysis includes: i) bibliometrics to allow a description of the studies in terms of their publication date, authors, and number of citations, ii) content analysis to identify the definitions and methodological approaches used by the authors and to classify the papers according to their objectives and main conclusions.

2. Methodology

The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is a specific methodology to locate studies already conducted in a given area of knowledge, select and assess contributions, analyze and synthesize data, ending with an evidence report that allows drawing reasonably clear conclusions about what is known and what is not known about a given topic or area of knowledge (Denyer & Tranfield, 2009). Through the literature review on the concept of Industrial Tourism, the evolution of the various definitions of Industrial Tourism, presented over the years, is explored.

Performing an SLR, in the theme addressed in this paper, is particularly challenging, given the fragmented nature of the area. We chose to follow the model proposed by Denyer and Tranfield (2009) that considers that SLR includes five essential steps for its elaboration in the business sciences:

- 1. formulation of the research question
- 2. location of the studies to be included
- 3. selection and evaluation of the selected studies
- 4. analysis and synthesis of the selected information
- 5. describe and use the results obtained in the previous steps.

The research question that guided the SLR is: what is Industrial Tourism about? What activities does it include?

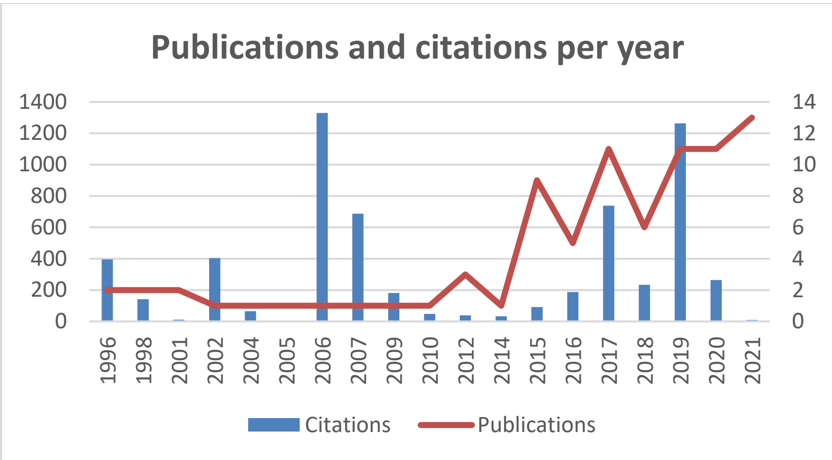
Regarding the location of the studies to be included, this study conducts a literature search on the two scientific databases frequently used in academia: "Scopus" and "Web of Science". The search was conducted on December 6, 2021.

The selection of the studies was conducted using keywords and Boolean operators in the following search query: “industrial tourism" OR "industrial heritage tourism" OR "factory tourism". The results were filtered by: i) the type of publication, retaining only journal papers, ii) the research field, retainig only journals in the field of "Social Sciences / Business, Management and Accounting, Economics, Econometrics and Finance", and iii) the language, retainig only paper written in English, Spanish or Portuguese. This procedure has enabled to identify 86 articles published between 1996 and 2021, that were analysed. The list of articles analyzed (Appendix 1) represents the catalog of studies considered most relevant to the theme, according to the defined search criteria. The analysis was performed in two steps. The first step intends to briefly map the literature, resorting to bibliometrics. The second step performs a content analysis of the 86 papers, based on their in-depth reading. The content analysis was perfomed manualy, considering the definition of industrial tourism proposed / used by the author(s) in each study. The content analysis enables to map the conceptual diversity and to organize the papers in terms of common definitions and perspectives.

3. Results

3.1 Bibliometrics

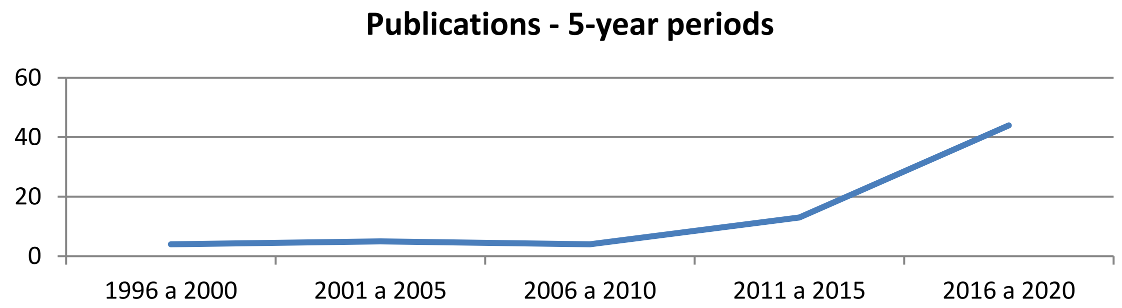
The articles selected for this analysis were published between 1996 and 2021 (25 years). Figure 1 shows the number of articles published by year, reflecting the increasing trend over the years. Although there was a first publication in 1996, in the following decade there was a reduced number of publications. The interest in this theme began to be more noticeable from 2015 onward, with the year with the most publications being 2021. However, 2006 is the year with the higher number of citations, even though only one article was published in this year.



Source: Authors’ own elaboration

Figure 1: Distribution of publications and citations by year

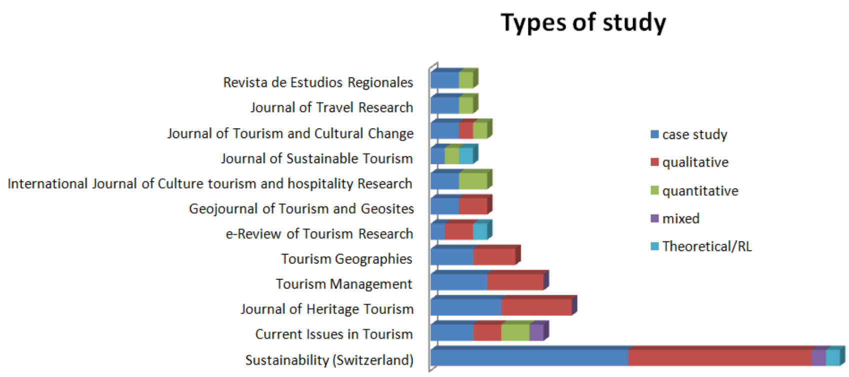
The growing interest of researchers is also demonstrated by the constant evolution of the number of publications over the last decade (Figure 2). The year 2021 has 13 publications, which strengthens the idea of a growth of publications on this theme in the coming years.



Source: Authors' own elaboration

Figure 2: Distribution of publications by 5-year periods

The analyzed articles are published in 49 different journals. Figure 3 shows the journals with more papers, considering also the type of studies that were published.



Source: Authors' own elaboration

Figure 3: Journals and type of studies

In general, the selected articles are spread over journals from different areas, Tourism and Hospitality, Culture, Regional Studies, Economics and Management, Law, Geography, Archeology, Marketing, and Social Sciences, which shows the rather fragmented nature of this theme.

3.2 Defining the concept of Industrial Tourism

This section presents the results of the content analysis considering the definitions of Industrial Tourims provided in the literature.

One of the most widespread definitions of industrial tourism, cited in several papers, is that given by Edwards and Llurdés in 1996, who stated that industrial tourism is "the development of tourism activities and industries in human-made sites, buildings, and landscapes that originate from industrial processes of times past" (Edwards & Llurdés, 1996).

However, according to a literature study performed in Rodriguez-Zulaica (2017), more recent studies define Industrial Tourism as any tourism activity developed in industrial sites and buildings, active or of our past, provided that its main activity is not or has not been tourism. This second, more updated definition is in line with the current commercial reality of Industrial Tourism. It is reflected in the definition provided in several studies, presented by Rodriguez-Zulaica (2017), namely:

> *- Industrial Tourism "consists in visits to deactivated industrial sites, to industrial complexes in operation, and in the implementation of specific industrial routes that complement other traditional historical-artistic routes (Presa, 2004),*

- "Industrial Tourism, understood as a form of cultural tourism, has as its main objective the dissemination of industrial heritage - old and new - that is closely linked to technology and work and that represents one of the features that have most characterized our way of being, our history and our culture" (Diputació de Barcelona, 2009),

- "set of tourist practices whose motivations for travel involve the discovery of the "world of work", past, present or future, that is, the set of places, techniques, organizations and cultures linked to work" (Álvarez, 2007).

This broad definition of industrial tourism leads to its association to other types of tourism, (Ionica et al., 2020). This is the case of *farm tourism* (Veeck et al., 2010), *farm stays* (Shinners, Lewis, & Parker, 2019), *working exhibitions*, *workplace tourism*, *factory tourism*, *sideline tourism* (Ionica et al., 2020), and *wine tourism* (Salvado, 2016). Although these other types of tourism can be related and can integrate the concept of industrial tourism, it is important to affirm industrial tourism as a more specific concept. For example, in the case of wine tourism, if the tourism proposal of a certain wine farm is to present the industrial process of wine production, it will fit in the concept of Industrial Tourism, in the case of just tasting and selling wine, it does not fit in the concept of Industrial Tourism.

Still, according to Rodriguez-Zulaica (2017), Industrial Tourism in the English literature is associated with the recovery and enhancement of the industrial past of a city or region, using the term "industrial heritage tourism". Accordingly, the frequent translation of Industrial Tourism to Spanish and French appears in many documents as "Industrial Heritage Tourism", a term that is considered a category of "Heritage Tourism", defined as including tourism activities linked to heritage, essentially cultural heritage. In this direction Rudd and Davis (1998) note that "Industrial Tourism is a popular subsection of Industrial Heritage Tourism", while Givental et al. (2019) consider that Industrial Tourism has become an important part of cultural tourism in the West, arguing that industrial heritage is a part of culture and as such reflects national character and national history. According to Perfetto & Presenza (2017) the literature on industrial tourism heritage management seems disjointed and lacks a clear understanding of the main aspects and issues related to it, highlighting the existence of three main themes: tourism demand, local development and destination governance.

Rodriguez-Zulaica (2017) also refers to the existence of other terms related to Industrial Tourism, such, Scientific Tourism, Technological Tourism, Productive Tourism and Tecnotourism. For example, Savia (2007), considers Tecnotourism as a branch of Industrial Tourism, focused on tourist visits to factories and active production centers, with the main objective of knowing their production processes.

According to Rodriguez-Zulaica (2017) industrial tourism was born in the United States and England in the 1960s, and gradually spread to other countries. Zhang et al., (2020) analyze the research conducted in Western Europe and China on this topic. The authors report that the research content in China focuses mainly on the issues of urban renewal, industrial heritage tourism, and creative industries, while Western countries are dominated by industrial heritage and community building, the exploitation of tourism and the protection of industrial sites, post-industrial heritage protection and the use of new technologies. They conclude that China's industrial heritage research is driven by national policy priorities, while research in Western Europe is driven by factual development seeking to solve the problems faced by the transformation of resource-worn cities, especially in restoring the ecological environment of their abandoned industrial sites.

In line with Rodriguez-Zulaica (2017) it is possible to distinguish three perfectly delimited concepts (see Figure 4): the concept of Industrial Tourism that is used to refer to any tourist activity that links tourists to different local industries, whether they are in operation or not, according to their industrial activity, the concept of active Industrial Tourism that refers to the visit of tourists to active companies, with the main objective of learning about their production processes, and the concept of Industrial Heritage Tourism that refers to visits to disused industrial buildings and facilities, with the main objective of learning about the "know-how" of past industry. This distinction is also stressed by Pardo Abad (2004), who distinguishes between two main categories of industrial tourism: i) industrial heritage tourism or "historical tourism" (museums and ecomuseums, factories and industrial sites, industrial routes and interpretation centers), and ii) factory tourism, also known as production tourism, refers to planned visits to active factories and industrial facilities.

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on Rodriguez-Zulaica (2017)

Figure 4: Different concepts of Industrial Tourism

However, some confusion persists regarding its definition, including both visits to active factories and companies and visits to vestiges of a city or region's industrial past, although there are major differences between the two activities (Rodriguez-Zulaica, 2017). As it will be shown in the next sections, some authors identify Industrial Heritage Tourism as being different from Industrial Tourism, other authors consider them synonymous, others still consider that despite not meaning the same thing they complement each other as a tourism offer.

3.3 Defining industrial tourism as visits to inactive industry (industrial heritage)

This section focuses on the studies that adopt the industrial heritage prespective of industrial tourism. Authors condider that industrial tourism is concerned with the development of tourism activities and industries in man-made sites, buildings and landscapes that originated in industrial processes of earlier periods (Edwards & Llurde ́s I Coit, 1996). It encompasses the industrial heritage, the remain materials of previously existing industry (Xie, 2006). According to this perspective, Guzmán et al. (2014) referred that industrial heritage is made up of tangible and intangible elements that structure in an interconnected way the industrial activity, reinforcing Moral-Moral & Fernandez-Alles(2019) that these tangible and intangible elements would be composed of movable goods (machinery, tools, archives, etc.), real estate (production areas, production facilities, etc.), and real estate (production areas, housing, etc.), the workers' way of life, as well as the know-how of the industrial production processes.

Industrial heritage is the youngest of all heritages because it comprises a collection of structures, parts and machines that were used, in many cases, until very recently (Rodrigues, 2019), including sites, structures, complexes, areas and landscapes, as well as machinery, objects and documents that evidence a past or ongoing industrial process (Moral-Moral & Fernandez-Alles, 2019). The first step to the creation of industrial heritage is disuse: while factories and mines remain active, industrial complexes are not considered heritage, they are fixed assets (Somoza-Medina & Monteserín-Abella, 2021).

According to this perspective, we can consider that industrial tourism emerges to enhance industrial heritage, without forgetting that material heritage issues include the material remains of industry (Prat Forga & Cànoves Valiente, 2017).

3.4 Defining industrial tourism as visits to active industry

Some authors advocate the concept of Industrial tourism as visits to active companies. In this prespective, industrial tourism involves visits by tourists to operational industrial sites where the main activity of the site is non-tourism (Frew, 2000). Tourist go to factories and companies, with the aim of seeing how their products are manufactured, as tourism (Frew, 2000), considers that former industrial sites represent the central attraction of industrial heritage tourism which differs from industrial tourism that focuses on visiting operational industrial sites.

Otgaar (2010), cited by Lee (2015) considers that all visits to private and public companies for leisure and/or to learn more about the company and its production process (education-oriented) fit into the broad definition of industrial tourism, highliting that terms such as "company visits", "factory visits", "technical visits" and "industrial tourism visits" are often used as a synonym for industrial tourism. He defines industrial tourism as site visits, where residents and tourists are able to become familiar with the operation of a company in the region, taking a relatively broad approach, allowing visitors to see the workers and production processes, experience or buy finished products, and learn about the history of the company considering also that industrial tourism comprises not only company visits, but also visits to company museums and brand parks. In a more recent paper, Otgaar (2012) considers the possibility that industrial heritage is not included in the definition of industrial tourism, stating that it will only be part of industrial tourism if it requires the participation of operating companies.

3.5 Industrial tourism and industrial heritage tourism as too faces of the same coin

Some authors relate the two concepts, Industrial Heritage and Industrial Tourism, making an approximation of the concepts, considering thems as complements.

Jonsen-Verbeke (1999), considered industrial tourism as both the visit to working facilities, and a way to support the sustainable development of old industrial areas, with closed areas and abandoned factories and related infrastructure, thus linking industrial heritage to living industry.

On the other hand Mitchell & Mitchell (2001) include visits to production plants, company museums and company visitor centers as industrial heritage tourism also known as production tourism, industrial attractions and industrial tourism.

Industrial tourism is referred to as a type of tourism that involves tourists visiting sites to learn about past, present, and future economic activities (Otgaar, et al., 2010), in line with Rodríguez-Zulaica (2017) in that stating that industrial tourism can be defined as any tourism activity that relates tourists to different local industries, whether they are in operation or not, according to their industrial activity.

Moral-Moral & Fernandez-Alles (2019) consider that industrial tourism represents a new type of tourism with a remarkable potential for growth and development, referring to Industrial Tourism as tourist visits to industrial or production centers, both disused and active, such as factories, warehouses, workshops, areas of processing and obtaining natural resources, etc., with the aim of transmitting to tourists and society the activities and processes developed. In many cases, it involves the recovery of old, underused or abandoned infrastructure or resources. These same authors refer that the industrial heritage is the central element of industrial tourism that, thanks to its conservation, maintenance and enhancement, becomes a key element for the development of industrial tourism.

In the same line of reasoning, Pardo Abad (2004) considers that industrial tourism is based both on the use of ancient and current industrial heritage for tourism purposes.

On the other hand, Andrade-Suárez & Caamaño-Franco (2020) refer the importance of three different types of resources (pre-industrial heritage, industrial revolution heritage, living industry) that are included in two groups: industrial archaeological heritage and living industry. Another cetegorization of resources is presented by Hospers (2002), who distingue three categories of resources around which industrial tourism is developed: industrial resources in the field of production and work processes, such as mines, production facilities, etc., transport-related resources: roads, railways, bridges, canals,etc., socio-cultural attractions linked to the industrial past of a region, such as workers' housing, among others.

4. Discussion and concluding remarks

The study allowed to realize that the concepts of Industrial Tourism and Industrial Heritage Tourism have been used in different contexts, so it is noted over time some confusion in the delimitation of these concepts, a view also shared by Otgaar (2012) who states that "scholars seem to have different and sometimes contradictory views on the definition of industrial tourism".

For some authors Industrial Tourism also includes the concept of Industrial Heritage Tourism. Other authors differentiate Industrial Tourism as living industry and Industrial Heritage Tourism as industry of the past, which is no longer operational.

In short, the term Industrial Tourism encompasses two different realities: on the one hand, the visit and tourist use of elements of the industrial past and, on the other hand, the visit to active industries, which will allow tourists to experience firsthand the production processes of the products they consume.

For example, Abad (2004) starts from the concept of general Industrial Tourism, for a division into two types: Production-type Industrial Tourism and Industrial Heritage Tourism or "historical tourism". In contrast to Otgaar (2012), consider that industrial heritage sites should be included in the definition of Industrial Tourism, whether they have or not the participation of operating companies. We consider that the concept Industrial Tourism should have a general scope, including all the potential that industry has as an asset for tourism.

From our point of view, there are active companies that have an extraordinary industrial heritage (material and/or immaterial), so the simple fact of the company being active or not, should not delimit the concept. Thus, we consider the concept of Industrial Tourism in line with the definition presented by Abad (2004), where the development of Industrial Tourism is based on the use of the old and current Industrial Heritage, as well as with Rudd & Davis (1998) being Industrial Tourism any tourist activity that relates tourists with different local industries, whether they are in operation or not.

In this context, we can understand Industrial Tourism as a type of tourism that includes visits to present, past or future industrial sites, considering sites that are no longer active in their industrial function, industrial companies in operation and sites of future industrial installations, as well as visits to other sites whose theme is related to industry (industrial technology centers, museums, industrial tourist routes, schools, and industrial laboratories and other similar). We consider that the concept of Industrial Tourism includes all kinds of tourist activities whose main reason for the visit is related to industrial knowledge, material and / or immaterial heritage.

This study has as limitations the fact that the analysis is carried out on articles published in scientific journals written in English, Spanish or Portuguese, not contemplating articles in other languages, as well as documents in other formats (e.g., books, brochures, etc.).

As a suggestion for future work we consider interesting a broader approach that relates the concept to other themes, such as: the impact of Industrial Tourism for the active companies (on the motivation and productivity of factory workers and as a source of innovation) and its role in the protection of living industrial heritage.

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ANNEXES

Authors	Title	Year
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McBoyle, G.	Green tourism and Scottish distilleries	1996
Kerstetter, D., Confer, J., Bricker, K.	Industrial heritage attractions: Types and tourists	1998
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Prat Forga, J.M., Cànoves Valiente, G.	Cultural change and industrial heritage tourism: material heritage of the industries of food and beverage in Catalonia (Spain)	2017
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Rodrigues, JCM	The route of the industrial heritage in the vale do ave (north of portugal) in a new trend of the tourism	2019
Ronck, C.L., Price, W.R.	Revealing "salt city's" geological and mining heritage at strataca	2019
Ruban, D.A., Molchanova, T.K., Yashalova, N.N.	Three rising tourism directions and climate change: Conceptualizing new opportunities	2019
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Pavlakovič, B., Demir, M.R., Pozvek, N., Turnšek, M.	Role of tourism in promoting geothermal energy: Public interest and motivation for geothermal energy tourism in slovenia	2021
Price, WR	Mining for Tourists: An Analysis of Industrial Tourism and Government Policy in Wales	2021
Riviezzo, A; Garofano, A; Mason, MC; Napolitano, MR	Italian corporate museums as industrial tourism destinations:. segmentation study based on strategic orientation	2021
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Yan Y.Q., Shen H.J., Ye B.H., Zhou L.	From axe to awe: assessing the co-effects of awe and authenticity on industrial heritage tourism	2021
Zhao Z., Liu Z.	Development path of industrial heritage tourism: A case study of kitakyushu (japan)	2021

Governance Issues in Protected Areas: The Case of Peneda-Gerês National Park

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Abstract: The increasing attention that protected areas have received from various players ranging from tourists, firms, and government entities, has highlighted the need to promote appropriate governance mechanisms. These are essential to promote and develop those areas enabling an alignment between various stakeholders with diverse agendas. This research draws attention to this key issue, focusing on the classified Peneda-Gerês National Park (PGNP), considered one of the top 10 in Europe. In order to do so, we employ game theory. This methodology is appropriate for strategic decision-making and enables a deeper understanding of the impacts of different governance mechanisms and their outcomes. This paper will contribute, on a theoretical level, to advancing the use of this methodology to study governance decisions in classified areas. In order to do so, diverse settings are modeled to illustrate different governance solutions employed to manage Peneda-Gerês National Park, highlighting the strategic interplay between the key stakeholders and the outcomes attained. Our results demonstrate that the degree of alignment between the various municipalities will have a direct impact in terms of performance, as well, as show the mechanisms which contribute. Additionally, our findings contribute, in practical terms, to showing how important it is for the public entities involved in the management and care of Peneda-Gerês National Park to cooperate and align their interests to ensure success. Moreover, the study refers to Peneda-Gerês National Park but the results attained are applicable to different contexts in terms of National Park management and promotion.

Keywords: National Park, tourism, game theory, place governance, strategy

1. Introduction

Peneda-Gerês National Park (PGNP) is situated in Portugal and part of the top 10 national parks in Europe, given its fauna and flora. National parks are ecosystems that play an important role in terms of the country's tourism but also in terms of employment and wealth creation. The municipalities in which they are located reap benefits with that but also have the responsibility of managing them, leading the efforts of conserving and promoting the national parks. In the case of PNGP, the park overlaps three districts and five municipalities: Melgaço, Terras de Bouro, Arcos de Valdevez, Ponte da Barca and Montalegre.

This article aims to study the impacts of different governance systems in protected areas, applied to the case of PGNP. This managerial process implies strategic decision-making characterized by the interdependence of the various municipalities which harbour the national park. To analyse this process, we will resort to game theory. Game theory studies decision-making by various rational players in which decisions made by one player have repercussions on the outcomes of the other players. Therefore, we will advance the use of this methodology in this domain in tourism where it is still at in embryonic stage (Lalicic & Weber-Sabil, 2020). The rigor, internal consistency and mathematical foundations of game theory enable a formal and systematic analysis of the prevalent strategic interactions. The model we propose is innovative in that it considers the three governance settings of PGNP. In the initial stage, where all the municipalities acted on their own accord; the middle stage which is characterized by the existence of an entity (ADERE) that aims to centralize and aggregate the interests of the various municipalities and the final stage of co-management, where goal alignment and coordination is the key. Our results show that cooperation allows for better outcomes and indicate the mechanisms that aid/hinder that effort.

Other than advancing the theoretical field, our results will contribute to highlighting the key to successful governance measures in managing the PGNP, yet these findings are extendable to national parks in general, and other tourist areas of interest which have various stakeholders making the decisions.

The paper will start by presenting the relevant literature review about tourism and governance issues in natural areas focusing on PGNP. It is then followed by the presentation of the game modelled and the results attained. The paper finalizes with the conclusion and avenues for future research.

2. Tourism and governance - case of PGNP

There are 500 classified national parks inside Europe (International Union for Conservation of Nature) and, in Portugal, we have only one national Park: the Peneda-Gerês National Park that is considered one of the 10 best parks in Europe (due to its species of fauna and flora). National parks require protection and preservation (Pulhin et al., 2021) considering their natural environment (fauna and flora) but also because of public recreation and because they represent important tourist attractions for the countries. The issues of protected areas governance bring about the need to find a balance between allowing visitation and enhancing preservation considering that tourism is a strategic sector and key contributor to countries' economy and requires a planning and management strategy so as to generate positive spin-off effects on the local and regional economies.

Planning the management of a national park requires collecting and integrating a lot of information about the physical, biological and social environment (Eadens et al., 2009; Stadolin &Yamchuk, 2017; Pulhin et al., 2021) and there is a call for different stakeholders' conflict management also (Haukeland, 2010, Stanila, 2017), which involves considering their diverse interests (Lalicic & Weber-Sabil, 2020). Some studies have already been developed (Stadolin &Yamchuk, 2017; Stanila, 2017; Pulhin et al., 2021) but there is still a gap in the literature regarding studies on the governance of protected areas.

Considering the specific case of Peneda-Gerês National Park and its governance issues, we can consider three main phases (see Table 1)

Table 1: Phases of Peneda-Gerês National Park governance model

1st PHASE - From May 1971 to Jan 1993	
Place Governance Model	Place governance based on a technical advisory committee chaired by the director of the park and a scientific committee with no specific cooperation
Cooperation Areas	Long-term scientific planning; Nature preservation/Conservation; Educational and tourist issues
Penalties	No penalty
Main Stakeholders	Technical advisory committee chaired by the director of the park responsible for Policy formulation and Management and Preservation/Conservation
2nd PHASE - From Feb. 1993 to March 2021	
Place Governance Model	Based on the Land Use Plan for the Peneda-Gerês National Park (POPNPG) with cooperation between the 5 municipalities mediated by ADERE (association for the development of the park's regions) that was created in Feb. 1993. The 5 municipalities' autonomy is still limited.
Cooperation Areas	Strategic planning; Promotion; Training; Valuing natural resources and nature preservation/ conservation and sustainable tourism
Penalties	Income investment from the 5 municipalities (ADERE financing costs); Reduction in tourists; Less local and regional development and negative impacts on the economy
Main Stakeholders	ICNB - Institute for the Conservation and Biodiversity responsible for policy formulation and Management as well as preservation/conservation
3rd PHASE - After March 2021	
Place Governance Model	Based on the co-management model with the active participation of the 5 municipalities that integrate the PGNP within a dynamic of proximity management, being a participative, collaborative and articulated management
Cooperation Areas	Cooperation at a financial, human resources, social and economic, ecological, territorial and cultural level; promotion, awareness and communication (visibility); increase in the number of visitors and strategic planning
Penalties	Fines; Sanctions (cuts or difficulties in accessing financing); Loss of visitors and notoriety; Less local and regional development and negative impacts on the economy
Main Stakeholders	5 municipalities that integrate the PGNP (Melgaço, Arcos de Valdevez, Ponte da Barca, Terras de Bouro and Montalegre); ICNF

During the first phase (from May 1971 to Jan 1993), the place governance of the PGNP was based on a technical advisory committee and chaired by the park director, with the presidents of the Municipal Councils of Melgaço as members and the main cooperation areas were connected with long-term scientific planning, valuing natural resources, nature preservation/conservation, educational, tourist and scientific issues

In the second phase (from February 1993 to March 2021), to help the governance of the Peneda-Gerês National Park– ADERE - association for the development of the park's regions, was established. ADERE, in its constitution, includes the following effective partners: the municipality of Arcos de Valdevez, the municipality of Melgaço, the municipality of Montalegre, the municipality of Ponte da Barca and the municipality of Terras de Bouro. In this stage, cooperation between the various municipalities already takes place, but their autonomy in terms of park management is still limited.

Finally, in the third phase (after March 2021) a new co-management model was implemented for the governance of PGNP that integrates the municipalities of Arcos de Valdevez, Ponte da Barca and Melgaço (in the district of Viana do Castelo), the municipality of Montalegre (district of Vila Real), and the municipality of Terras de Bouro (district of Braga). These stakeholders will begin to participate in a more active way in the governance of the PGNP, together with the ICNF (Institute for Conservation of Nature and Forests). This institute will maintain all its responsibilities in terms of licensing, with the municipalities being responsible for acting more in the field of valuing territories. This new place governance model creates a dynamic of proximity management, putting into practice a participative, collaborative and articulated management. The main areas of cooperation are connected to social, economic, ecological, territorial and cultural development, promotion, awareness and communication (visibility) and the increase in the number of visitors.

3. Methodology – game modelled

Game theory is the study of strategic decision-making. A game is a formal description of a strategic situation. A game is defined by its players, their information set, the possible actions available to them, and their preferences and payoffs. The players are the agents (i.e. individuals, groups, firms) who make the decisions. A game is considered of complete information if its players are aware of all the information relevant to the game: the players; the decisions timings; their possible actions and payoffs. In games considered of incomplete information part of that information is unavailable to the players. Their payoff (or utility), is a numerical value that shows the desirability of a specific outcome for that player. The payoff of each player is influenced both by his actions and also by the other players' actions. The strategic interdependence of the players is the cornerstone of any game. Games can be modelled in various ways. There are cooperative games which study the results attained by each player when making decisions as a group, also studying the conditions which motivate players to diverge from the agreed behavior. Non-cooperative games focus on individual decision-making. In these games, players are called to make their decisions not knowing the other players' decisions (these are called simultaneous games), whereas in non-cooperative sequential games, players make their decisions in a given order. Each of these games has a different technique which enables the game to be solved.

Game theory has been applied to the most diverse areas in various fields ranging from economics, business, politics, war negotiation to biology. Tourism is no exception. Game Theory has been applied to tourism, where the different stakeholders interact and benefit from the destination promotion and development.

Zhao, Zhang & Liu (2019), applied game theory to analyse regional tourism cooperation, showing that game theory can be a powerful tool to show which strategies should be applied by tourism stakeholders in competitive tourism environments. Their results showed the importance of cooperation as well as noting the conditions necessary to sustain it. Sheng (2011) used game theory to study the interactions between competitive and complementary destinations in a given region, and concluded that decision makers should opt to put in place moderate rather than very aggressive strategies. Chen et al., 2021, studied the tourism industry's green supply chain management. Their results showed that most of the hotels do not have an incentive mechanism for green growth but also, that hotels which adopted green behaviours tend to perform better. They put forward some suggestions for governmental measures.

Therefore, some studies that use game theory in the tourism research area, focus on regional tourism cooperation regional competition and sustainable development green supply chain and strategic interdependence between destinations. Nonetheless, the use of this methodology to study governance issues related to the management of national parks, is, to the best of our knowledge, non-existent.

To study the governance systems applied to PGNP, we model a non-cooperative, simultaneous game. In such games, the Nash equilibrium is used as a solution technique. The Nash equilibrium refers to the set of strategies of best response for each player, where there is no incentive for any of the players to change from that strategy, in other words, the Nash equilibrium is self-enforcing. In our modelled game there are two rational players: Municipality A and Municipality B[1] which decide whether to cooperate or not in the management of PGNP. We start with the initial phase where both players are motivated by their own performance, then the second stage where there is an external agent (ADERE) which acts as a mediating agent and finally phase 3 where there is a co-management system.

4. Discussion

4.1 Phase 1 – initial phase: May 1971 - 1993

In this initial stage, both municipalities aim to maximize their outcomes, focusing solely on their individual interests. The table below shows the outcomes of this game. The playoffs of each player have been transformed into a ranking to facilitate the reading. Each pair of values indicates the ranking for each of the Municipalities for each of the situations, from 1 to 4 (least to best preferred).

Table 2: Initial phase outcomes

		Municipality B	
		Not Cooperate	Cooperate
Municipality A	Not Cooperate	2,2	4,1
	Cooperate	1,4	3,3

In this case, the Nash equilibrium will be for both to Not Cooperate.

4.2 Phase 2 – ADERE: 1993- March 201

This stage is characterized by an external agent, ADERE, which mediates the players to push them to develop synergies and therefore increase the benefits for all involved. In this case, although there is no way for ADERE to 'force' each municipality to work together, when one doesn't follow through on what was agreed it suffers, which can be described as reputation costs. On the other hand, following through on the cooperation efforts means that the municipalities which follow through will need to make joint efforts, investments and those which don't will still reap the benefits which result from those efforts. In this case, the outcomes of the game are shown in the table below:

Table 3: Stage with ADERE

		Municipality B	
		Not Cooperate	Cooperate
Municipality A	Not Cooperate	2,2	3,1
	Cooperate	1,3	4,4

In the case where all cooperate and develop the efforts in line with ADERE recommendations, the result will be the most favorable (4,4). However, when one decided not to cooperate, (results in 3,1) it will still reap the benefits of the efforts and investments undertaken by the remaining municipalities, yet having not incurred in those direct costs, but it will suffer, "reputational costs". Finally, when all players decide not to cooperate, then they will have the costs incurred, but also will not reap any of the benefits, as ADERE's agenda will not have been followed, resulting in outcome (2,2). In this case, there are two possible Nash equilibriums either both don't cooperate or both decide to cooperate (4,4,). In this scenario, any of the two results are possible (in the presence of more than one equilibrium we cannot determine which one will prevail).

4.3 Phase 3 – co-management: From March 2021

The final stage is the co-management stage. In this stage, the municipalities work as a group. This is different from the second stage where the municipality worked as an individual unit mediated by an external agent (ADERE). In this stage, the municipalities, as a clan, aim to maximize the joint outcomes. Therefore, in this case, when one of the municipalities decides not to cooperate, they will incur not only the reputational costs but also

[1] The game is modelled, as is usual, for two players as the underlining logic and outcomes are more simplified, and therefore easier to grasp, but it can be extended to more players.

heavy penalties for that behavior. This explains the worst outcome (1,1) when the players decide to take that course of action. At the other extreme, the players will have the best outcome (4,4) when they cooperate. When a player decides not to cooperate, the other will also not be able to exploit the benefits of the co-management system and therefore will witness a lower outcome (3) than in the case of cooperation (4).

Table 4: Stage with co-management

		Municipality B	
		Not Cooperate	Cooperate
Municipality A	Not Cooperate	1,1	2,3
	Cooperate	3,2	4,4

The Nash equilibrium, in this case, is Cooperate, Cooperate.

Our results clearly show that the higher the alignment, congruence and cooperation between the Municipalities, and the more significant the sanctions imposed for deviating that are applied, the higher the sustainability of the outcome will be.

5. Conclusion

Our study, through the use of game theory methodology, studied the key stakeholders involved in the corporate governance of PGNP. The study addressed all three phases of that system. It initiated from the situation where all municipalities worked on their own accord, to the next phase, where there was an external entity mediating the municipalities to direct them towards a certain course of action, and finally the stage of co-management. In the initial phase, the results show that the Nash equilibrium would be for the players involved not to cooperate, in the second stage there were two possible Nash equilibria and finally, in the co-management stage the Nash equilibrium was of cooperation for all involved. Our results clearly show the strategic decision-making is dependent on congruence and cooperation, as well as, the factors which aid/hinder that cooperation (ex. sanctions, etc.). This research adds value, also, in terms of relationship management and governance approaches between various stakeholders and our results show how management authorities can leverage those to maximize the performance. This paper advances the use of game theory in the Tourism arena, but more importantly, aids stakeholders and policymakers on key factors which play a role in the success of governance mechanisms, and which, therefore, should be considered when making such decisions. In terms of avenues for future research, we suggest exporting this methodology to include the management of other vital natural resorts and also extending it to other stakeholders who could be included in the analysis.

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Developing a Destination Management Information System: A Case Study of Ottawa, Canada

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Abstract: Over the last decade, the concept of smart destination management has been gaining momentum (Boes et al, 2016; Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2013, 2015; Del Vecchio et al, 2018a; Gretzel et al, 2015; Ivars-Baidal et al, 2019; Lamsfus and Alzua-Sorzabal, 2013; Xiang et al, 2015). As the tourism industry seeks recovery from the devastations of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, several authors have argued that it is more important than ever for destinations to become "smart" in efforts to build back in a more sustainable and regenerative way (Abbas et al, 2021; Assaf and Scuderi, 2020). Though called on globally to guide destinations through this era of change and adaptation, Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) continue to struggle to obtain adequate and reliable data. Specifically, those representing smaller regions often lack the internal capacity to perform the analyses required to become smart destinations (Dodds and Butler, 2019; Dredge, 2016; Gretzel et al, 2006). While the literature has pointed to Destination Management Information Systems (DMISs) as the solution to smart destination management, current applications have been limited and evidence remains primarily anecdotal. Therefore, guided by Höpken et al's (2011) Knowledge Destination Framework Architecture, this study aimed to develop and empirically test a DMIS for Ottawa Tourism in its capacity to support smart destination management. Findings indicated that while it serves as a valid process in the development of a DMIS, a DMIS's capacity to support smart destination management is limited by the quality of its inputs. Opportunities for future knowledge generation and knowledge application in the tourism industry are discussed along with areas for future research.

Keywords: smart destination, destination management, data-driven decision-making, knowledge destination framework architecture, destination management information system, destination marketing organizations

1. Introduction

As technological advancements in Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) have surged in recent years, mass quantities of data, termed Big Data, have been generated across a wide range of industries (Chen, Mao and Liu, 2014). Big Data has most often been characterised in the literature by 6V's: Volume, for its scale in quantity; Velocity, for its rate of generation; Variety, for its diversity in type; Value, for its utility; Veracity, for its accuracy; and Variability, for its inconsistency in generation (Jeble et al, 2017; Kościelniak and Puto, 2015; Laney, 2001; 2012; 2015). Despite the challenges posed by these attributes, organizations with the capacity to gather and harness Big Data are privy to highly detailed insights that can be leveraged to support a competitive and sustainable advantage through better-informed management decisions (Hao, Zhang and Song, 2019; Gajdošík, 2019).

Particularly in the tourism industry, Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs), responsible for the marketing and increasingly the management of tourism destinations, have been challenged to embrace Big Data in becoming "smart destinations". A smart destination is defined as:

> *"An innovative tourism space, accessible to all, consolidated on state-of-the-art technological infrastructure that supports sustainable development of the territory, facilitates the interaction and integration of the visitor with the environment, elevates the visitor experience at the destination, and enhances the quality of life for the residents" (SEGITTUR, 2015, p.32).*

Destinations that have successfully harnessed Big Data have been found to have increased competitiveness and innovation in areas including visitor mobility management, visitor experience management, and tourism resource management (Boes, Buhalis and Inversini, 2016; Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2013; 2015; Del Vecchino et al, 2018a; 2018b; Enclada et al, 2017; Fuchs, Höpken and Lexhahen, 2014; Fuchs et al, 2013; Gajdošík, 2019; Höpken et al, 2013). Over the last decade, the concept of smart destination management has been gaining momentum (Boes et al, 2016; Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2013, 2015; Del Vecchio et al, 2018a; Gretzel et al, 2015; Ivars-Baidal et al, 2019; Lamsfus and Alzua-Sorzabal, 2013; Xiang et al, 2015); however, as the tourism industry seeks recovery from the damage of the COVID-19 pandemic, several authors have argued that it is more important than ever for destinations to become "smart" in efforts to build back in a more sustainable and regenerative way (Abbas et al, 2021; Assaf and Scuderi, 2020). Yet, it has been continuously recognized that a great portion of DMOs, specifically those representing smaller destinations, struggle to obtain adequate data and preform the analyses required to become smart destinations (Dodds and Butler, 2019; Dredge, 2016; Gretzel et al, 2006).

In efforts to achieve smart destination management across all levels of DMOs, several studies have supported the need for a destination management information system (DMIS) – an amalgamation of data from internal and external sources into a user-friendly decision support system from which DMOs can make data-driven destination management decisions (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2013; Fuchs et al, 2013; Fuchs, Höpken and Lexhagen, 2014; Höpken et al, 2011; 2015; Ritchie and Ritchie, 2002; Trunfio and Della Lucia, 2019). To date, however, there have been few applications of DMISs in the literature; specifically, the testing and assessment of DMISs in supporting smart destination management remains primarily anecdotal. Therefore, guided by Höpken et al's (2011) Knowledge Destination Framework Architecture, a four-phased case study of Ottawa Tourism was conducted to both develop and empirically test a DMIS in its capacity to support smart destination management. This project was conducted in collaboration with Ottawa Tourism, Ryerson University, and Klevr Places, a start-up company helping destinations make data-based decisions (https://klevrplaces.com/).

2. Background

This section sets out to review the existing literature in the context of Destination Management Information Systems (DMISs). First, a theoretical framework of DMIS development will be outlined along with its existing applications. Second, the case of Ottawa Tourism will be presented along with the need for the current study.

2.1 The knowledge destination framework architecture

The Knowledge Destination Framework Architecture (Höpken et al, 2011), is one of the most highly referenced in smart destinations and Destination Management Information Systems (DMISs) literature (see figure 1). This framework proposes that smart destinations develop knowledge via a two layered process. In the first layer, knowledge is generated through the identification, extraction, housing, and harnessing of data required for destination management; while in the second layer, knowledge is applied through a DMIS in which the data is visualized and interpreted to support smart destination management decisions (Höpken et al, 2011).

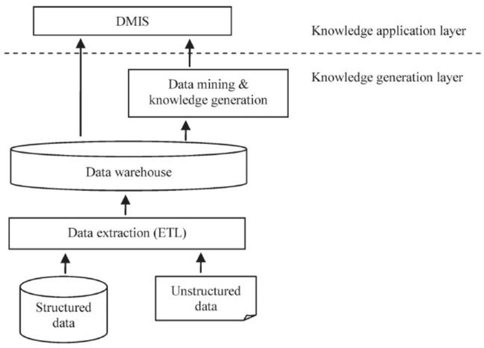

Figure 1: Höpken et al's (2011) knowledge destination framework architecture

While the literature on smart destinations and Destination Management Information Systems (DMISs) is expanding, practical applications of DMISs have been scantly presented in the literature save for a selection of case studies. These studies have not only served as a model for future DMIS development but have also indicated that DMISs hold the capacity to support Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) in achieving smart destination management (Fuchs et al, 2013; Fuchs, Höpken and Lexhagen, 2014; Gajdošík, 2019; Höpken et al, 2011; 2013; Ritchie and Ritchie, 2002). While these studies have been primarily focused on recording the DMIS development process, the empirical testing of these DMISs towards supporting smart destination management has been limited; thus, evidence towards the benefits of DMIS applications remains primarily anecdotal. There is, therefore, a need for further research not only towards the development of DMISs but also towards the empirical testing of these DMISs in their capacity to support smart destination management.

2.2 A case study of Ottawa, Canada

This study specifically aims to develop and test a Destination Management Information System (DMIS) for, the metropolitan region of Ottawa, Canada. Ottawa is Canada's capital city, located in the province of Ontario. Situated on the traditional Anishinàbeg Algonquin territory, the City of Ottawa was established in 1855 following settlements and influences of the Irish, French, English, and Scottish as early as the 1600s (Ottawa Tourism, 2021). Ottawa's tourism economy is characterized by its historic and culturally rich lodging, dining, and entertainment options that attract both business and leisure visitors year-round (Ottawa Tourism, 2021). Most notably, Ottawa is home to seven of Canada's nine national museums, the historic ByWard Market, the Ottawa River, the Rideau River and the Rideau Canal, as well as Canada's federal government on Parliament Hill (Ottawa Tourism, 2021).

The tourism industry plays a significant role in Ottawa's economy (Ottawa Tourism, 2020a). Namely, the ongoing total economic impact of Ottawa's tourism industry translates to 43,570 jobs, $1.69 billion in wages and salaries, $2.72 billion in GDP, and $5.49 billion in economic outputs (Ottawa Tourism, 2020a, p. 4). In 2020, however, Ottawa's tourism industry, among many other destinations, was devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic with approximately $1.4 billion lost in visitor spending from 2019 (Ottawa Tourism, 2020b). Taking on a destination management role, the region's Destination Marketing Organization (DMO), Ottawa Tourism (2020b) addressed this challenge by "serving as a conduit of information to its members and to the public, advocating for relief on the industry's behalf, hustling to rebook meetings and conventions, maintaining relationships with suppliers and clients, and working to share the stories of the industry's resilience far and wide" (p. 2). Despite their use of data prior to the pandemic, Ottawa Tourism (2020b) notes that as part of its recovery strategy, "one of [their] priorities…has been to develop into a data-driven organization" (p. 4). Therefore, Ottawa serves as an ideal case study to both develop and test the utility of a DMIS in supporting DMOs with smart destination management.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a single case study approach in the development and testing of a Destination Management Information System (DMIS) for Ottawa Tourism. In doing so, the research was conducted over four-phases: (1) an in-depth interview with Ottawa Tourism stakeholders to perform an assessment of their current practices and needs; (2) development of a DMIS prototype for Ottawa Tourism; (3) presenting and testing the utility of the DMIS through a semi-structured interview with Ottawa Tourism; and (4) addressing the feedback and presenting the final DMIS in a debrief meeting with Ottawa Tourism.

In February 2020, an in-depth, semi-structured interview was conducted with key stakeholders at Ottawa Tourism to assess their current knowledge generation and application practices in accordance with Höpken et al's (2011) Knowledge Destination Framework Architecture as well as identify the existing challenges or gaps in these areas. Questions sought to gather information regarding: (1) existing knowledge generation practices (i.e., data identification, data extraction, data warehousing, data mining); (2) challenges or gaps in knowledge generation; (3) existing knowledge application practices (i.e., data dissemination amongst internal and external stakeholders); and (4) challenges or gaps in knowledge application practices. The transcript was analyzed manually by the researchers.

From March 2020 to February 2021, the findings of the initial interview were applied to the development of a DMIS in accordance with Höpken et al's (2011) Knowledge Destination Framework Architecture. First, existing data sources identified by Ottawa Tourism were individually gathered and assessed on the grounds of the most frequently applied Data Quality Dimensions in the literature including timeliness, consistency, accuracy, and completeness (Sidi et al, 2012). Challenges and gaps identified amongst the data were then attempted to be filled by additional datasets acquired through a thorough online search that was subject to assessment across the same four Data Quality Dimensions. Second, the datasets were extracted, individually transformed, and were then loaded to the data warehouse. Third, the datasets in the warehouse were amalgamated through a mapping process. Fourth, the gathered datasets were manipulated through analytical processes to generate knowledge. Finally, the generated knowledge was visualized through an interactive DMIS. Ottawa Tourism's knowledge manager was engaged and updated throughout each phase of development.

In March 2021, a semi-structured interview was held with Ottawa Tourism stakeholders to present and test the utility of the DMIS. The questions aimed to assess the ability of the DMIS to generate and apply knowledge towards smart destination management. First, knowledge generation was assessed across the Data Quality

Dimensions of timeliness, consistency, accuracy, and completeness (Sidi et al, 2012). Second, knowledge application was assessed based on the DMIS's capacity to support smart destination management across seven domains of destination management adopted from Wang (2011): (1) Build product: inform investment and infrastructure decision making; (2) Build identity: inform, educate, and advise visitors; (3) Build commitment: deliver services to visitors; (4) Build vision: support and develop destination strategy; (5) Build coalition: advise and support stakeholders; (6) Build sustainability: inform destination competitiveness and sustainability; and (7) Build resilience: inform safety and crisis management. The transcript was analyzed manually by the researchers.

In efforts to maximize utility of the DMIS, additional efforts were made between April 2021 and August 2021 in attempt to address the gaps and challenges noted in the interview. Finally, in September 2021, a debrief meeting was held with Ottawa Tourism to review the results of these efforts.

4. Findings

The following will outline the results of the four-phased process of developing and testing a Destination Management Information System (DMIS) for Ottawa Tourism.

4.1 Current practices and needs assessment

Ottawa Tourism's current knowledge generation and application practices were assessed in accordance with Höpken et al's (2011) Knowledge Destination Framework Architecture. First, with regards to data identification, it was found that Ottawa Tourism engaged in both internal and external data collection. External sources derived from a variety of sources and included national, mobile, marketing, accommodation, and visitor sentiment data. In-house data collection, on the other hand, was primarily used to supplement gaps in available external data sources. Internal data collection methods included an airport and attractions visitor survey as well as daily visitation data shared from local stakeholders. Ottawa Tourism noted that their collected sources were extracted and transformed with Business Intelligence (BI) Tools including SPSS, Microsoft's Excel, and Envision. The transformed sources were housed on-premises and minimal aggregation and mapping was performed manually using BI Tools. Analyses were primarily descriptive but included some advanced analytics using SPSS and Microsoft's Excel. Knowledge application practices by Ottawa Tourism included the dissemination of data to both internal and external stakeholders. Internally, knowledge was presented and disseminated via reports, webinars, as well as collective staff and one-on-one meetings. Similarly, knowledge was presented and disseminated to extremal stakeholders (i.e., industry partners) via reports and webinars.

The challenges and gaps experienced throughout this process were then identified to assess the need. Namely, Ottawa Tourism noted four main challenges in generating knowledge. First, budget limitations were noted as a barrier to purchasing datasets as well as data analysis software. Second, inconsistencies in data formats (e.g., structured vs unstructured; static vs live) posed challenges when transforming and aggregating datasets for analysis. Third, gaps in data availability and poor-quality data sources limited the generation of valuable insights. Finally, with a small in-house data team, Ottawa Tourism identified a lack of internal capacity (i.e., time and staff) to effectively gather, transform, amalgamate, and mobilize Big Data towards supporting real-time management decisions. Together, these barriers resulted in gaps in knowledge generation across various categories of key performance indicators (KPIs). Namely, while Ottawa Tourism felt that their existing sources provided sufficient data regarding international arrivals, hotel accommodations, trip purpose, visitor spend, and sentiment; challenges in knowledge generation resulted in inadequate data regarding domestic arrivals, alternative accommodations, tourism employment, sustainability indicators, and their competitive environment. With regards to knowledge application, Ottawa Tourism noted that their primary challenges were upholding confidentiality of stakeholder data, ensuring access to knowledge sharing across all relevant stakeholders, and having a unified platform to house, analyze, and support data-based decision making. It was noted that a dashboard DMIS tool was an existing gap and desired addition to their existing knowledge application practices.

4.2 DMIS development

Following a review and comparison of several popular DMIS platforms, Microsoft's Power BI was selected as the platform for the present study. Once licences were acquired, the development of the DMIS prototype for Ottawa Tourism followed the five phases of Höpken et al's (2011) Knowledge Destination Framework Architecture.

Phase one, taking place from March 2020 through May 2020, included the identification and evaluation of relevant datasets from an array of internal and external sources based on the Data Quality Dimensions of timeliness, consistency, accuracy, and completeness (Sidi et al, 2012). Only a selection of Ottawa Tourism's current datasets were approved through this assessment, thus, additional datasets were further gathered through an online search and were assessed for inclusion in the DMIS. Notably, however, challenges were experienced in identifying datasets that successfully met all criteria; thus, accuracy was prioritized to ensure trusted results at the metropolitan area level. As a result, data related to tourism employment and select sustainability indicators were incomplete; most datasets were only comparable by date due to dataset inconsistencies; and data distribution delays of up to one year, on behalf of the data sources, severely impacted timeliness.

The second phase, which was undertaken between June 2020 and August 2020, included the extraction, transformation, and loading of the various datasets to the data warehouse. All extracted datasets for the purpose of this prototype were static, however, there was a mix of both raw and processed datasets. All datasets were individually loaded into Power BI where transformations were made using the on-board Query Editor. Transformations included deconstructing processed datasets into a raw and usable format, translating coded variable names and responses into readable labels, filtering variables for the required information, converting variable types to align with visual presentation needs, and curating new variables for analysis. Following each individual transformation, the datasets were loaded to the on-premises Power BI data warehouse.

Once transformed and loaded to the data warehouse, the datasets were amalgamated through a mapping process in September 2020. This consisted of establishing relationships between connected datasets with shared variables and linking all datasets by date to a central calendar dataset in Power BI's Model View.

In the fourth phase, taking place from October 2020 to December 2020, the data was analyzed in Power BI through the application of Data Analysis Expressions (DAX) language, on-board processing, and R programming language. Manipulations were applied to generate knowledge across the various categories of key performance indicators recognized by Ottawa Tourism in the initial interview.

Finally, from January 2021 to February 2021, the fifth phase consisted of visualizing the generated knowledge through an interactive Power BI dashboard DMIS. The resulting dashboard consisted of six pages (see figure 2): (1) a destination overview that provides a holistic summary of the destination's most essential key performance indicators; (2) an arrivals report that breaks down visitor statistics, identifies influential factors, and provides internal and competitor benchmarking; (3) a visitor spending report that tracks seasonality, identifies influential factors, and dissects spending across various sectors of the destination's tourism industry; (4) a visitor profiles report that identified visitors demographics, trip purposes, and dispersion and density throughout the destination; (5) an accommodations report that tracks key performance indicators and competitor benchmarking across accommodation types; and (6) a travel trade report that identified behavioural trends in travel package arrivals.

4.3 Presenting and testing the DMIS

In March 2021, a semi-structured interview was held with Ottawa Tourism stakeholders to present and test the utility of the DMIS in generating and applying knowledge. First, the ability of the DMIS to generate knowledge was assessed across the Data Quality Dimensions of timeliness, consistency, accuracy, and completeness (Sidi et al, 2012). While Ottawa Tourism indicated that the DMIS was accurate in terms of the quality of data and granularity for the specific region, challenges were noted across the other dimensions. Namely, although data was collected on most existing and previously inadequate indicators (e.g., domestic arrivals, alternative accommodations, competitive environment, and some sustainability indicators), poor accuracy of sources of tourism employment and select sustainability indicators led to incomplete data in these domains. Next, while all datasets were comparable by date, additional filtering and forecasting capabilities were unable to be realized due to poor consistency across datasets. Finally, the timeliness of the data was hindered by two aspects. First, the quarterly aggregation and release of data by most sources was deemed ineffective within such a dynamic industry that requires monthly, weekly, or even daily insights. Second, the delay in data distribution by most sources hindered the ability to make real-time decisions, specifically in the rapidly changing environment present during a crisis.

Figure 2: DMIS prototype for Ottawa Tourism

Knowledge application was assessed based on the DMIS's capacity to support seven domains of smart destination management including building product, identity, commitment, vision, coalition, sustainability, and resilience (adopted from Wang, 2011). While Ottawa Tourism noted that the extraction, warehousing, harnessing, and visualization of the DMIS would support them in making decisions across these seven domains, the weaknesses in the quality of the data inputs diminished its overall utility, but specifically the capacity to build sustainability and resilience. It was noted that to make decisions to build sustainability and resilience, more complete data is required across sustainability indicators, more consistent datasets are required to make more reliable forecasts, and more timely data is needed due to the dynamic and urgent nature of these decisions.

4.4 Addressing feedback and debrief meeting

After presenting and testing the utility of the DMIS with Ottawa Tourism in March 2021, efforts were made between April 2021 and August 2021 to address the identified gaps and challenges in data timeliness, consistency, and completeness by way of an additional search for supplementary datasets. The search was conducted both online and through contacting industry stakeholders. While additional datasets were identified in the domain of tourism employment and select sustainability indicators, the researchers were only able to obtain them at the provincial level and not at the metropolitan level, thus, the challenges in completeness were unresolved. Additionally, no new datasets were identified towards resolving the challenges in consistency and timeliness.

In September 2021, a debrief meeting was held with Ottawa Tourism to review the results of these efforts. Overall, the DMIS was deemed adequate in supporting management decisions towards building product, identity, commitment, vision, and coalition, but required more complete, consistent, and timely data inputs in efforts to build sustainability and resilience.

5. Discussion and conclusion

While the COVID-19 recovery is the short-term goal for many, destinations must look to build greater resiliency in the long term. Using smart destination management is now a critical need (Abbas et al, 2021; Assaf and Scuderi, 2020). Through the practical development and testing of a Destination Management Information System (DMIS) for Ottawa Tourism, this study aimed to contribute to the limited applications of DMISs in the literature, specifically, the empirical testing of DMISs towards supporting smart destination management. The results indicated that while Höpken et al's (2011) Knowledge Destination Framework Architecture serves as a valid process in the development of a DMIS, a DMIS's capacity to support smart destination management is limited by the quality of its inputs. Namely, the ability to make decisions, primarily with regards to building sustainability and resiliency, require data inputs that are timely, consistent, accurate, and complete.

The findings of this study point to several opportunities to support future knowledge generation and knowledge application within the tourism industry. First, there is a need for the tourism industry to share data to enhance decision making. Not only is more data needed, but a more unified approach to data collection to ensure comparable and reliable data is required. Second there is a need for more data on sustainability indicators. Currently there is little data about visitor flow, resource use, and community impact apart from ad-hoc data. Third, there is a need for more data interpretation, rather than just visualization of data to ensure that data informed decision making is done. As many DMO's do not even have budgets for data, let alone analysts, tools such as Klevr Place's data interpretation dashboard offers a useful, potentially more affordable tool for destinations.

In addition to serving as a guide for the development and application of future DMISs, the findings of this study support several opportunities for future research. First, while this study prioritized indicators associated with arrivals, spend, visitor profiles, accommodations, and travel trade, there is an opportunity for future applications to further explore the inclusion of additional indicators related to insights in marketing, sentiment, employment, and sustainability. Second, as this study developed a prototype, only static datasets were included in the DMIS; therefore, there is an opportunity to further explore the benefits and challenges of including live datasets in DMIS applications. Third, the reliability and validity of existing DMIS applications have been limited by anecdotal evidence, qualitative data collection, and single case studies; thus, it is recommended that future studies continue to apply theoretical frameworks and utilize more rigorous methods (e.g., experimental procedures) in testing the utility of a DMIS to support smart destination management. Finally, while most DMIS applications to date have focused on a single destination, there is a need for future research to explore the development and testing of a scalable DMIS that can be accessible and transferable across DMO's of all sizes.

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Organizational Culture and Group Dynamics in the Tourism Industry

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Abstract: The tourism industry is one of the most dominant industries at a global level that affect the world's economy (Belias et al., 2017), as the tourism industry contributes to a very high percentage of the Gross Domestic Product of many countries (such as United States, China, Japan, Italy, France and Spain) (Statista, 2021). On the other hand, researchers have acknowledged the importance of organizational culture (Cook & Yanow, 1993; Schein, 1993) as well as the importance of group dynamics, (Crossan et al., 1999; Wastell, 1999) on the members of an organization. Over the latest decades, globalization has made cultural diversity a world-wide phenomenon. Tourism and Hospitality is a field where someone can recognize the importance of cultural differences among different cultural groups. In an organization, such as a hotel company, there are a lot of cultural diversities not only among the employees of the hotel but also among the guests of the hotel (Rampley, 2005; Bavik, 2015). So it is essential for a hotel company to establish its organizational culture which will be consist of several values, rules and priorities that everyone who is involved in it (employees and guests) has to follow. The aim of this paper is to examine the current literature concerning the relationship between organizational culture and group dynamics in general, as well as in the tourism industry. The methodology which will be used is literature selection of papers, studies, articles and journals retrieved from online bibliographic databases (such as Science Direct and Google Scholar). Although, there is a significant amount of papers discussing the organizational culture or the group dynamics in an organization there seems to be a research lack in the connection between organizational culture and group dynamics especially in the touristic and hospitality services. With the current paper we try to shed some light in the above field in order to trigger for future theoretical as also empirical research.

Keywords: organizational culture, group dynamics, relationship, tourism industry

1. Introduction

Over the last 30 years, Human Resources Management scholars have turned their interest into the field of Organizational Culture. Many researchers of organizational behaviour suggest that organizational culture contributes an essential factor of differentiation in business performance (Piercy et al., 2004). According to Schein (2004) "the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture". Schein (2004) also highlights that "the unique talent of leaders is their ability to understand and work with culture; and that is an ultimate act of leadership to destroy culture when it is viewed as dysfunctional".

Organizational culture forms the organizational procedures, integrates the organizational capabilities, solves the organization's problems, and hence, impeding or facilitating the organization's effectiveness (Yilmaz & Ergun, 2008).

In addition to this, group dynamics is a field that combines all the things that are related with people and their groups. One of the major issues of group dynamics is the building of a team and its culture. A team's culture is the shared perception of how the team should work in order to accomplish its goals. Team norms, member roles, and patterns of interaction are included in the team culture (Levi, 2017). Teams do not develop their culture from scratch. They adopt cultural norms and values from their organization and society (Wheelan, 2005). When there is an agreement in norms, values and roles (in other words team's culture), anxiety is reduced and the communication between the members of the team is improved (Levi, 2017). Also collaborative team culture provides the sharing of information between team members so as to coordinate work activities (Zarraga & Bonache, 2005). When the team's culture is united, it includes mutual trust, leniency in judging others, courage to state opinions and willingness to help (Levi, 2017).

The main purpose of this paper is to examine the current literature concerning the relationship between organizational culture and group dynamics in general, as well as in the tourism industry. The methodology which will be used is literature selection of papers, studies, articles, conference proceedings, books and journals retrieved from online bibliographic databases (such as Science Direct and Google Scholar). The selection of these references is based on relevance with the topic of the paper and it is not exhaustive.

2. Organizational culture

Organizational culture is considered one of the main key factors that modern companies have to focus on. The organizational culture of a company consists of the setting of values, rules and priorities that are followed by the personnel and all the individuals that are involved in it (Belias et al., 2017; Belias et al. 2015; Belias et al. 2016). In other words, organizational culture consists of beliefs about the goals of an organization that its members should pursue, as well as the ideas about the appropriate modes of behaviour the members of the organizations should follow in order to achieve these goals (Hill and Jones, 2001).

One of the first scholars that defined organizational culture is Schein (1986). According to Schein (1986) organizational culture is “a pattern of basic assumptions invented, discovered, or developed by a group to face its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that it has considered valid and sufficient to be taught to new members as the right way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems”. On the same point of view, Barney (1986) defined organizational culture as “a complex set of values, beliefs, assumptions, and symbols that define the way an organization does business”.

Organizational culture serves two main functions in the organization: (a) to help members to know their relationship with the other members (internal environment), (b) to help the organization adapt to the external environment (Belias, Velissariou & Rossidis, 2019). As far as the internal environment is concerned, culture governs everyday working relationships and determines the way that individuals communicate within the organization, what behaviour is acceptable or not, and the way that power and authority are shared (Torrington et al., 2005). Similarly, as far as the external environment is concerned, culture is associated with the way the organization achieves goals and deals with third parties. In addition, culture can help the organization respond quickly to the needs of the client or to the movement of a competitor (Belias, Velissariou & Rossidis, 2019). Thus, culture is related to the social environment of an organization, creating either positive or negative relationships within and outside of the organization (Armstrong, 2006).

3. Organizational culture in the tourism industry

Tourism industry is one of the biggest global industries, which has become a part of people’s life style, with its suppliers and consumers spread throughout the world. In order to provide successful services, a hospitality organization has to share a set of cultural values that focuses on quality and customers, encourages workplace motivation and teamwork, gives employees freedom in meeting customer demands, supports innovation and creativity, and requires for someone to pay detail attention when doing a job (Tepeci, 2005; Chung and Schneider, 2003; Miller, 1992).

According to Pantiyasa (2016), an organizational culture in the hospitality industry would be reflected on the “moments of truth”, which is translated as the time when an employee interacts with the guests and requires quick decision making.

Moreover, Nickson (2007) argues that organizational culture can be expressed by a variety of things someone can meet in the hotel, such as furniture model, hotel logo and the usage of certain languages by employees.

Over the last two decades, there have been some researches which investigate the values of the organizational culture in the tourism industry. More thoroughly, Altunay (1999) investigated organizational culture in luxurious hotels of Turkey. Altuney (1999) discovered that organizational culture helps employees to score high levels of communication, cooperation, teamwork and fair management practices. In addition, Kyriakidou and Gore (2005) found out that successful hospitality and tourism firms adopt an organizational culture which encourages the collaboration in missions and strategies, builds the future of the organization, develops the organization and the individuals working on it, grows a learning environment and practices teamwork in the workplace.

On the same point of view Pantiyasa (2016) studied the effects of the organizational culture in Padma Resort Legian (Bali). Pantiyasa (2016) found out that the core values of the organizational culture are the following:

- Achievement: the success of a touristic company can be measured by targeting on achievement on every part of the job. Pulakos et al (2004) argues that performance management can be achieved by exposing the bigger picture in the employees, by providing feedback regularly, and by developing through experience.
- Excellence: A superior organization is defined through superior human capital, superior fellowship, superior process and superior product (Dahlgarrd et al., 1999). Similarly, Sasmita & Nayantara (2003) suggest that an organization that supports perfection, has to provide a vision to its employees, has to provide perfect activities and processes, needs to evaluate perfection, must empower employees and must support learning processes.
- Customer focus: It is important for a company to focus its organizational culture into the satisfaction of the client. Mohammadpour Amir (2014) (cited in Pantiyasa, 2016) argues that the customer is one of the company's biggest asset. For that reason a modern company (occupied in the hospitality services) should see things by the customer's perspective and should try to understand and satisfy the customers under a highly competitive environment (Mohammadpour Amir, cited in Pantiyasa, 2016).
- Honesty and Integrity: Desson et al. (2010) mention that the integrity of a company exhibits the fact that the company appreciates the organization's honesty, develops very high ethical standards and provides an outcome that can be trusted.

Finally, Alkaya & Yirik (2014), after their research in a five star hotel in Antalya, came to the conclusion that organization culture influences on all personnel, group and group identity conflict. In other words, the organization culture of the hospitality companies could create conflicts between employees because of the differences that exist due to different cultures of the employees (Alkaya & Yirik, 2014). Planning an organizational culture independent from the different cultures of the employees can trigger the negative results of conflicts. For that reason, managers should take into consideration employees' profiles when forming organizational culture. Organizational conflict has a direct effect on quality and efficiency in the tourism sector. Thus, managers have to develop measures to prevent organizational conflict from happening (Alkaya & Yirik, 2014).

4. Defining group dynamics

A group is more than a collection of people. In order to define the differences between collections of people, groups and teams, researchers use several approaches that vary depending on which features are considered important (Levi, 2017).

A team is defined as a special type of group in which people work interdependently to accomplish a goal. Organizations use many different types of teams to serve a variety of purposes. For that reason, the scientific study of group dynamics provides useful insights about how teams operate and how they can be improved (Levi, 2017). So the main question is "what are the major characteristics in the field of group dynamics?".

Forsyth (2019) defines group dynamics as "the influential interpersonal processes that occur in and between groups over time. These processes not only determine how members relate to and engage with one another, but they also determine the group's inherent nature and trajectory: the actions the group takes, how it responds to its environment, and what it achieves".

To be more specific, group dynamics involve the examination of the below major issues:

- Inclusion and identity: Do humans prefer inclusion to exclusion and group membership to isolation? How do group experiences and memberships influence individuals' identities?
- Formation: Who joins groups, and who remains apart? Why do people deliberately create groups or join existing groups?
- Cohesion and development: What is cohesion and what causes it? How do groups develop over time?
- Structure: What are norms, roles and networks of intermember relations, and how do they organize groups?
- Influence: When will people conform to a group's standards, and when will they remain independent? How powerful is social influence?
- Power: Why are some members of groups more powerful than others?
- Leadership: Who do groups prefer for leaders? Should a leader be task-focused or relationship-focused?

- Performance: Do people perform tasks more effectively in groups or when they are alone?
- Teams: What is the difference between a group and a team? Does team building improve team work? How can leaders intervene to improve the performance of their teams?
- Decision making: What steps do groups take when making decisions?
- Conflict in groups: What causes disputes between group members? Why do groups sometimes splinter into subgroups? How can disputes in groups be resolved?
- Intergroup relations: What causes disputes between groups? How can intergroup conflict be resolved? (Forsyth, 2019)

Finally, in order for a group to be developed, according to Tuckman's theory (Tuckman 1965; Tuckman & Jensen 2010), it passes through five stages during its development:

- 1. Orientation (forming): Exchange of background personal information, uncertainty, tentative communication.
- 2. Conflict (storming): Dissatisfaction, disagreement, challenges to leader and procedures, cliques form
- 3. Structure (norming): Cohesiveness, agreement on procedures, standards, and roles, improved communication
- 4. Performance (performing): Focus on the work of the group, task completion, decision making, cooperation
- 5.Dissolution (adjourning): Departures, withdrawal, decreased dependence, regret.

5. Group dynamics in the tourism industry

The creation of teams has become a key strategy in the tourism industry. Team building is very important in supporting and improving the effectiveness of groups and should be a key part of a program for organizational change.

More specifically, the hospitality industry is characterised by social interaction between a number of different groups (Ingram & Desombre, 2000). In other words, there are various teams working for the tourism and hospitality industry, such as: representatives of passenger carriers, hotel operators, licensed travel agents, tour operators, retailers and restaurant operators (Page, 2019). Figure 1 describes the different departments (or teams as they usually called in the hospitality department (Walker & Walker, 2014)) which can be found in a typical hotel business.

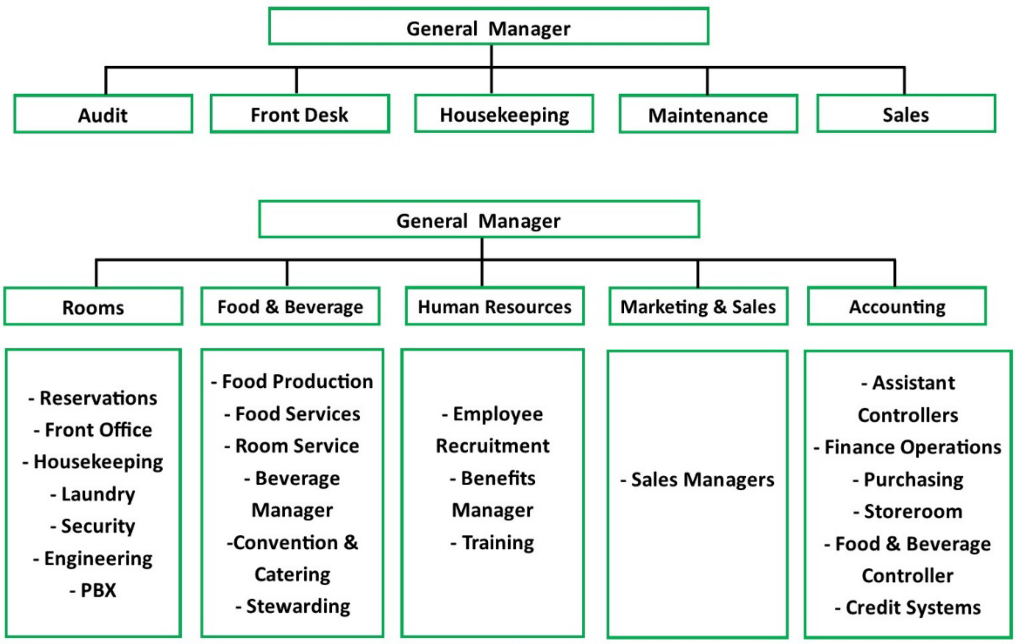

Figure 1: Teams in a hotel business (Stutts & Wortman, 2005)

Hotel businesses, and hospitality companies in general, use teams in various ways. One way is the organisation of the company into teams from the start. That implies that employees must act as team players which is very vital for the company's proper function (Walker & Walker, 2014). Another way managers can use teams is through Total Quality Management (TQM) programs (Belias et al. 2016b) that involve that the employees are working in teams in a constant effort to improve guest experience. More specifically, teams are formed from one or several different departments and then the team members choose the area of operation that need improvement and proceed to make changes that will benefit the guests (Walker & Walker, 2014). A third way that managers can use teams is through self-managed teams. Self – managed teams make the decisions that the managers used to take in the past. This saves managers time, so they can concentrate to more important things. An example of self-managed teams is hotel housekeepers. Hotel housekeepers that score highly on room inspections no longer need to have their rooms checked by a floor housekeeper. The teams of these housekeepers receive a bonus for superior performance and the hotel can save on the salary of the floor housekeepers (Walker & Walker, 2014).

In addition, Ingram and Desombre (2000) suggest the molecular structure hotel unit model, which focuses on the needs of the guest (Figure 2).

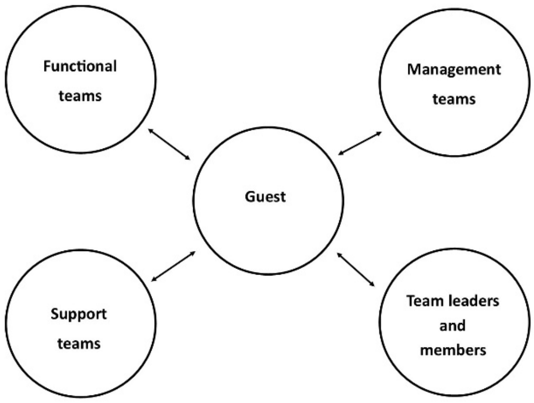

Figure 2: Molecular structure hotel unit model (Ingram & Desombre, 2000)

According to the above model functional as well as management teams focus into the needs of the guest. Moreover, this model develops an innovative and participative teamwork approach that is designed to improve service quality and to reduce labour costs. Communication through daily, weekly and shift briefings seems to be the key for communication among the employees. As far as teamwork is concerned, the model introduces a number of ways with which molecular structure model can be monitored. First of all, "open table" technique is used. According to this technique, selected team members are invited to lunch with the hotel unit general manager and are encouraged to discuss any items of concern that affect them or the team. Moreover, regular formal appraisals are given as well as less formal appraisals in order to form the basis for team performance (Ingram & Desombre, 2000). Team performance, according to molecular structure model, is measured through the following characteristics:

- Team satisfaction: pay, meals, training, fair treatment
- Guest satisfaction: feedback, guests, returning, growing business
- Marketing actions: marketing plan, local trade, press visibility
- Condition of buildings and equipment: safety, maintenance
- Controlling costs: efficiency, energy management, stock levels
- Respect: from management, cooperation, support from others
- Environment and ecology: waste, "good neighbour"
- Profit contribution: improvements, sales volumes
- School of life: training and career development

- Image: "look" of the hotel, respect in local community, pride in work (Ingram & Desombre, 2000)

6. Organizational culture and group dynamics in the tourism industry

Human resources managers in the hospitality industry have to deal with specific characteristics which include employee's and customer's diversity as well as the formation of different groups of professionals (Georgiadou and Iasonos, 2015). For that reason, a lot of modern organizations invest in promoting diversity in the work environment. Thus, it is very important to understand "how diversity impacts individual and team processes and outcomes in the workplace" (Harrison & Sin, 2006).

Recent studies have shown that diversity has been claimed to impact team effectiveness (Harrison & Sin, 2006). Similarly, diverse work teams were found to attain high value to organizations (Georgiadou and Iasonos, 2015). One of the characteristics of the hospitality industry is the multicultural and globalised perspective (Korjala, 2012). As a result, diversity management practices may offer major advantages for the organization when facilitating transactions with customers (Hicks-Clarke & Iles, 2000). Besides, a company's reputation and image can be effectively enhanced, when committing to diversity. (Roberson & Park, 2007).

Hospitality and tourism industry operates in a very complex multicultural environment. Thus, organizations have to take into serious consideration, individuals' perception on culture as also they should not underestimate the role of the national culture (Reisinger, 2009).

Most managers recognize the value and the importance of culture. However, they find it difficult to connect culture with diversity in order to lead to the achievement of the strategic objectives (Georgiadou and Iasonos, 2015). According to Okoro & Washington (2012), organizational competiveness is strongly dependent on the ability to manage cultural diversity in a workplace and communicate effectively across cultures.

So, diversity has to be a part of the organizational culture in order to be effective. Hence, creating a handbook which outlines rules and regulations in consistence with diversity, ensuring that employees are familiar with the policies as well as reinforcing these priorities in regular staff meeting, are some of the ways with which diversity could be built in an organizational culture (Overproof, 2015).

There are some practical rules that a manager should take care of when establishing diversity into the organizational culture and group dynamics (especially into managing teams):

- Diversity should be a priority during hiring process
- Creating clear and inclusive policies
- Providing diversity training to employees
- Supporting effective communication
- Encouraging positive interactions between employees
- Educating the team leaders
- Creating a council to oversee inclusion
- Recognizing and celebrating diversity
- Being open to employee feedback
- Hosting more effective meetings
- Establishing clear goals and measuring progress (Overproof, 2015)

Last but not least, managers have to be careful of the following conflict that may happen when establishing changes in the organizational culture: Gullen and Rhodes (1983) suggest that associating with others during the course of work contributes to friendship. Because of social needs, informal groups can be created. These groups are not necessarily associated with the working terms. These informal groups generate their own culture and values that may conflict with those of the organization, causing resistance to the changes that managers are trying to bring into the organization (Keiser, 1989).

7. Conclusion

The paper has examined the connection between organizational culture and group dynamics in the tourism industry. As it is indicated by various researchers (Altunay, 1999; Kyriakidou & Gore, 2005) organizational culture potentiates communication, teamwork, cooperation, motivation as well as creativity and innovation strategies. Hence, it is essential for the development of an organization to build an organizational culture which will be adopted by all the personnel. It is also very important for the future of the organization that organization's managers should be able to adjust the organization culture to the changes that occur on the internal and external environment of the organization (Belias, Velissariou & Rossidis, 2019). More specifically, employee's and customer's diversity is one of the main changes that human resources managers have to deal with when they create working teams in the hospitality businesses. Team's culture is considered to be a reflection of the organization's culture (Thompson, 2004). Thus, managers have to take into serious consideration the role of group dynamics (orientation, conflict, structure, performance and dissolution) when building a working team in order to be successful and efficient.

Due to the empirical research lack in the connection between organizational culture and group dynamics in the tourism industry, there is a need for future empirical research which will help the academia and the practitioners to better understand the relationship between organizational culture and group dynamics. Especially, it is essential to create theoretical as also empirical models which will measure the connection between these two terms. These models should not only be used for the tourism industry but also they can be adjusted for organizations in general.

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The Impacts of Covid-19 on Staff Training Within the Aviation Sector

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Abstract: Aviation is among those industries that were most heavily impacted and disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The impacts were most severe in passenger traffic where the amount of seats offered dropped by 50% during 2020 causing airline revenue loss of 371bn USD. Air-traffic cuts exceeded 90% in some areas. Covid-19 pandemic had many indirect impacts on air travel services, including how staff training is carried out. Although the pandemic has had massive negative influences in different areas of life, it has opened doors to new innovations and developments as well. A giant leap forward has taken place in online education, which this study focuses on from the specific viewpoint of air travel service providers. Attempts to contain the spread of Covid-19 lead to school closures and by the beginning of April 2020 the pandemic had impacted over 90% of the world's total enrolled learners. Similarly 188 country-wide school closures took place globally. This led to boost in online education – possibly the greatest growth of all time was seen. In aviation sector the impacts are evident as well, mostly reflected by the ways how staff training is delivered at airports. Organizations in air traffic chain had to adapt to the changed operational landscape, new health and safety risks and learn to comply with new regulations. Staff skills and competences were in the middle of this. This case study examines these developments in international air transport context during 2020 and 2021. We will look at various examples in aviation industry organizations related to staff training, focusing specifically on how training practices have changed due to Covid-19. From the basis of these findings and experiences, the paper attempts to draw a future scenario of digital transformation of training in the industry. Case studies are based on courses developed and provided by Airport College (AC) which is a private online training academy serving the global aviation sector with digitally enhanced training solutions.

Keywords: aviation, training, online learning, digital transformation, VR, workplace

1. Overview

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in early 2020 the world entered an unexpected era of disruption which impacted the mobility of people. Nation-wide lock-downs that took place in 2020 had a specific negative impact on international travel and tourism which was down by 72% in 2021 compared to figures of 2019 (measured by # of international tourist arrivals). Similarly export venues from international tourism decreased by 1 trillion US Dollars globally. (World Tourism Organization 2022) From the perspective of travel and tourism the most immediate outcome of pandemic-related restrictions was that international travel decreased very fast. Part of this turned to the benefit of domestic travel with substantial increase in "safe" ways of travel (such as cottage holidays). The situation led to many changes in consumer behavior, of which some are likely to be more permanent than others. For example, motorhome and campervan sales hit record levels in 2020-21 when people were seeking alternative ways of spending their free-time and holidays (RV Industry Association 2022). In overall the impact of Covid-19 on travel has been very negative.

This paper focuses on staff training at airports and the impacts of the pandemic on training activities. While the majority of airport staff is working in large international airports, this is also where the greatest disruptions have taken place. In this study we will review airport ground handling operations where most of the people working in airports are located. This workforce plays a central role in operations critical for passenger service and actions needed for aircraft turnaround between flights. By April 2020 the number of international flights decreased by 80% as result of flight cancellations (Santos 2020). This led to massive staff lay-offs in airport ground handling. The issue of workforce competences and how to maintain them becomes extremely critical when airport operations start to recover. Airport College International (AC) is the leading provider of online training for airport staff. This includes airlines, ground handling companies, authorities, training institutions and public organizations. Since 2012 AC has carried out pioneer work, strongly founded on research evidence, to modernize the provision of training within aviation sector. Realizing that the pandemic will have long-term impacts on many aspects of aviation, particularly on workforce development and resourcing, AC initiated this study to source understanding on the future dimensions and demands of training. This paper reviews developments related to staff training in international air transport context during 2020 and 2021 focusing on AC´s two most significant target markets Finland and Asia (South-Korea specifically) where the primary data was also collected from. We will analyze the impact of the pandemic on air travel and training activities at airports. We will then examine how organizations operating at airports are adapting to the changing operational landscape with specific focus on workforce development.

2. Starting point, objectives and methods

Aviation is a largely regulated industry with comprehensive procedures defined for each work-role to ensure work is carried out appropriately and by following high standards of quality, safety and customer demands. To allow this, sets of competence requirements are assigned for work-roles. Many competences are mandatory and without them employees are not allowed to access the airport and/or work there. Compliancy training programs are designed to fulfil these competences with a requirement for recurrent training within 2 or 3 years typically. Alignment of competent workforce with respect to resource demands in daily operations set the starting point for discussion on the role of training during the pandemic and when the industry starts to recover. As result of massive layouts of staff in 2020 it seems that many former employees have shifted to other professions. This is natural, but for airport employers the situation is difficult. If an employer quickly faces an acute demand for more employees it´s likely that a sufficient amount of competent work candidates are not available. Even if former employees appeared willing to work again, they wouldn´t have the required competencies anymore. Updating them takes time and resources. In a situation where traffic volumes increase substantially meeting the increased demand for workforce would be very challenging. This calls for new ways in competence development and training.

2.1 The training perspective

Understanding the impacts of Covid-19 on education is important for the scope of this study as it helps us realize both the challenges and possibilities in training provision. According to UNESCO the pandemic has impacted over 1.5 billion learners globally, representing 91,3% of the world's total enrolled learners (Unesco 2020). This population, led by educational practitioners, has been able to adopt a new means of distance learning which utilizes the great potential of digital education. In past years, companies have been in the forefront of digital learning adoption, because when applied appropriately, digital training can provide substantial added value to businesses in terms of increased quality, flexibility and significant savings in training-related costs. The IATA Aviation Human Resources Report from 2018 reported that HR leaders expect the share of digital training to increase substantially in the near future, because more efficient means of training are needed (IATA 2018). This said, very little digitalization had taken place in airport training by the end of 2019. Experiences from the educational domain in large-scale adoption of digital methods in teaching and learning are encouraging, however. They show that in a situation where change cannot be resisted anymore and ways of working need to be completely reconsidered, people are able to adapt to change. In education the pandemic didn´t only have negative influences. In fact, it triggered a revolution in learning engaging millions and millions of learners and teachers around the world to exploit the possibilities of distance education and digital learning. As the past two years have shown distance working practices are emerging in a quite similar way simply because in many cases there is no alternative. When workplace training is considered, and the context of airport work specifically, the question is what kind of changes are emerging and how permanent they will be?

2.2 Key considerations

During the writing of this paper there are many speculations that the pandemic will be soon over leading to recovery in international travel and tourism as well. Whatever the future will be like, employers in aviation sector need to be able to adapt to the change that is taking place and the fact that the world around us is not likely to be the same as it was in 2019. From this starting point the key questions to answer within the context of this study are: (1) how employers can continue to maintain and develop their staff capacities, and (2) how training practices and arrangements should be adapted to meet the requirements of changed operational environment?

2.3 Methods

This study was conducted as desktop research using the most relevant aviation industry statistics (provided by ICAO, IATA, ACI), competence development reports (IATA), economical and societal data (Unesco, WTO), other available literature and interviews with industry stakeholders as data sources. AC´s training records which contain global training data from hundreds of organizations in more than 140 countries were used as well. The insights of aviation leaders were used to source understanding on the challenges and potential solutions.

3. Results

This section provides a statistical overview of the state of training in airport operations during 2020 and 2021 focusing on Asia (South-Korea in particular) and Finland. It attempts to illustrate the impact of changed demand

and operational requirements on workforce training to understand what kind of actions and solutions are needed to training workforce for tomorrow´s needs.

3.1 Statistical view of air travel volumes

Assuming that airport staff training activity is somehow dependent on air traffic volumes we will first have a look at how the pandemic impacted air traffic volumes. Statistics show that there are significant differences between countries and regions as well. For example, China experienced the deepest and most urgent decrease in air traffic volumes by as early as mid-February 2020. Soon after, air traffic volumes started to rise reaching pre-pandemic levels by the end of September 2020. In Japan the decrease was more moderate hitting bottom levels in the end of May 2020. However, by January 2021 air traffic volumes in Japan were still over 30% behind pre-pandemic levels. In this regard, South-Korea follows the same pattern with Japan. There are significant variations in Asian countries. Resurgence of Covid-19 during the third quarter of 2021 led to new travel restrictions decreasing global air traffic volumes again (Airports Council International 2021).

Statistics from Finland are less encouraging. Finland hit the bottom in air traffic volumes also in April 2020 with massive 99% decrease. This is partly explained by Helsinki airport´s position as the gateway from Europe to Asia where the pandemic evolved most aggressively in the spring of 2020. Figures from domestic air travel are similar, however (Statistics Finland 2020a). The situation didn´t improve much during 2020 with >90% less volume compared to pre-pandemic levels (Statistics Finland 2020b). Globally, air traffic seems to recover slowly. Report from December 2021 provided by IATA shows 45,1% decrease in global air traffic compared to 2 years before. The same report claims that the overall travel demand seems to strengthen now, despite the emergence of Omicron variant in December 2021. It´s expected that the confidence to travel will increase in 2022 with clear signs of recovery in many countries (IATA 2022).

3.2 Impacts on training activity and skills demand

Next, we will examine changes in training volumes in two different training markets – South-Korea and Finland. Training statistics cover staff training records maintained by AC at 7 airports in South-Korea and 12 airports in Finland. Following the development of traffic volumes due to the pandemic, training statistics show a major decrease in training volumes starting from April 2020. In South-Korea, there was a decrease of 77% in online training volumes compared to 4/2019. In Finland, a drop of 60% in training volumes was seen. This reflects the fact that Asian countries were most acutely impacted by the pandemic and the greatest negative impact in Finland was seen in May 2020 (with 89% decrease compared to 5/2019). Interestingly, both target markets seem to have reached 2019 levels in training activity by the end of 2021. This shows that although the pandemic is still on-going with high global infection rates, companies providing airport ground handling services are active in preparing their workforce for the recovery of operations. Recovery of operations is expected to require many permanent changes in how operations are carried out airports. Preparing workforce for this new normal by training seems to be in progress.

The greatest impact on training activities in airport ground handling operations due to Covid-19 has been the shift of operational focus from passenger traffic to air cargo. While passenger traffic volumes decreased quickly after the pandemic spread, the demand for cargo transport services increased hitting record numbers in 2021 (Kulisch 2021). This was partially impacted by decreased passenger flight capacity, as cargo is also transported in passenger aircraft. Cargo demand was boosted by urgent global demand for health supplies and quick increase in online shopping due to mobility restrictions. To allow airlines to respond to the changed situation, aviation authorities passed an exemption for air carriers to transport cargo shipments inside passenger cabins. This impacted training requirements of airport staff. Workforce that was still on duty had to participate in mandatory training programs to acquire required competencies for new operational procedures. Introduction of a range of pandemic-related sanitary guidelines and requirements for safe travel also increased the training demand.

Reports from airport ground handling companies and airlines indicate the nature of training demand and how new needs are emerging. Some training contents tend to update more frequently than others. Due to the pandemic aviation authorities had to release new requirements for operational requirements throughout the air travel chain and many of these impacted the competence requirements of airport staff. New safety and sanitary procedures impact customer service at various points of the customer service process. A particular impact is seen in the role of staff when it comes to advising passengers on new safety protocols. Considering these aspects as part of customer service experience requires training and practice. A notable increase in the demand of customer service training at airports was identified in late 2021 (Airport College 2021). Staff competences are put to test specifically when things don´t go as planned. How these situations are dealt with impacts customer satisfaction and behavior. For example, tightening safety restrictions may raise the stress levels of customers and sometimes this impacts customer behavior negatively. Courses that prepare the staff to encounter with unruly or threatening customers are an essential part of airport staff training and demand for them seems to increase due to the pandemic.

3.3 Challenges and solutions in workforce development

Some examples of how companies are adapting to the situation described earlier are reviewed next. Mobility restrictions and social distancing are not only impacting the behavior of customers and staff in customer service. The impact reaches out to working individuals and work communities as well. Due to the pandemic much of office work is still done from distance. This is a logical and easy-to-implement solution as the so-called knowledge workers can often manage well with their work tasks in distance mode. Whenever the work requires physical presence the situation turns more challenging. This is typically the case when traditional means of staff training are considered. At airports many challenges related to physical attendance to trainings can be overcome by new approaches to training and by implementation of digitally enabled courses. A group of leaders in aviation were interviewed for a White Paper released by AC in February 2021 in the midst of the pandemic to share their insights on the challenges and solutions in workforce development. The following table lists issues related to training the leaders have identified and their potential solutions.

Table 1: Challenges and potential solutions related to training at airports (adapted from Patala 2021)

Challenge	Solution
Maintenance of regulatory employee competences using face-to-face training is difficult or impossible	Provide access to online recurrent self-study training programs
More training is needed quickly due to changing business, new procedures and changed client expectations	Provide access to off-the-shelf online training courses for all employees
Changing focus of business operations creates skill-gaps (e.g. due to increasing proportional share of air cargo)	Establish online retraining programs that allow employees to extend their skills to new operational areas and responsibilities
Short supply of employees in certain operational areas (due to layoffs)	Promote multi-skilling of employees by providing access to wider online training portfolios
Possible cuts in training budgets	Increase the volume of online training to achieve training-related cost savings
More changes in operational environment are expected and they may emerge rapidly impacting competence requirements	Prepare and implement online learning delivery and follow-up systems that allow fast reaction and the scaling up of training
Changes in client companies, partners and subcontractors are likely to emerge, creating demand for custom training programs	Consider customized online training courses to quickly react to changing competency requirements

When face-to-face training is difficult or impossible to arrange, digitally enabled training solutions can create new opportunities for training provision. Experience from the field shows that employers are motivated to learn about these opportunities and they are more willing to invest in training technology. Good examples of this are simulation-based training programs and virtual reality solutions which have been available for years. The possibility to allow individuals to experience training scenarios in a simulated environment on their own might be considered safe in the given situation. However, these solutions have some advantages over face-to-face training which materialize as result. For example, rehearsal of customer service skills is less risky with a virtual client in a simulated environment than trying to learn the same skills at work with real customers. These skills are typically challenging to practise without realistic settings with authentic customers. Virtuality provides additional opportunities to prepare employees for customer encounters. This should have a positive impact on customer experience due to better prepared customer service staff. When safety is concerned, the added value of simulated training becomes more vital. Referring to the case of unruly customer behaviour, meeting unruly customers in real life can be risky without adequate preparation. A simulated approach allows employees to practise concrete actions and strategies in very realistic scenarios. This kind of contextual learning approach is evidently more efficient than training which takes place outside the actual context of work (Smith 2005).

4. Discussion

The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted our society in many negative ways and its impacts on aviation have been massive. Crises often encourage humans to explore new means of survival and innovate for better. Workplace training in general has benefited from the pandemic in many ways. Digitalization which never before really executed in large scale, finally seems to evolve providing various benefits for employers. A positive finding from the aviation training context is that employers have continued to train their staff quite soon after the biggest disruption caused by the pandemic. Competent staff is considered a valuable asset in terms of maintaining organizational capacity and ability to respond to new needs emerging during recovery. New and more flexible ways of providing training to employees are expected to emerge as response to more rapid changes in operational environment and competence requirements. These developments seem to follow the general trends that are emerging in workplace training. Increasing demands for upskilling and reskilling employees to fulfil skill-gaps and the increasing importance of compliancy training are top priorities for HR leaders. Time and cost pressures are impacting training more than ever before creating demand for more efficient, digitally enabled training concepts and solutions (Udemy 2021, LinkedIn 2021).

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Tourism Routes Characterisation and Concepts: A Scoping Review

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Abstract: The concept of routes in tourism has a broad understanding that goes from a journey between two or more points to a formal network of stakeholders. This scoping review provides an overview of the literature on tourism routes by analysing their characterisation and conceptualization. The review includes documents from four databases, written in English, published until May 2020, and focusing on tourism routes as organizations of stakeholders. Based on 194 documents, regional scale routes under the food and drink thematic group are identified as the commonest, followed by the pilgrimage and history thematic groups on a transnational scale. There are neither universally accepted concepts nor terms to define routes in the tourism field.

Keywords: scoping literature review; tourism routes; stakeholders networks

1. Introduction

The concept of tourism routes goes from a narrow perception based on a journey between two or more points to a broad understanding of a network where a group of stakeholders works together under a common theme to achieve mutual goals (Moulin and Boniface, 2001; Rogerson, 2007; Timothy, 2014; World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and European Travel Commission (ETC), 2017). A report published by UNWTO and ETC (2017) mentions that although the initial purpose of routes was to link a theme together by creating a linear or circular itinerary to guide travellers, this purpose has been enlarged since many routes are now created with no fixed or recommended itinerary and understood as networks of similar themed products or destinations. Nevertheless, according to Moulin and Boniface (2001), routes and networks are different concepts; routes are an actual itinerary of travel whilst networks are a background entity to support them.

Besides, routes are addressed by a broad spectrum of terms in accordance with their touristic product, for instance, tourism routes (Rogerson, 2007), cultural heritage routes (Snowball and Courtney, 2010), wine routes (Telfer, 2001), gastronomic routes (Millán-Vazquez de la Torre, Arjona-Fuentes and Amador-Hidalgo, 2017), or pilgrimage routes (Lois González, Castro Fernández and Lopez, 2016), among others.

International organizations have been developing studies in this field and approaching these initiatives in distinct terms too. For instance, the UNWTO (2015) suggested five criteria to group cultural routes, i.e., design and structure, theme, territory, historic origin or current reconfiguration, and visitor infrastructure. On the other hand, the UNWTO and ETC (2017) proposed a thematic grouping of routes based on the underlying aspirations of travellers, e.g., history, pilgrimage, roots, landscape, food and drink, among others. Furthermore, it is possible to classify transnational tourism routes into distinctive categories as shown by UNWTO and ETC (2017), namely localized cross-border initiatives, itineraries and travel corridors initiatives, thematic or cultural networking initiatives, sustainable environmental management initiatives, theme and experience initiatives, and strategic regional cooperation initiatives.

Considering the diversity of concepts and typologies to define tourism routes as well as the absence of a review on this topic, this literature review has the main goals of distinguishing between the different typologies of routes and analysing the tourism routes conceptualization. Note that this analysis was carried out within the scope of a PhD research and was designed to provide the author, as well as other researchers, with an overall view of this concept. Accordingly, a literature review method known as scoping review is applied to answer that question. A scoping review is an assessment with the aim of mapping the potential extent, range, and nature of a research theme, and it may be applied to clarify key concepts or factors related to a concept (Arksey and O'Malley, 2005; Peters *et al.*, 2015; Munn *et al.*, 2018; Tricco *et al.*, 2018). Additionally, this research may contribute to the application of new methodologies for literature reviews in tourism, namely the scoping review.

2. Materials and methods

The scoping review method was proposed by Arksey & O'Malley (2005) and its usage has been increasing ever since (Tricco *et al.*, 2016). A scoping review has a much broader scope than a conventional systematic literature review which addresses clearly defined questions (Arksey and O'Malley, 2005; Peters *et al.*, 2015; Munn *et al.*, 2018; Tricco *et al.*, 2018). There are examples of scoping reviews applied to tourism literature (Welling, Árnason and Ólafsdottír, 2015; Gaudette, Roult and Lefebvre, 2017; Seyfi and Hall, 2020). Those studies have applied the framework developed by Arksey & O'Malley (2005), except that by Seyfi & Hall (2020). This research applies the protocol of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) developed by Joanna Briggs Institute (Tricco et al, 2018). The review intends to include all literature on tourism routes, published until May 2020, written in the English language (Table 1). Ultimately, this review tried to address the organizations identified by UNWTO & ETC (2017) as the thematic or cultural networking initiatives, which are partnerships between destinations, local authorities, cultural sites, academic institutions, or other bodies, and are led by groups or associations, bringing together public and private partners. Although the UNWTO & ETC (2017) only considered transnational initiatives, this review also includes initiatives at other scales, i.e. local, regional and national. The search terms, "tourism" and "route", tried to include a vast majority of studies on this research topic. Subsequently, the document references from all database results were exported to an Excel file and duplicated articles were deleted.

Table 1: Electronic search strategy applied

Database	Terms	Searched fields	Language	Other filters	Date
SCOPUS	Touris* Route*	Title, Abstract and Keywords	English	-	May 7th, 2020
Web of Science	Touris* Route*	Topic		-	
EBSCO -Academic Search Complete	Touris* Route*	Author keywords, Title and Abstract		Document type = "Article" and "Journal article"	
Google Scholar	Tourism Route	(Not applicable)		Patents and Citations not included	

Next step, a screening process was planned by all reviewers and conducted by the first author. Considering the high number of returned documents, a filter was used to reduce the number of publications based on author keywords. Thus, VOSviewer software (van Eck and Waltman, 2010) was applied to map and cluster the author keywords from searched documents from SCOPUS database to identify the most suitable keywords for this study (Figure 1). A similar approach for keyword clustering has been applied by Garrigos-Simon, Narangajavana-Kaosiri and Narangajavana (2019) or Duarte, Braga, Marques, & Sá (2020). Based on this analysis, it was decided to include all the publications with one of the following terms in their title, keywords, or abstract, if available: "Wine*", "Cultur*", "Heritage", "Pilgrim*" or "Gastronom*". Note that the documents retrieved from Google Scholar were filtered based only on their title, which was the data available before the full-text paper assessment. Nevertheless, it was possible to reduce the number of papers and ensure a close focus on our research topic.

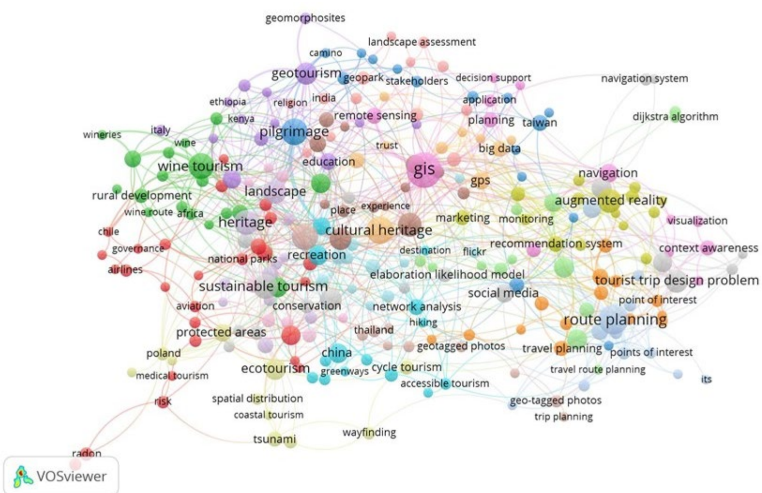

Figure 1: Map of clusters based on author keywords

The screening process then continued with the analysis of the titles and the abstracts of the remaining publications. This procedure resulted in the exclusion of publications not related to tourism routes but mostly related to issues of tourism destinations and tourism attractions development, the relationship between cultural heritage and tourism, or the tourists' travel patterns.

The full-text assessment for eligibility started with the exclusion of publications that were inaccessible, not in the English language, or not in a document type required by this research, e.g., complete books or academic thesis. Moreover, the full-text assessment led to the exclusion of documents not related to tourism routes as groups or associations of stakeholders. The excluded studies were mostly focused on routes merely as itineraries to travel, for instance, pilgrimage, cultural or heritage routes, and hiking trails, greenways, or scenic routes, as well as cultural heritage sites and wine tourism destinations.

After the selection of the source of evidence, all reviewers agreed on the data required to answer the mentioned research goals. First, it was necessary to collect data to characterize the routes under analysis, which was based on their location, the aforementioned criteria of the territory of implementation by UNWTO (2015), i.e. local, regional, national or transnational, and the thematic grouping of routes by UNWTO and ETC (2017). Simultaneously, the conceptualization of tourism routes was considered. Thus, the following data were extracted and analysed from each publication: location, territory, thematic group, and conceptualization.

Finally, a content analysis of the selected publications was conducted, and the results were presented in a narrative format, including visual representations, such as maps and charts.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 The selection of sources of evidence

From the electronic search, a total of 6058 documents were returned: 2547 publications from SCOPUS, 1740 from WOS, 826 from EBSCO, and 945 from SCHOLAR. After the exclusion of duplicates, 4107 were identified for the screening process. The application of the author keywords to filter the results led to the exclusion of 2920 publications and reduced the number to 1187. Additionally, by reading the titles and abstract, another 670 publications were excluded, and therefore a full assessment was made of 517 documents. The unavailability of documents, the use of other languages than English, and the fact that the paper did not correspond to the determined document formats led to the exclusion of 114 documents. In addition, 207 were deleted because they did not suit the research topic. Finally, the review includes a total of 194 documents, as shown by the flow diagram in Figure 2.

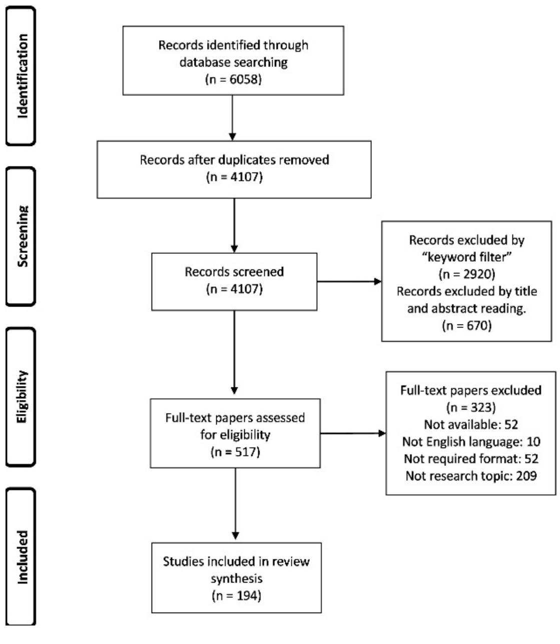

Figure 2: Flow diagram of the selection of sources of evidence (adapted from Tricco et al., 2018)

3.2 The characterization of tourism routes

Considering that the main goal of this research is to clarify the concept of tourism routes, it is of foremost importance to identify the diverse types of routes addressed in the literature as well as their location. The tourism routes are mostly located in Europe (70%), followed by America (17%), particularly in the United States of America and Canada; and Africa (10%), particularly in South Africa. Only 3% of the total studies are in Asia, while there are no studies in Oceania (Figure 3). It is possible that the selected searching keywords, "tourism" and "route", may have limited those results to European/Western research and it may also justify the lack of results, particularly, from Asia and Oceania.

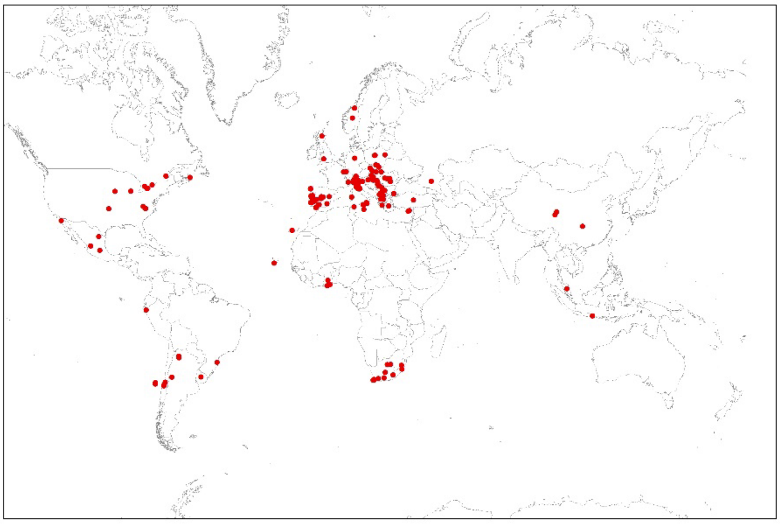

Figure 3: Route's location

For a thorough understanding of the most studied type of routes, two variables are crossed, namely the route's thematic group and territory (Figure 4). The analysis shows that the most common studied routes come under the food and drink thematic group on a regional scale (48%), and are based predominantly on wine routes, but also on other gastronomic products, such as olive routes. Additionally, a substantial number of routes have been registered on a transnational scale under the pilgrimage (16%) and history (8%) thematic groups. For instance, the studies on the cultural routes of the Council of Europe (COE), such as the Cultural Route of Roman Emperors or the pilgrimage routes of the Way of Saint James, and the studies on the UNESCO Slave Route project or the Silk Road project.

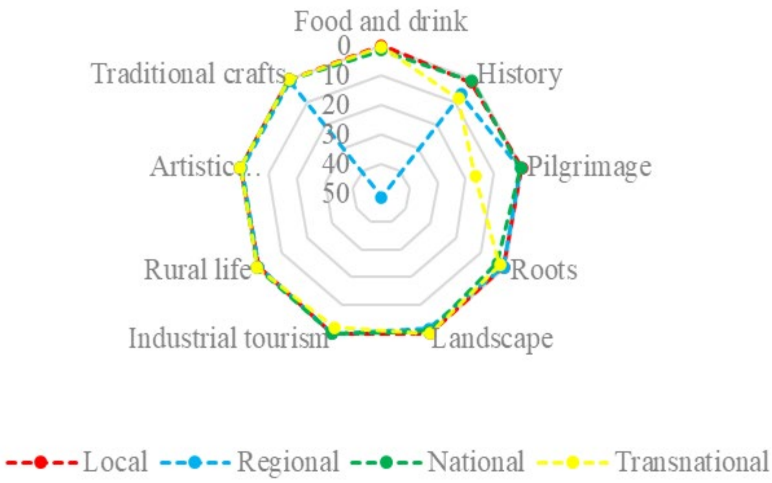

Figure 4: Route thematic groups by territory (%)

3.3 The conceptualization of tourism routes

Analysis of the conceptualization of tourism routes makes use of the most common types of routes discussed above, i.e., the food and drinks thematic group on a regional scale and the history and pilgrimage thematic groups on an international scale.

3.3.1 The food and drinks thematic group on a regional scale

The research under this category corresponds predominantly to wine routes, although the literature also presents studies on similar organizations around distinct products, such as an ale trail (Plummer, Telfer and Hashimoto, 2006) or an olive route (Folgado-Fernández, Campón-Cerro and Hernández-Mogollón, 2019).

Regarding wine routes, they could be just a location map of the wineries within a limited area and a signposted road to connect those wineries. In fact, wine routes were created in France and Germany during the first half of the 20th century, consisting of wineries location maps, which were often associated with an official demarcated wine region or geographical indication, e.g., Champagne, France (Bruwer, 2003; López-Guzmán, Cañizares and García, 2009; Coros, Pop and Popa, 2019; Trišić *et al.*, 2020). Accordingly, Gatti, Incerti and Ravagli (2002) presented the concept of a wine route suggested by the *Centre national des ressources du tourisme en espace rural* (1996), which defines a wine route as “a sign-posted itinerary, through a limited area (region, province, designed area) whose aim is to discover regional wine(s) product(s) and associated activities” (p. 99). Similarly, according to Bruwer (2003), a wine route connects wine estates and wineries in a given area, but includes other elements, for instance, vineyards, roads, and natural attractions, and should be marked with signposts to direct visitors along the route. Ramos, Cuamea and Galván-León (2019) mentioned that a wine route “… consists of the definition of one or several itineraries through one geographical area, perfectly signposted... Also, it is necessary to provide information about cultural or historic places… [and] must highlight the benefits of acquiring knowledge about the vineyard cultivation and wine process, as well as wine tasting and target the appreciation of the rural area” (p. 25).

Nevertheless, wine routes have been developed by the establishment of vertical alliances to incorporate other types of members and perform other tasks. Telfer (2001) mentioned the collaboration between wineries on advertising, the partnerships with tourism operators, and the organisation of events together with local restaurants and chefs as a way to promote the wine tourism destination. Correia, Passos Ascenção and Charters (2004) referred to a wine route that incorporates the wineries and the local and regional authorities, which was not only created to signpost the route and to produce promotional documentation but also to improve and develop member’s amenities and infrastructures, for example, interpretation centres and a museum. Brás, Costa and Buhalis (2010) considered a wine route as “a network of agents in a wine region, whose purpose is to promote regional development by employing strategies that lead to the development of an inclusive regional network which encompasses public and private agents from both sectors of activity (wine and tourism) …” (p. 1621). Thus, the role of the wine route could eventually be connected to the role of a Destination Management Organisation (Brás, Costa and Buhalis, 2010). Besides, a wine route may be a formal network that unites and coordinates businesses, involving wine producers, public authorities, academia or private stakeholders from the hospitality industry and complementary services, among others. They are based on a common effort, promote community bonding and sharing of knowledge and expertise, and aim to promote wine tourism destinations (Correia, Passos Ascenção and Charters, 2004; Bregoli *et al.*, 2016; Lavandoski *et al.*, 2016; Del Chiappa, Bregoli and Kim, 2019).

Besides, there are studies on wine routes adopting the conceptualization instituted by national authorities, for instance in Italy (Patti, 2013) or Spain (López-Guzmán, Cañizares and García, 2009; Gomis *et al.*, 2010). In Italy, wine and food routes are defined by law as “itineraries created in geographical areas where quality wines are produced…” (Patti, 2013, p.296). López-Guzmán, *et al.* (2009) presented a definition provided by the Spanish Ministry of Tourism, in 2000, which defines a wine route as “… the integration of both existing and potential resources and services of interest to tourists in winemaking areas to form a single thematic concept…” (p. 424). Additionally, Gomis *et al.* (2010) described the wine routes of Spain as a tourism product club, a concept in which companies work together to develop new tourism products or add value to existing products as well to enhance tourism development by reviewing common problems.

The literature also presents studies on similar organizations around distinct products, such as ale trails (Plummer, Telfer and Hashimoto, 2006), or olive routes (Millán-Vazquez de la Torre, Arjona-Fuentes and Amador-Hidalgo, 2017), among others. The understanding of these routes is similar to wine routes; for instance, as explained by Millán-Vazquez de la Torre, Arjona-Fuentes and Amador-Hidalgo (2017), a gastronomic route is "… an itinerary that allows the agricultural and industrial productive process and the sampling of the regional cuisine… made up of producers… and regional restaurants… organized around a key product that characterises the route named after it or, in some cases, around a basket of products, and the itinerary is developed based on the roadway network…" (p. 101).

3.3.2 The history and pilgrimage thematic groups on a transnational scale

The routes under the history and pilgrimage thematic groups on a transnational scale are mainly related to international cooperation projects, such as the Cultural Routes of COE program or the UNESCO Slave route initiative. However, it is also possible to identify the dichotomy between tourism routes as a network of stakeholders and a path to be followed by tourists. For instance, Djukic and Vukmirovic (2012) understood the cultural route of Roman Emperors as a cooperation project between European countries, whilst Božić and Berić (2013) and Božić and Tomić (2016) emphasized the route's purpose of connecting neighbour regions or countries and to link touristic attractions. Moreover, the Slave Route initiative is described as a project involving African, American, and European countries that is managed by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Brower Stahl, 2010; Yankholmes, Boakye and Wellington, 2010), which work together with the UNWTO in a cultural tourism program for the preservation and restoration of slave trade heritage (Teye, Turk and Sönmez, 2011). Moreover, the studies on the Silk Road mentioned the route as a network of trade routes connecting Asia, Africa, and Europe (Wang, Qi and Xu, 2010) and the element of tourism associated with the project (Sun *et al.*, 2011). Another example is the Liberation Heritage Route in Africa, which is described by Snowball and Courtney (2010, p.563) as "… a strategy which links up less well known, often rural, tourist attractions in order to market them more effectively under a unified theme and improve the management and conservation of heritage assets."

Furthermore, studies on the Way of Saint James focused on the routes as a simple itinerary connecting the visitor's points of origin and destination and the touristic attractions along the way (Murray and Graham, 1997; Lois González and Somoza Medina, 2003; Fernandes *et al.*, 2012). Murray and Graham (1997) addressed the Way of Saint James as a path to be followed and defined it as "an intricate web of connections (both terrestrial and maritime), which linked all of Europe to north-west Spain" (p.15). Nevertheless, the Way of Saint James is no longer merely a pilgrimage itinerary towards Santiago de Compostela, but it is a Cultural Route of the COE; thus, according to the COE´s view, it is a tourism cooperation project aiming the development and promotion of a series of itineraries based on transnational heritage representing European values and a network that connects territories under a common heritage theme. Likewise, the Via Francigena, which is another cultural route of COE, is understood as an itinerary based on a historic route that links heritage (nodes) along an axis (line) (Diti, Torreggiani and Tassinari, 2015; Trono and Oliva, 2017). On the other hand, Bellens *et al.* (2016) adopted the concept of cultural routes of COE to study the Via Francigena, which implies tourism cooperation for the development and promotion of the destinations and the importance and sharing of common values. Øian (2019) mentioned that the Saint Olav Ways connect not only the heritage sites but also communities, regions, and landscapes, while Serenelli *et al.* (2017) studied the Via Lauretana, which is not a cultural route of COE, but it is addressed as one by the authors.

4. Conclusion

The study of tourism routes has been focused on two main types of routes, one under the thematic group of food and drink on a regional scale, such as wine routes, and another under the history and pilgrimage thematic groups on an international scale, such as the cultural routes of COE. In broad terms, both might be organizations that result from partnerships between stakeholders to promote tourism development under a common theme. Our results support the idea that the concept of tourism routes has been enlarged from the narrow perception of a journey between two points to a network of stakeholders that work together to achieve common goals. In fact, wine routes evolved from initiatives to map and link wineries through a linear or circular itinerary to a network of stakeholders, including public and private agents, that eventually could manage a destination. The network is promoted by stakeholders, such as wine producers, public authorities, academia or other private stakeholders from the hospitality industry, complementary services, among others. Besides, the creation of programs such as the cultural routes of COE, which promote the cooperation between stakeholders on existing routes, e.g., the Way of Saint James, and includes routes with no fixed itinerary, e.g., the ATRIUM (Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes of the 20th Century in Europe's Urban Memory Route) validates the same idea.

Nevertheless, there are multiple definitions and concepts used to refer to tourism routes in the literature, even though this review aimed at a specific type of tourism route. Besides, those concepts are understood differently by the authors.

To the best of the authors' knowledge, this is one of the first literature reviews using a PRISMA scoping review approach in the tourism field. It is also worth mentioning the usage of VOSviewer to identify the main terms used in the literature on tourism routes.

This scoping review has three main limitations. First, the choice of the keywords "tourism" and "route" may influence the proportion of European/Western research in the analysis, and it may explain a lack of results from other parts of the globe, for instance, Asia and Oceania. Second, the application of a filter based on the author keywords using VOSviewer may have resulted in the exclusion of studies on routes associated with other touristic products than those included in the selected keywords. Third, another limitation is related to the PRISMA-ScR format, namely the exclusion of the results of individual sources of evidence reporting all relevant outcomes data for each source. In addition, adjustments were made to match the PRISMA-Scr protocol to the journal guidelines for publications, namely the abstract is not written by topics as it should be, the results and discussion sections are together in a single section, and an acknowledgements section was added to include the funding data.

Declaration of interest statement

None.

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Debt of Hotel Companies: The Impact of Company Characteristics and Crisis Periods

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Abstract: This paper studies the financial determinants of debt of Portuguese hotel companies using the main indicators suggested by the Trade-Off and the Pecking Order theories. The main objective of this study was to analyse the determinants that most contribute to the debt of Portuguese companies in the hotel industry. The study also aimed to understand the impact of crisis periods on the debt. Since data collected refers to the period between 2005 and 2020 it also analyses the impact of the 2008 financial crisis and, more recently, the global pandemic COVID-19. The results show that debt is negatively associated with profitability and age, and is positively associated with size, growth opportunities and tangibility. These results are in line with the Pecking Order theory, ranking the choice of financing methods. We can also conclude that the way hotels finance their assets will affect their level of debt. We also evidence that debt of Portuguese hotels companies increases in periods of crisis.

Keywords: debt, hotels companies, crisis, capital structure

1. Introduction

The hospitality industry is one of the main contributors to economic development, wealth and job creation in Portugal, and its importance has increased over the years. In this study, companies in the hospitality sector are analysed due to the fact that it is an industry that has suffered greatly from the current pandemic of COVID-19, because they were forced to stop working, consequently going through a period of no revenues and the workers layoff. Therefore, it is expected that debt increased, either by new borrowings to finance older responsibilities, or by having adhered to moratorium programs of previous financing. The aim is to understand what factors have affected the debt of Portuguese companies in this industry. Thus, the main objective of this study is to understand which factors affect the debt of Portuguese firms in the hotel industry between 2005 and 2020.

This study has a relevant contribution to the literature. It investigates the debt of Portuguese companies in the hotel industry over a long period of time, which allows the inclusion of the analysis of financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic periods. Thus, it adds information to the literature of the hotel industry, distinguished by the possibility of comparing the companies' debt in periods with and without financial and economic crisis.

This study provided evidence that debt is negatively associated with profitability and age, and is positively associated with size, growth opportunities and tangibility. These results are in accordance with the Pecking Order theory. However, the main conclusion of this study is that the debt of hotel companies in Portugal increases in periods of crisis.

The work is organized in four sections. In the first section is the literature review that addresses the main determinants of debt. Next, the databases, the methodology and the variables used are presented. In section three is the empirical study and the paper ends with the conclusion.

2. Literature review

2.1 Debt

There are several theories of capital structure, and Modigliani and Miller (1958) starts with the idea that debt has no impact on firm value. Later, Modigliani and Miller (1963) present the advantages of debt associated with the advantages by tax benefits of debt, with interest being tax deductible. In this sense, if assets are fully financed by debt, the value of the firm will be maximized.

In the Trade-Off theory, Myers (1984) argues that firms tend to define an optimal capital structure that tends to vary with their intrinsic characteristics. At the optimal level of debt, tax benefits, agency costs and financial insolvency costs are in equilibrium. In this case, firms have a target capital structure that maximizes their value. When debt is higher than the optimal level, agency costs and insolvency costs increase to levels higher than the advantages obtained from tax benefits associated with the deductibility of interest for tax purposes. As the debt level increases, the risk for shareholders and creditors increases, which is related with the higher risk of bankruptcy and an increase of agency costs. If debt is below the optimal level, agency costs and insolvency costs are lower than the tax benefits associated with the deductibility of interest.

Regarding the Agency theory, the separation of powers between management and ownership, with the owners delegating to the management the administration of the company. Jensen and Meckling (1976) point out that the principal (the owner) hires the agent (the management) to make decisions in the company. However, the agent has its own interests that may not coincide with the interests of the principal, so that conflicts of interest arise (Jensen and Meckling, 1976). As such, several agency problems may arise in a company. The agency problems between shareholders and managers arise because managers haven't the same objectives than shareholders, so they haven't incentives to act according to the shareholders' interest and maximizing the company's value (Jensen and Meckling, 1976).

The Pecking Order theory is based on a negative relationship between the firm's performance and its financing decision. Myers (1984) and Myers and Majluf (1984) argue that capital structure of a company does not translate into the optimal level of debt that maximizes its value, but rather results from several successive optimal decisions, among the sources of financing in a hierarchical manner, aiming to reduce the costs caused by information asymmetry. This approach argues that firms' investment opportunities are firstly financed by internally generated funds, with self-financing being a primary resource. Then, firms should finance themselves by issuing debt, which has a lower level of risk. At the end, firms choose the source of financing that has more information costs, the issue of new equity.

Finally, considering the conflicts of interest and the information asymmetry between management and shareholders, the Signalling theory proposed by Ross (1977), in which the choice of the debt/equity ratio is independent of the optimal concept and is represented by the willingness of a company to send information to investors. Therefore, the provision of information about management decisions to markets allow the reduction of information asymmetry for investors. Thus, effective communication and proper dissemination of information induces better knowledge of the company and its performance. Myers and Majluf (1984) refer that management resists to issue equity when they believe that the company's value is undervalued and consequently, investors tend to consider issuing shares as a bad sign, assuming that managers only offer shares to the public if they have a fair or overvalued price.

2.2 The hotel industry in Portugal

The main activity in a hotel is the provision of accommodation and other support services. Companies in hospitality industry have several activities that range from lodging, food, security, entertainment, and other activities related to the guests' well-being (Bresciani et al., 2015).

The hospitality industry is characterized mainly by its intangibility due to the provision of services not embodied in a physical asset. This industry is further characterized by being labour intensive, given that a range of human capital is required for service functionality. Finally, its activity requires a building that allows the provision of rooms and other related services. Therefore, a large investment in fixed assets is necessary. Sometimes, hotel companies use operational leasing on equipment and buildings (Koh and Jang, 2009).

Note that Portugal has been recognized worldwide in terms of tourism, through the numerous awards and distinctions received every year by the international community as the *World Travel Award*, among other distinctive awards (Moreira, 2018).

In the last decade, this industry has experienced a considerable growth of tourists and revenues, which allows to an important driver of national economic recovery (Pacheco and Tavares, 2017). However, with the COVID-19 crisis, this was the first sector to be impacted and severely affected due to travel bans and restrictions and mobility disruptions (OMT, 2021). In addition to travel restrictions, one of the recommendations made to tourists is to discourage unneeded travel. Additionally, it has also been noted a critical relationship between tourism activity and the spread of diseases such as COVID-19 (Hall et al. 2020; Shi and Liu, 2020), which resulted in new behaviours in relation to the practice of activities for the preservation of lives in the present and in the future.

The total number of hotels operating in Portugal has been increasing over time, but in 2020 the number of hotels decrease because of the COVID-19 pandemic that was severely felt worldwide. It has a negative impact on companies, considering the sharp decrease of more than 50% in revenues in this industry (INE, 2000 and 2021).

2.3 Relevant factors to debt in the hotel industry

There are several factors that may contribute to debt, but in this study, we only analyse financial factors, which have been widely addressed in the literature.

2.3.1 Profitability

Profitability is an important factor to understand the company's ability to generate results to meet its liabilities. Gaud et al. (2005) argue that more profitable firms are better able to meet their obligations. According to the Trade-Off theory, more profitable companies should choose more to debt to benefit from the interest tax deduction. Jang et al. (2008) suggest a positive relationship between profitability and debt because firms with a greater ability to create and maintain results have greater bargaining power and, therefore, more easily borrow from creditors. In the Signal theory, Modigliani and Miller (1963) and Ross (1977) argue for a positive relationship between profitability and debt level, because management send signals to the market that firms have good profitability prospects in future.

Instead, the Pecking Order theory assumes that firms have a hierarchical preference in the choice of financing sources. The retained earnings are used first, then third-party resources, then debt and, lastly, the issuance of new shares. Myers (1984) and Myers and Majluf (1984) predict a negative relationship between profitability and debt because companies prefer to finance with internal resources rather than through debt. More profitable firms take less debt because they prefer to finance their investments through internal financing. If these resources are not enough to finance all investment projects, firms will take on debt. More profitable firms are better able to meet their obligations (Gaud et al., 2005). Thus, it is hypothesized the following:

H1: Hotel companies with higher profitability have lower debt.

2.3.2 Business risk

Hotel companies are exposed to business risk due to their seasonal activities, economic environment and management skills (Elgonemy, 2002). Pecking Order theory states a negative relationship between risk and debt, since riskier companies are more likely to default. Therefore, risk reduces the ability of firms to finance and increases their costs (Myers, 1984). This may induce creditors to demand a higher payment (higher financial cost to the firm) for the fact that it faces a higher bankruptcy risk (Lemmon et al., 2008). Akhtar (2011) and Lemmon et al. (2008) support the conclusion that risk is negatively related to debt. Based on Trade-Off theory a negative relationship between risk and debt is expected because bankruptcy risk reduces the appetite to use debt (Matemilola et al., 2018). Agency costs and bankruptcy costs suggest that risk also influences the capital structure of companies (Harris and Raviv, 1991). The higher debt means higher agency costs and bankruptcy cost, which turns debt inadvisable because these costs are higher that the tax advantage of debt. So, higher debt induce companies to pay higher interest costs. In this way, it is expected to have lower level of debt when there is higher risk. Several empirical studies (e.g., Gaud et al., 2005; Pacheco and Tavares, 2017) conclude for a negative relationship between risk and debt. Accordingly, we state the following research hypotheses:

H2: Higher business risk of hotel companies are negatively associated with debt.

2.3.3 Size

Size may also be important to understand debt. Daskalakis and Psillaki (2008) argue that size is expected to be positively related with debt because larger firms tend to be more diversified and therefore less risky and, consequently, have a lower probability of default. Then, larger firms may be able to reduce transaction costs associated with debt. In turn, information costs are lower for larger firms, as the quality of financial information improves as the firm gets larger. Due to lower information asymmetry, larger firms have easier access to capital markets and tend to pay lower interest rates, thus having a greater incentive to increase their indebtedness (Pacheco and Tavares, 2017). Thus, there seems to be a positive association between firm size and debt. Daskalakis and Psillaki (2008), Vieira and Novo (2010) and Serrasqueiro and Nunes (2014) show a positive relationship between debt and firm size. However, Pacheco and Tavares (2017) show that size and debt do not have a statistically significant relationship. Thus, we present the following research hypothesis:

H3: The size of hotel companies is positively associated with debt.

2.3.4 Opportunity for growth

Growth may be related to increased activities and turnover. Vieira and Novo (2010) and Miller (1977) argue that firms with higher growth rates could not optimize their investments, possibly making lenders unwilling to finance them. The Trade-Off theory suggests a negative relationship between growth opportunities and debt, so access to finance would be more limited for these firms (Jensen, 1986; Elgonemy, 2002). However, Pecking Order theory predicts a positive relationship between growth opportunities and debt, because firms with higher growth rates experience more financing needs (Mueller and Sensini, 2021). Thus, if companies' ability to generate internal funds isn´t enough to meet their needs, the companies will demand external sources to finance its growth (Myers, 1984; Myers and Majluf, 1984). Ramalho and Silva (2013) suggested that Portuguese companies with high growth opportunity rates prefer loans because they haven't enough internal funds and want to avoid new investors in equity. Thus, we establish the next research hypothesis:

H4: Hotel companies with higher growth opportunities are positively associated with debt.

2.3.5 Age

Regarding age, younger companies are more dependent on debt, while older companies depend on their ability to generate profits and, consequently, are less dependent on debt, following the Pecking Order theory (Bhaird and Lucey, 2010). However, Trade-off theory predicts that the older the age, the higher the firm's reputation and the lower the cost of borrowing, which indicates that there is a positive correlation between age and debt (Mueller and Sensini, 2021). Instead, according to the Pecking Order theory, firms increase their ability to retain resources throughout their life cycle, reducing borrowings to their investments (Pacheco and Tavares, 2017). Consequently, younger firms are more dependent on debt (Myers, 1984; Myers and Majluf, 1984; Bhaird and Lucey, 2010). Ramalho and Silva (2013) and Vieira and Novo (2010) found a negative relationship between the variables, with older Portuguese firms generating sufficient internal resources and not being as dependent on debt as younger firms. However, Vieira et al. (2013) found no evidence that age is statistically significant, concluding that debt is not related with corporate maturity.

In short, younger companies are more dependent on debt, while older companies depend on their ability to generate profits and, consequently, are less dependent on debt, following the Pecking Order theory (Bhaird and Lucey, 2010). Based on these assumptions, we state the following hypothesis:

H5: Older companies have lower debt.

2.3.6 Asset tangibility

Tangibility is, according to Trade-off theory, positively related with debt. Companies with higher tangible asset value provide higher guarantees reducing agency costs and information asymmetry (Jensen and Meckling, 1976). By the Pecking Order theory, it is suggested a positive association, because companies with higher collateral induce a lower risk for creditors who will lend more at lower costs (Myers and Majluf, 1984). Vieira et al. (2013) show that the asset value positively influences debt, concluding that the higher the asset value, the higher the credit granted. Thus, since the assets are accepted as collateral, it is expected a positive relationship between asset tangibility and debt (Pacheco and Tavares, 2017). However, Mueller and Sensini (2021) find no significant relationship between asset tangibility and debt, while Serrasqueiro and Nunes (2011) and Vieira and Novo (2010) evidence a negative relationship between tangibility and debt. Thus, we establish the following hypothesis:

H6: Asset tangibility positively affects debt of Portuguese hotel companies.

2.3.7 Financial and economic crises

Portugal, like other countries around the world, has already experienced periods of economic and financial crisis. One of the most recent was the 2008 world financial crisis, with a greater impact in Portugal between 2011 and

2014. Nowadays, the new pandemic COVID-19 have impact on country national economy which led to an economic crisis. In comparison with other crises, COVID-19 highlights the unexpected nature of the shock.

The biggest difference is that the COVID-19 influence the entire economy in general, leading to the closure of many institutions and stores, which negatively impact on demand for many services and products, particularly in tourism and hotel industry. However, the financial crisis had a greater focus on financial creditors, which had an impact on the liquidity of the financial system. With the credit crunch and the sovereign debt crisis, Portugal requested a financial rescue from European Union, International Monetary Fund and European Central Bank. Ribeiro (2016) studied 393 companies in the Portuguese hotel industry and concluded that debt increased between 2010 and 2014.

The present COVID-19 pandemic induced governments worldwide to close a large part of their economies with the aim of containing the spread of virus, which could lead to a liquidity crisis for most companies (Acharya and Steffen, 2020). Many companies were forced to stop operating for some time, or operating with various tight safety rules imposed by the government, which also led to layoffs of their workers. Also, the hospitality industry seems to be one of the most affected by this pandemic. Since the borders between countries were closed and the circulation between municipalities was restricted because the risk of virus transmission, travels was restricted and travel agencies, restaurants, hotels, and other activities linked to the industry had to close temporarily or have restricted activities.

The increase of demand volatility in these periods induce an increase in corporate risk, which may lead to decrease debt because higher probability of bankruptcy and default. However, it is also expected the companies increase its debt because of governmental programs that facilitates loans to support the lower operational activity of companies.

World Tourism Organization report a great decrease of 74% in the number of international tourists and estimated not only a loss of USD 1.3 trillion in revenues, but also more than 100 million tourism jobs near unemployment (UNWTO, 2021). In Portugal, the number of international tourists to global destinations decreased a lot compared to the previous year (INE, 2020 and 2021). The overnight stays in tourist accommodation between March 2019 and March 2020 decreased about 58,5% (Daniel and Fernandes, 2020). Based on these observations, it is studied the impact of these crisis periods on the hotel company's debt by analysing the following research hypothesis:

H7: The debt of hotel companies increases in periods of crisis.

3. Methodology and data

The main objective of this study is to analyse the determinants of debt in Portuguese hotels companies, with a particular emphasis in periods of economic and financial crisis.

About Portuguese companies in the hotel industry were collected from SABI database for 16 years, from 2005 to 2020. The companies selected are the one classified under the Economic Activity Code 551, which can include hotels, apartment-hotels, and guesthouses. The time horizon allows a broader analysis, including the 2008 financial crisis and COVID-19 economic crisis.

The work follows a multivariate linear regression analysis with the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) methodology to study the impact of financial variables on debt. Since there is a need to control our results by the number of hotels managed or controlled by each company, we use the variable NHOTEL. Our final database have 9842 observations from 1.005 companies with 1.050 hotels on year 2020 (1.149 hotels in 2019). With the variables are defined in Table 1, regression model is specified as follows:

$$\textbf{DEBT}_{i,t} = \beta_{0i,t} + \beta_1.\text{NHOTEL}_{i,t} + \beta_2.R\text{OA}_{i,t} + \beta_3.\text{SIZE}_{i,t} + \beta_4.\text{AGE}_{i,t} + \beta_5.\text{RISK}_{i,t} + \beta_6.\text{GROWTH}_{i,t} + \beta_7.\text{TANG}_{i,t} + \beta_8.\text{CRISIS}_{i,t} + \mu_{i,t} \quad [1]$$

Table 1: Variable definitions

Variable	Description	Source
DEBT$_{i,t}$	Ratio between total debt and total net assets of company$_i$ in period$_t$.	SABI

Variable	Description	Source
ROA$_{i,t}$	Ratio of operating income by total net assets of company$_i$ in period$_t$.	SABI
SIZE$_{i,t}$	Logarithm of company$_i$' sales in period$_t$.	SABI
AGE$_{i,t}$	Logarithm of the number of years from the beginning to company$_i$ in period$_t$.	SABI
RISK$_{i,t}$	Standard deviation of historical operating income of company$_i$ in the last three years prior to period$_t$ (based on Matemilola et al., 2018).	SABI
GROWTH$_{i,t}$	Growth rate of company$_i$' sales in period$_t$ (based on Mueller, et al., 2021).	SABI
TANG$_{i,t}$	Ratio between fixed assets and total net assets of companyi in periodt (based on Mueller, et al., 2021).	SABI
CRISIS$_{i,t}$	*Dummy* variable that takes the value 1 in the years related to the financial crisis (years 2011 to 2014) and to the economic crisis (year 2020), and 0 otherwise.	Authors' calculations
NHOTEL$_{i,t}$	Average number of hotels owned by company$_i$ in period$_t$.	National Tourism Register (RNT)

4. Analysis and discussion

This section analyse the data in order to obtain empirical evidence on the financial issues that affect corporate debt in the hotel industry.

4.1 Descriptive statistics

The analysis starts with descriptive statistics. Table 2 shows that on average each company operates 1.28 hotels, and the maximum number of hotels operated by a company is 26. It is also noted that 36.1% of the observations refer to periods of economic and financial crisis.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	Median	Standard deviation	Min.	Max.
DEBT	53,4	55,1	26,7	0	100
CRISIS	0,361	0	0,48	0	1
ROA	0,0401	0,0245	0,129	-1,07	1,97
RISK	5,46	1,3	29,2	0	1070
SIZE	5,88	5,87	0,677	2,15	8,03
AGE	26	22	17,2	1	124
GROWTH	1,11	0,0382	44,6	-1	3100
TANG	0,608	0,678	0,299	0	1
NHOTEL	1,28	1	1,43	1	26

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Note: Variables defined in Table 1.

Operating profitability averages 4.01% of net assets and has a standard deviation of 12.9%. The results show that the average debt ratio is 53.4% with a standard deviation of 26.7%, which suggests a high company debt. The companies' risk is, on average, 5.46, that is relatively low. The standard deviation of risk is high, showing a fluctuation of 29.2 between companies, underlining the existence of outliers. The average size is 5.88. The companies average age is 26 years, the oldest with 124 and the youngest with only 1 year of activity. Sales growth has an average of 1.11 and a standard deviation of 44.6. The maximum value seems that growth is being influenced by some companies with relatively extreme values. Finally, the mean of fixed assets variable is about 60.8% of total net assets, with a standard deviation of 29.9%.

4.2 Correlation matrix

The correlation matrix is presented in Table 3. The correlation between the financial variables isn't very strong, with the strongest correlation of 32,1% between size and number of hotels as expected. The next strongest correlation is 17,3% between asset tangibility and debt.

Table 3: Correlation matrix

DEBT	CRISIS	NHOTEL	ROA	RISK	SIZE	AGE	GROWTH	TANG	
1	0,031	0,020	-0,17	0,015	0,067	-0,267	0,026	0,173	**DEBT**
	1	-0,006	-0,191	0,002	-0,099	0,018	0,002	0,011	**CRISIS**
		1	0,004	-0,004	0,321	0,011	-0,002	-0,079	**NHOTEL**
			1	0,006	0,143	-0,043	-0,004	-0,248	**ROA**
				1	-0,021	-0,036	0,003	0,003	**RISK**
					1	0,094	0,015	-0,013	**SIZE**
						1	-0,007	-0,049	**AGE**
							1	0,005	**GROWTH**
								1	**TANG**

Source: Authors' elaboration.
Note: Variables defined in Table 1.

4.3 Multivariate analysis

Based on a sample of 9840 observations, Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regressions were estimated, whose heteroskedasticity-adjusted results are presented in Table 4. The coefficients show that the variables used explain about 14% of the hotel company's debt. The results allow us to understand the impact of financial factors in the debt of the Portuguese hotel companies.

Based only on the statistically significant coefficients of Table 3, the results in model (1) evidence that ROA is negatively related to debt, as the results of Mueller et al. (2021), Pacheco and Tavares (2017) and Matias et al. (2018). Because it isn't statistically significant, risk isn't a relevant factor to determine corporate debt.

The variable size is positively related with debt, as expected, and support studies like Matias et al. (2018), Matemilola et al. (2018), Daskalakis et al. (2008), Vieira el al. (2013), Serrasqueiro and Nunes (2014), and Vieira and Novo (2010). In this sense, there is statistical evidence that the larger the size of a hotel company, the higher its level of debt. Additionally, the variable AGE relates negatively with debt, which support the results of Mueller el al. (2021), Pacheco and Tavares (2017), Matias et al. (2018), and Vieira et al. (2010). There is statistical evidence to state that the older the company, the lower its level of debt.

Table 4: Debt determinants of hotel companies

	(1)	(2)
Constant	55,537 ***	54,584 ***
	(2,518)	(2,544)
ROA	-30,337 ***	-30,542 ***
	(1,801)	-(1,855)
RISK	0,0122	-0,013
	(0,009)	-(0,010)
SIZE	4,339 ***	4,472 ***
	(0,401)	-(0,402)
AGE	-10,657 ***	-10,716 ***
	(0,329)	-(0,330)
GROWTH	0,0125 ***	0,013 ***

	(1)	(2)
	(0,003)	-(0,003)
TANG	9,997 ***	9,898 ***
	(0,877)	-(0,874)
NHOTEL	-0,071	-0,093
	(0,153)	(0,151)
CRISIS		1,257 **
		(0,525)
n	9842	9842
Adjusted R^2	0,141	0,142
F(n,k)	231,383	204,994
F(p-value)	<0,010	<0,010

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Note: This table presents the results of the OLS estimation corrected by the heteroscedasticity detected through White's test. The dependent variable is Debt. The coefficients are in the same line of variable name and in brackets are the standard deviation of the coefficient estimation. Variables defined in Table 1. ***, ** and * are statistical significance at 1%, 5% and 10%, respectively.

The GROWTH variable is, as expected, statistically positively related with debt, which corroborates the study of Mueller et al. (2021). There is statistical evidence that the higher the growth opportunities for Portuguese hotel companies, the higher their level of debt. Then, the TANG variable is positively related with debt, which is in line with the results of Matias et al. (2018) and Matemilola et al. (2018). Thus, it is evidenced that the higher the asset tangibility of hotel companies in Portugal, the higher their level of debt.
In model (2) the variable CRISIS is introduced to analyse the impact of financial crisis and economic crisis periods. The result shows a positive relationship between periods of crisis and debt of the hotel companies in Portugal. Thus, in periods of financial and economic crisis, companies in this industry increase debt. Although no other studies were found on the statistical impact of crisis periods on the corporate debt of hotel industry, the result is in line with the expectations. Thus, in periods of financial and economic crisis in Portugal corporate debt is higher. The results for the financial determinants remain similar in terms of behaviour in relation to the initial model.

4.4 Discussion of results

Regarding the research hypotheses proposed in this study, the first research hypothesis suggested a negative relationship between profitability and debt, which was corroborated. Therefore, companies with higher profitability is expected to have a lower debt. The second research hypothesis suggests a negative relationship between risk and debt, which wasn't validated. Regarding the third research hypothesis, which proposed a positive relationship between the company size and debt, it was found statistical evidence that validates the statement. In this sense, it is possible to state that larger companies have higher level of debt.

The fourth research hypothesis suggests a positive relationship between growth opportunities and debt, which was statistically validated. Hence, it is suggested that hotel companies with higher growth opportunities have more debt. The fifth research hypothesis suggests was validated. We evidence statistically negative relationship between company age and debt. In this sense, it is possible to state that younger companies have more debt. About the positive relationship between asset tangibility and debt, the sixth research hypothesis is confirmed. We find statistical evidence that asset tangibility has a positive impact on company debt. In general, our results are in accordance with the Pecking Order theory, which suggests that Portuguese hotel companies prefer self-financing to external financing.

Finally, the last research hypothesis about the importance of financial and economic crisis periods, the results statistically evidence a positive influence on debt. Therefore, in periods of crisis the debt of Portuguese hotel companies increases.

5. Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to analyse the determinants that most contribute to the debt of Portuguese companies in the hotel industry. The study also aimed to understand the impact of financial and economic crisis period on the debt.

Based on data collected between 2005 and 2020 for companies in hotel industry, the results show that the factors that most contribute to debt are profitability, size, age, growth opportunities and tangibility of the asset. The results suggest that more profitable hotel companies prefer to use profits rather than loans to finance investments since there is a negative relationship between profitability and debt. Company size shows a positive and significant relationship with debt, confirming the tendency of larger hotel businesses to take on more debt. Age shows a negative and significant relationship with total debt, suggesting that young firms have greater difficulties in accessing credit. The results concerning growth opportunities show a significant positive impact of revenue growth rate on debt, suggesting that firms with higher revenue growth are more likely to finance growth with debt. Finally, asset tangibility is statistically significant, suggesting that firms with a high level of tangible fixed assets tend to have easier access to financing. Thus, they can provide greater guarantees to creditors and, therefore, reduce adverse selection problems and information asymmetries. However, business risk in Portuguese companies in the hotel industry is not relevant. In general, the results of this study allow to validate the application of the Pecking Order theory in the companies of this industry, prioritizing the choice of financing methods. The main conclusion is that the periods of financial and economic crisis in Portugal affect significantly, and positively, the debt of hotel companies. It seems that crisis periods have an impact on financial markets and lenders adjust their risk analysis in response to crisis, rather than company performance to deal with it. Therefore, lenders adjust their financial and economic analysis of companies based on their expectations of the impact of crisis on companies.

Finally, considering the COVID-19, the results may support national authorities in the definition of any financial support policies suited to the specificities of hotel businesses. For future work we suggest to analyse zombie companies in Portugal and their level of debt as well as the impact at a national level. Additionally, future work would be to use corporate governance factors to explain the level of debt in hotel companies.

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Factors That Affect the Perception of the Tourist Destination of Braga

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Abstract: This study aims to understand the tourists' perception about the city of Braga (Portugal), bearing in mind four explanatory dimensions for choosing a destination – Destination's Loyalty; Destination's Identity; Destination's Competitiveness and Destinations' Image. This approach introduces a multidimensional concept of a tourist destination as a relationship between tourists and the places they visit. A cross-sectional study was conducted based on the administration of a structured questionnaire to a sample of 220 non-resident tourists in the city of Braga. Hypotheses were tested using Partial Least Squares and confirmed the four explanatory dimensions as variables impacting in the visitors' perceptions of this tourist destination. Results suggest that some demographic variables have a statistically significant effect on the perception of this touristic destination. This study brought to the discussion four explanatory factors of tourist destinations, focusing on the city of Braga. It provides clear insights on what to consider when strategically planning on how to make or keep Braga as an interesting place for tourists to visit and keep coming back.

Keywords: marketing, tourist destination, image, identity, loyalty, competitiveness

1. Introduction

Braga is a historic, young and dynamic city that gets the 2nd position (with 59.092 votes) in a study to choose the "Best European Destination 2019" promoted by the European Best Destinations. With this study, we seek to analyze the most relevant aspects in choosing this tourist destination, as well as its perception among visitants and intention to come back.

Thus, the purpose of this article is to evaluate the non-resident tourist's perception of the city of Braga using four explanatory dimensions of the destination: Destination's Loyalty; Destination's Identity; Destination's Competitiveness and Destination's Image. Specifically, it is intended to assess the impact of the competitiveness of the destination on the image of the destination, on the identity of the destination and, loyalty to the destination Braga; the impact of the destination image on the creation of the Braga destination identity and the impact on destination loyalty of the destination identity and the Braga destination image. For this purpose, a semi-structured questionnaire was applied to a sample of 220 non-resident tourists in Braga.

This study brought to the discussion four explanatory factors of tourist destinations, with a focus on the city of Braga. It provides a clear view of what to consider when strategically planning how to make or keep Braga an interesting place for tourists to visit and keep coming back.

The research contribute to the literature on tourism marketing by applying the four explanatory dimensions of the attraction of a tourist destination to the specific case of a Portuguese city - Braga. On the other hand, it provides a clear vision of the dimensions to be considered in the strategic tourist planning of cities and, in the specific case, of how to make or maintain Braga as an interesting place for tourists to visit and keep coming back.

2. Literature review

Destination loyalty seems to be related to the frequency of visits and the consumption or use of a tourist product or service in time (Valle, Silva, Mendes & Guerreiro, 2006). Visit frequency seems to depend on the connection established between the visitor -tourist, and the visited place. Thus, the greater the connectivity, knowledge, involvement and emotional "attachment" to a destination, the more often it will be visited, shared, and recommended to others. Tourist loyalty was conceptualized according to 3 approaches (Zhang et al., 2014) (1)loyalty in attitude -intention to recommend-; (2) behavioral loyalty -eg. repeated visits- and (3) composite loyalty - combining the previous two. Loyalty to a destination results from the visitor's perception of satisfaction; the perceived satisfaction comes from the sum of experiences, stories, and moments experienced during the tourist visit (Valle et al., 2006).

The Destination's identity can be defined as aspects, circumstances, resources, experiences that are identified, involving, and connecting people to places or tourist destinations (Matza, 2014). According to Poladashvili (2015), decisions about places and fixation of locations have been debated in various fields of research, including philosophy, psychology, geography, sociology and natural resource management. Attachment to place refers to the bonds people develop with places (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Giuliani, 2003; Pretty et al., 2003). Three components are explaining the attachment to a place: cognitive, affective, and conative (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001). Beliefs and perceptions constitute the cognitive component; the emotional connection to the place is the affective aspect. The desire to visit, use and enjoy is part of the conative component. The tourist destination itself remains a latent measure in the full dimension observed by people visiting these areas or tourist destinations, as suggested by some authors (d'Orey, 2015; d'Orey, Cardoso & Abreu, 2019). We can see that in the words of Mira, M., Mónico, L., & Breda, L. (2021), to strengthen this economic dynamic, policies must lead to a strategy of enhancing the economy and business, leveraged in the identity of destinations (Araújo, 2013; Bornhorst, Ritchie, & Sheehan, 2010; Della-Corte, 2013; Pillmayer & Scherle, 2014; Spyriadis, Fletcher & Fyall, 2013). Destination's competitiveness can be understood as a constant strategic and continuous adaptation of the tourist destination vis-à-vis its competitors or peers (Andrades & Dimanche, 2017). In other words, it consists of positive differentiation in terms of the preservation of the natural and built heritage, traditions, uses and customs, as well as the capacity for innovation in terms of the tourist attraction of a city or destination, concerning its peers or competing cities. Pais (2015) and Pike and Page (2014) argue that a competitive and sustainable destination requires two fundamental elements: resources (which are comparative advantages) and effectiveness in managing the destination.

Regarding resources, as means of achieving comparative advantages, Pike and Page (2014) mention that these can be understood as elements whose main role is to attract visitors to a destination. It is essential to have adequate and efficient management skills, in terms of material resources, talent management, and management of expectations. These management skills will contribute to building positive differentiation factors vis-à-vis any competitor. According to Mazanec, Wober, & Zins (2007), competitiveness is a factor that characterizes tourist destinations. They refer to internal and external elements: heritage and culture, economic and educational level of populations are internal elements of competitiveness of tourist destinations. Tourism growth, market share and distance to travel are external elements of competitiveness. Dwyer and Kim (2003) consider that companies, and market behavior in a given place indicate a micro vision of competitiveness; the population's income provides a macro view of the competitiveness of tourist destinations. On the economic value associated with competitiveness Silva, F. (2020) The destination's success depends on its ability to compete effectively and profitably in the market, ensuring that its general appearance and the experiences it offers are superior to those of alternative destinations of potential consumers (Fletcher et al., 2018; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Enright & Newton, 2005; Dimoska & Trimcey, 2012) and maintaining or increasing its market position and share (Enright & Newton, 2005). The destination image is built as a result of the constant interaction between the visitor and the visited city. As the city is promoted, it is visited and communicated, ie, the tourist shares their experiences and this feedback helps in the construction of what we can refer to a destination image. Research in destinations image began to emerge after a study by Hunt on the subject in 1971 (Gallarza, Saura & García, 2002; Tasci & Gartner, 2007; Pike, 2008; Pais, 2015). Gradually, since this study, numerous research works related to this topic have emerged in the last decades, being referred to as one of the most discussed topics in the context of tourism (Gallarza et al., 2002). Regarding the image of the destination for consumers and according to the authors Agapito, Valle, & Mendes, (2013) The image of the destination is an interpretation of a destination made by visitors and that influences consumer behavior (Qu, Kim & Im, 2011; Matza, 2014). According to Lopes and Fernandes (2020) and Even and Kozak (2018), two of the main tourism marketing challenges are the differentiation of a destination from the others and the recognition of this differentiation by potential visitors. Differentiation contibutes to create a specific identity of the destination, promoting tourist satisfaction, revisit intentions and loyalty (Hultman, Skarmeas, Oghazi & Behesti, 2015).

Due to the growth in the number of tourist destinations, strategies that reinforce competitive advantages, allowing perceived differentiation aspects will contribute to improving a place's image (Hultman et al., 2015; Souiden, Ladhari & Chiadmi, 2017) and consequent destiny loyalty (Wong, 2017). As mentioned by Picazo and Moreno-Gil (2019), images used to promote a product or service are more effective than words, as images are easier to remember and recognize. According to Ferreira and Fernandes (2019) image is an important tangible characteristic of any destination. Pike, et al. (2018) stated that all cities have unique characteristics (specific streets, monuments, gardens, leisure spaces, uses, and traditions) that reflect the distinctive mark of a city. It is difficult to control all the factors that influence a place's image, but it is possible to do so by promoting the destination through creative events that interest both tourists and residents (Dean et al., 2019). Furthermore, the media have a prominent role in both the construction and management of the image of a tourist destination (Cristea, Apostol & Dosescu, 2015).

In this sense, events are important ways to promote and give visibility to touristic places; they can be disclosed using traditional media but, also, on social media. The internet allows organizations and individuals to spread information, therefore, tourism marketing must bet on integrated communication; Dedeoglu (2019) and Picazo and Moreno-Gil (2019) advocate in favor of a conscious choice of images to be shared by tourism marketers. Because imagem seems to impact on tourist destination loyalty (Qu, Kim & Im, 20117).

3. Conceptual model

Being the main purpose of this study to evaluate the non-resident tourist's perception of the city of Braga, a (structural) model was built (Figure 1) composed of four latent variables: destination's competitiveness, destination's image, destination's identity and destination's loyalty.

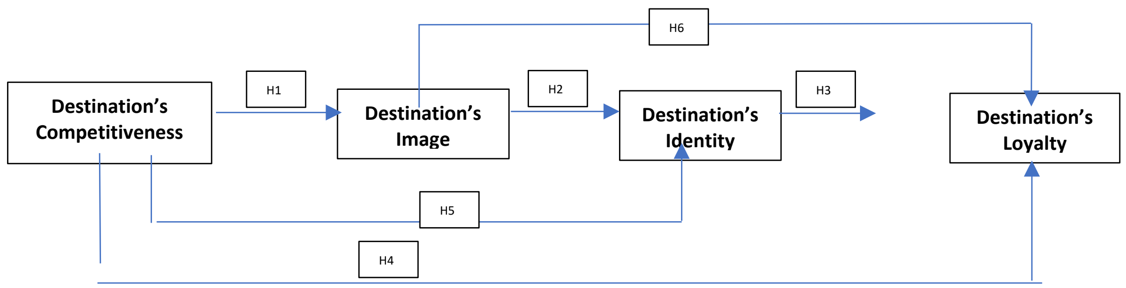

Figure 1: Conceptual model

The latent variables image, identity, and loyalty of the destination are endogenous and the latent variable competitiveness of the destination is exogenous. The relationships established between the latent variables were as follows: there is a direct effect of competitiveness on the destination's image; a direct effect of the image of the destination on the identity of the destination and an indirect effect of competitiveness on the identity of the destination; a direct effect of destination identity on destination loyalty and an indirect effect of destination competitiveness, image, and identity on destination loyalty.

Following the proposed conceptual model and the relationships established between the variables, the following hypotheses were formulated, as represented in Figure 1:

> *H1: The competitiveness of the destination has a positive impact on the image of the destination- the city of Braga (Pike & Page, 2014; Andrades & Dimanche, 2017).*
>
> *H2: The image of the destination has a positive impact on the identity of the destination – the city of Braga- (Qu, Kim & Im, 2011; Matza, 2014)*
>
> *H3: The identity of the destination has a positive impact on loyalty to the destination – the city of Braga (Souiden, Ladhari & Chiadmi, 2017; Hultman, Skarmeas, Oghazi & Beheshti, 2015).*
>
> *H4: The competitiveness of the destination has a positive impact on the identity of the destination- the city of Braga- (Pike & Page, 2014; Andrades & Dimanche, 2017*
>
> *H5: The competitiveness of the destination has a positive impact on loyalty to the destination – the city of Braga (Pick & Page, 2014; Wong, 2017).*
>
> *H6: The image of the destination has a positive impact on loyalty to the destination – the city of Braga (Pike & Page, 2014; Andrades & Dimanche, 2017).*

4. Methodology

We used a quantitative approach to make it possible to test the study's main objective and the created hypotheses. Quantitative studies present a significant number of advantages, like (1) allowing the establishment of relationships between the variables collected in the questionnaire, (2) replicating the methods and techniques for other samples and, if the sample is significant, (3) generalizing the achieved results (Mody, Hanks & Cheng, 2021; Khoo-Lattimore, Mura & Yung, 2019; Walle, 1997).

First, a statistical analysis of the dependent and independent variables was performed, and then the Partial Least Square (PLS) method was applied to the structural model.

5. Participants

The sample of this study consists of 220 participants; answers were collected through a questionnaire made available online and sent by e-mail to non-resident tourists who visited the city of Braga between July 2020 and 2021. We used an already validated scale in previous studies (D'Orey, 2015). The questionnaire consists of 25 questions that were divided into five groups: (G1) destination's competitiveness with nine questions; (G2) destination's image, with five questions; (G3) destination's identity, with two questions; (G4) destinations' loyalty, with five questions and (G5) sociodemographic characteristics of respondents with four questions. As previously done, we used a 5-point Likert scale, being 1 – I totally disagree, and 5 – I totally agree. A pre-test was also carried out to a total of 20 responses. Answers were validated with a Cronbach Alpha of 0.841 (reference value being 0.70, according to Hair et al., 2019).

6. Sample description

Our sample was composed by 56,4% of man and 32,6% of women. The majority of the participants were between 26 to 55 years of age (23,60% and 37,70%, respectively). More than half of respondents have a graduate degree; 94,55% of the individuals were Portuguese. It should be noted that the sample was collected during the pandemic and, as such, the movement of foreign tourists in Braga was reduced due to all the restrictions imposed by the Health Authorities.

Table 1: Sociodemographic characteristics of respondents

	Frequency	**Percentage**
Gender		
Women	96	43,60%
Men	124	56,40%
Age		
15-25	47	21,40%
26-40	52	23,60%
41-55	83	37,70%
More than 55	37	16,80%
Education		
Doctorate	49	22,27%
Graduate/Bachelor	79	35,91%
Postgraduate/Master	75	34,09%
Intermediate/Secondary	14	6,36%
Other	3	2,50%
Nationality		
Portuguese	208	94,55%
Other	12	5,45%

7. Statistical analysis

As suggested by Ringle at al. (2015), we applied the Partial Least Square (PLS) and used the Smart PL" 3.0 software. PLS is a variance-base method that combines multivariate statistical techniques such as factor analysis and regression estimation. According to Hair et al. (2019), the PLS has as assumption the non-normal distribution of data and allows, even in small samples, to establish significant relationships between latent variables and, also, between these latent variables and the indicators that measure them.

The sample size was previously validated and in order to verify its suitability for the application of the PLS method (Hair et al., 2019). We decided to apply the PLS algorithm to the conceptual model (figure 2):

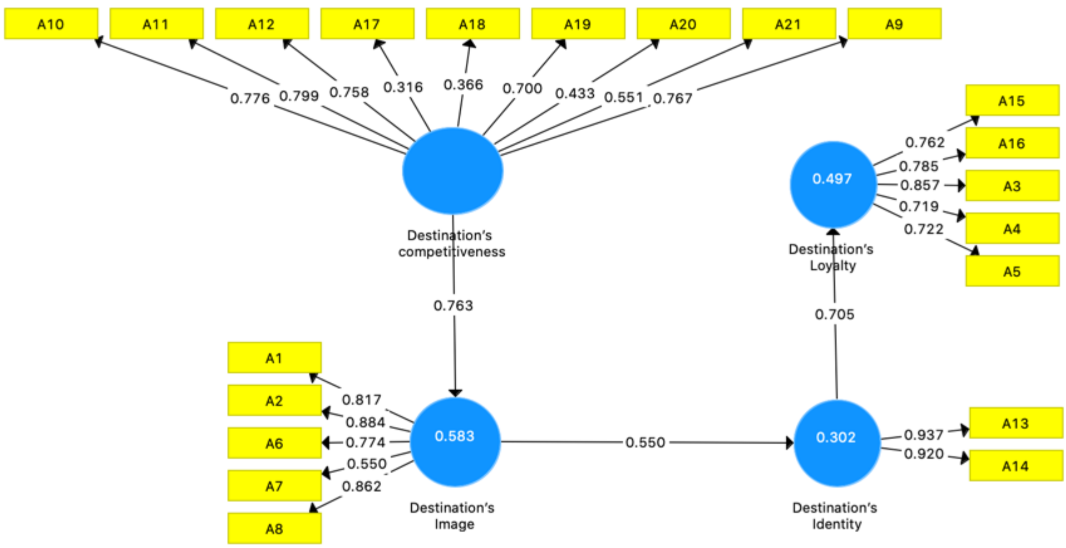

Figure 2: PLS model

The theoretical model includes four latent variables (represented in circles), such as competitiveness, image, identity and loyalty of the destination and 21 indicators (represented in rectangles) that measure the latent variables.

8. Model validation

Once the PLS model is obtained, it lacks validation in terms of predictive precision, reflective measures and discriminant validity.

The predictive precision is evaluated using the R Square (R2) values of the endogenous (dependent) latent variables, that is, destination's image, destination's identity and destination's loyalty. The values of R2 are shown in Figure 2, within the circles, with the latent variable destination's image having an R2 of 0.583, destination's identity an R2 of 0.302 and destination's loyalty an R2 of 0.497. According to Cohen (1988) an R2 greater than 0.35 represents a "high" effect, thus, all latent variables have a high R2.

To assess the internal consistency of the latent variables, we used composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha. To assess the convergent validity, the outer loadings (individual indicator reliability) and the average variance extracted (AVE) were analyzed. According to Hair et al. (2019), composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha have reference values of 0.70; our data shows values that are higher than the reference values (Table 2) and thus, the internal convergence is "satisfactory to good". The outer loadings (OL) of the model explain at least 50% of the variance of each latent variable, with the exception of indicators A17 (OL> 0.316), A18 (OL > 0.366) and A20 (OL> 0.433) referring to the latent variable Destination's Competitiveness. As far as AVE measures, according to Hair et al. (2019), we need to consider 0,50 as the reference value. Table 2 shows that all AVEs are above the reference value, reinforcing the good internal consistency of the PLS model presented.

Regarding discriminant validity, the Fornell Larcker Criterion was used (Table 2). We conclude that there is discriminant validity in each of the four latent variables since the square root of each AVE of the latent variables is superior to all the squared correlations of the latent variables.

Table 2: Reflective measures and discriminant validity

	Destination's Identity	Destination's Image	Destination's Loyalty	Destination's competitiveness
Cronbach's Alpha	0.840	0.839	0.830	0.810
Composite Reliability	0.926	0.888	0.879	0.847
AVE	0.862	0.619	0.594	0.502
Fornell Larcker Criterion				
Destination's Identity	**0.928**			
Destination's Image	0.550	**0.787**		
Destination's Loyalty	0.705	0.713	**0.771**	
Destination's Competitiveness	0.654	0.763	0.704	**0.834**

9. Results

Regarding the variables for the formation of tourist destinations (competitiveness, image, identity and loyalty of the destination), table 3 shows their statistics (average and standard deviation).

Table 3: Statistics of the training variables of tourist destinations

	Mean	**Std. Deviation**
Destination's Competitiveness		
A9 - The people residing here are kind and hospitable	4,35	0,678
A10 - I am satisfied with the quality of the services provided by the city	4,14	0,702
A11-This City has unique locations that must be visited	4,43	0,762
A12- I consider that this City is rich in cultural heritage (history / tradition / gastronomy)	4,51	0,674
A17-I limited my stay to Braga due to the price of the tourist offer	2,78	1,185
A18-The price of the stay was the main criterion of choice	2,51	1,223
A19-I consider the management of Braga to be well organized	3,81	0,906
A20-During my stay I visited (or had the opportunity to visit) several museums	3,15	1,224
A21-During my stay I visited (or had the opportunity to visit) historical sites	4,26	0,826
Destination's Image		
A1 - I had pleasant moments during my stay at Braga	4,32	0,725
A2 - Visiting this City was a pleasant experience	4,40	0,694
A6 - I feel that these holidays were relaxing	4,02	0,814
A7 - I felt safe during my visit to this City	4,57	0,672
A8 - This place is very pleasant	4,44	0,706
Destination's Identity		
A13- My personality is perfectly suited to this city	3,89	0,953
A14-I feel that this place is part of the person that I am	3,43	1,18
Destination's Loyalty		
A3 - I am very pleased with this City	4,22	0,745
A4 - I am pleased with the quality of the tourist services provided	3,96	0,742
A5 - I was pleased with the way I was welcomed in this City	4,26	0,699
A15-I believe I will visit this place again	4,40	0,834
A16-I believe this place is the perfect holiday destination	3,18	1,185

As far as Braga destination competitiveness, the answers that showed the highest average agreement were those to questions A12 (4.51) regarding the cultural tourist wealth of Braga, A11 (4.44) regarding the fact that Braga has unique places that must be visited and the A9 (4.35) considering Braga's population to be kind and hospitable.

In the image of the destination, the greatest agreement, in average terms, was found in the answers to question A7 (4.57) and A8 (4.44), referring, respectively, to the sense of security felt in Braga and the recognition that Braga is a pleasant city. In the identity of the destination, respondents agreed that their personality fits with the city of Braga (A13– 3.89) and, as far as loyalty to the destination, question A15 (4.40) shows the intention to visit Braga again.

After validating the PLS model, we carried out a bootstrap analysis, a non-parametric procedure that allows testing the statistical significance of the relationships established between latent variables (Ringle et al., 2015).

The results obtained from the application of the bootstrap analysis are shown in table 4 and we can conclude that all the relationships established between the latent variables are very significant, for p = 0.000.

Table 4: Significance testing results

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
H1: Destination's _competitiveness -> Destination's _Image	0.763	0.770	0.028	27.402	0.000*
H2: Destination's _Image -> Destination's _Identity	0.550	0.554	0.048	11.515	0.000*
H3: Destination's _Identity -> Destination's _Loyalty_	0.705	0.711	0.035	20.266	0.000*
H4: Destination's _competitiveness -> Destination's _Identity	0.420	0.427	0.045	9.298	0.000*
H5: Destination's _competitiveness -> Destination's _Loyalty_	0.296	0.305	0.043	6.876	0.000*
H6: Destination's _Image -> Destination's _Loyalty_	0.388	0.395	0.049	7.931	0.000*

Note: *p=0.000. Source: authors' own calculations.

We can conclude that Braga's destination competitiveness has a direct positive impact (β = 0.763) on the image of the destination, confirming the H1. A 10% variation in the competitiveness of the destination has a positive impact of 76.3% on the image of the destination for non-resident tourists. The factors that most contribute to the competitiveness of the destination are Braga's cultural tourist wealth, the fact that Braga has unique places that must be visited, and the kind and hospitable of the Braga population. The image that is created about a destination is a source of competitive advantages, attracting visitors to a destination (Pike & Page, 2014). However, this competitive advantage must be supported by adequate and efficient management of both physical and emotional resources, namely tastes and expectations. It is the management of these resources that make a destination different, therefore requiring continuous adaptation in terms of strategic adaptation (Andrades & Dimanche, 2017).

The image of the destination has a direct positive impact (β = 0.550) on the identity of the city of Braga, confirming H2. When there is a 10% variation in the image of Braga, there is a 55% impact on the identity of the Braga destination. The factors that most contribute to the image of the Braga destination are the feeling of security and the recognition that Braga is a pleasant city. The destination image is an interpretation of the visitor, influencing consumer behavior and creating loyalty (Qu, Kim & Im, 2011). On the other hand, destination identity arises from the identification of aspects, circumstances, resources and experiences that involve, and connect people to the place visited (Matza, 2014). In the case of Braga, the feeling of security and the recognition that Braga is a pleasant city are the elements that visitors identify as the identity features of this destination.

The identity of the destination has a direct positive impact (β = 0.705) on the loyalty to the Braga destination by non-resident tourists, confirming H3. When the identity of the Braga destination varies by 10%, loyalty to this destination varies by 70.5%. Respondents identify essentially with this destination since they consider their personality to fit in with the city. Loyalty to a destination depends on the perception and absorption by visitors of the different elements, contributing to the image of the destination (Hultman et al., 2015; Souiden, Ladhari & Chiadmi, 2017) and, therefore, to loyalty (Wong, 2017).). By creating a specific identity for a destination, as in the case of Braga where most tourists associate their personality with the Braga destination, the visitor is creating a specific identity for this destination, increasing tourist satisfaction and loyalty (Hultman, Skarmeas, Oghazi & Behesti, 2015).

The competitiveness of the destination has an indirect positive impact (Destination's competitiveness -> Destination's Image -> Destination's Identity) on the destination's identity (β= 0.402), confirming H4. A 10% variation in the competitiveness of the destination, makes the identity of this city vary by 40.2%. And, the competitiveness of the destination has an indirect positive impact (Destination's competitiveness -> Destination's Image -> Destination's Identity -> Destination's Loyalty) on the loyalty of non-resident tourists to the city of Braga (β = 0.296), confirming H5. Thus, a 10% variation in the competitiveness of the city of Braga makes the loyalty to this city vary by 29.6%. Destinations become competitive through distinctive physical and human resources, contributing to the tourist's image of a destination. It is these features that create the image of the destination in the eyes of a visitor. Consequently, this image creates an identity for the destination (Pike & Page, 2014; Andrade & Dimanche, 2017). Identity with the destination will create loyalty to the destination, making the tourist want to return to that destination again (Pick & Page, 2014; Wong, 2017). Finally, the image of the destination has an indirect positive impact (Destination's Image -> Destination's Identity -> Destination's Loyalty) on loyalty to the city of Braga (β = 0.388), confirming H6 and also previous research (Quet al., 2017). When the image of Braga to non-resident tourists varies by 10%, loyalty to this destination varies by 38.8%.

We can also conclude that loyalty to the city of Braga is directly influenced by the identity of the destination and, indirectly, by the competitiveness and image that non-resident tourists have of the city of Braga.

10. Conclusions

The main purpose of this study is to understand the perception of non-resident tourists about Braga as a touristic destination, using four explanatory dimensions already introduced in previous research: Destination’s loyalty, Destination’s Identity, Destination’s Competitiveness and Destination’s Image.

We verified that identity, loyalty, competitiveness, and image are relevant variables to support their decision.

According to data, competitiveness has a positive impact (76.3%) on the image of the destination, and the factors that most contribute to this are the cultural wealth, the unique places, and the hospitality of the people of Braga. The city's image has an impact of 55%, having as differentiating aspects the safety, and the feeling of being a pleasant space. On the identity of the destination and regarding loyalty, it has an impact of 75%; tourists feel that their personality fits with the city. On loyalty, this has an impact on 38.8% of tourists.

Thus, we can see that the variable with the greatest impact on tourists is their competitiveness and the one with the least impact was the loyalty of tourists to this city. This study sought to understand how 4 specific variables contribute to the formation of tourist destinations and how they are interconnected, focusing on Braga. It helps understand which aspects of the different explanatory factors impact tourists choosing to visit this city. This is the main contribution of the research – theoretical and practical approach to better understand the motives that make tourists visit Braga, by using already validated variables.

The main limitation of this study is the fact that it only analyses one specific town, using mainly individuals that were a part of the authors’ network. Using a representative sample could bring clear insights, as well as replicate this study to some other Portuguese and European cities. A qualitative study, seeking to understand the attitudes and behaviors that lead tourists to choose this destination and which emotional reasons contribute to the attractiveness and loyalty of tourists to this city could allow accurate results. We can suggest doing in-depth interviews or applying a Delph study with some experts and/or responsible for tourist organizations in Braga, trying to match their opinions and experiences with those transmitted by tourists. This study is original because it is the first time that attraction to the destination Braga is studied through loyalty, identity, image and image of the destination, contributing to the literature on tourist marketing. Thus, this study provides a clear view of the dimensions to be considered in the strategic tourist planning of cities and, in the specific case, of how to make or maintain Braga as a place of interest for tourists to visit and continue to return.

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Internal Control and Risks Mitigation in Tourism Sector in Portugal

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Abstract: The Covid-19 pandemic affected the operational risk of organizations, requiring its management through Internal Control Systems (ICS). The tourism sector in Portugal, one of the largest and most competitive, was also one of the most affected by the pandemic, which emerged in March 2020. The main purpose of this paper is to analyse the perception of tourism managers about the relationship between the existence of internal control and risk mitigation in their companies. We present a quantitative study carried out by questionnaire, sent to 830 managers from tourism companies in the region of Porto, Portugal. Most participants consider crucial the implementation of ICS and a competitive advantage in the current pandemic context. They also consider that the implementation of ICS is not accessible to all companies, but its absence does not necessarily make them more fragile. The study also concludes that besides internal control, the role of the Portuguese Government was crucial to overcome the difficulties caused by the pandemic and to ensure companies' recovery. Financial support from the government allows companies to invest in procedures to overcome the pandemic situation, such as strengthening cleanliness measures, focusing on new technologies and creating products and/or services more attractive to consumers. This study contributes to the perception of tourism managers about internal control, highlight the need to implement risk analysis routines to manage risks that may threaten the company activities and highlight the government´s role in business recovery.

Keywords: internal control system, risk, tourism, pandemic, Portugal

1. Introduction

Internal control consists of procedures that ensure the organization's compliance with laws, regulations and internal processes. It includes actions taken by the organization to manage and assess risks (strategic, financial or operational) to achieve established objectives and targets. The design of these procedures should be run under the responsibility of the board of directors and the executive management, involving all the entity's employees. Risk assessment and management allows an organization to understand and hierarchize the impact of potential events in their objectives and to act accordingly. Therefore, a good Internal Control System (ICS) is essential for efficient risk management, facilitating the detection of errors and fraud, maximizing results with minimal resources, in search for organizational effectiveness and efficiency.

In Portugal, in March 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic generate an economic crisis. The tourism sector, with a significant weight in the Portuguese economy (around 15% to GDP in 2019), was one of the most affected sectors, leading to layoffs and reduced activities. The negative socio-economic impact of the pandemic crisis in this sector is of great concern, demanding a key action (Bera et al., 2020). Under the challenges of this uncertainty, risk analysis and assessment assume a new crucial role.

To this end, this article is a move in the study of the importance of internal control regarding the risks in the tourism sector in Portugal, addressing the perception of tourism managers on the subject.

2. Risk management in tourism sector

The American Institute of Certified Public Accountants was the first body to define Internal Control, in 1934, considering that it comprises a plan to organize and coordinate business methods and measures to guarantee the safeguarding of assets, verify the adequacy and reliability of accounting data, promote operational efficiency and encourage adherence to policies established by management. A company has an efficient ICS when its mission is performed ethically; financial statements are reliable and credible; there is an accomplishment with the organization's laws, regulations and policies; adopts an economic, effective and efficient use of resources; and promote adequate asset safeguards. These controls ensure the processes and record of valid transactions and the proper implementation, storage and maintenance of planned procedures.

In the tourism business, the risks can derive from its many dimensions: employees, suppliers, customers, investors, credit institutions, among others. Risk analysis is a fundamental step in the process of internal control

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to attain risk management; and consists of evaluating possible occurrences or circumstances that may compromise the fulfilment of organizational objectives (Susanto and Meiryani, 2018). This step takes place after identifying the potential hazards to the entity, aims to estimate possible operational losses and prevent them by establishing a strategy that involves prioritizing the most likely or dangerous risks. The risk management requires a detailed analysis of the risks implicit in the business, subdivided into four phases: identifying, evaluating, prioritizing and monitoring the risk.

Situations such as accidents at work, financial fraud or natural disasters constitute dangers for an organization. The emergence in 2020 of the crisis caused by a worldwide pandemic is the finest example of an organizational danger that has a catastrophic impact on several business sectors. This pandemic, the Covid-19 pandemic, emerged in the far away Wuhan (China) on December 1, 2019, to appear and cause a greater impact in Portugal in mid-March 2020. One of the sectors most seriously affected by the pandemic was tourism, leading to the closure of facilities due to the cancellation of trips by potential tourists (Sousa et al., 2020), almost shutting down the sector.

According to Harris and Brown (1998), this sector has a specific feature, such as sales instability and high fixed costs, which makes it very dependent on demand. Another specificity of this sector is seasonality, and its management is one of the main problems of hotel managers. In this way, and since this sector operates in a very competitive and constantly changing environment is important the constant update and alignment of management with consumer preferences. Some authors even consider that the pandemic will intensify the competition between countries for tourists, scarcer and more valuable (Grech et al., 2020). Risk management and assessment models have already been used by travel agencies and tourism companies in their operational planning (Ural, 2015; Ritchie and Jiang, 2019). The negative effects of the pandemic just stressed the importance of risk management crucial in tourism organizations.

The losses caused by the materialization of the epidemic risk can be expressed in financial terms (financial risk), heavily affecting the financial liquidity of tourist companies (Bera et al., 2020). The European Commission warns of the need for solidarity between EU countries; and identifies some financial instruments to be implemented, at the governmental level, to assist and mitigate financial effects to citizens and sectors of the economy particularly affected by the pandemic, including tourism. The instruments can be spending measures, fiscal measures - sectoral and regional - or measures other than fiscal (European Commission, 2020). Some examples implemented in Portugal were loans, credits and loan guarantees for enterprises, exemption from social security premiums.

The economic effects of the pandemic occur both on the supply side (operations of companies in the tourism sector) and the demand side (consumer behaviour), forcing risk management and systemic actions that mitigate their effects on countries' economies (Bera et al., 2020).

In 2020, the tourism sector in Portugal was responsible for more than 8% of the GDP (representing a decrease of about 50,4% compared to 2019) and, according to data published by the National Institute of Statistics of Portugal, there was a drop of more than 64% in the number of guests, compared to the previous year. Until July 2020, the tourism sector obtained 696.4 million euros of total income, 70% less than in the same period in 2019. The greatest contribution was from national tourists, with a total of 3.05 million guests, compared to the 2.35 million that came from abroad. British tourists were the ones who most sought out Portugal for holiday, but the national tourist accommodation registered 78% fewer British tourists, between January and July 2020, compared to the same period of 2019. The average visit of guests also decreases to 2.4 nights in accommodation - 6.2% less than in 2019. The resident tourists were the ones that most contributed to the number of overnight stays, in August 2021, reaching the highest monthly value ever recorded. Compared to August 2019, overnight stays from residents grew by 22.6% and overnight stays from non-residents decreased by 46.9%.

The impact of Covid-19 on tourism will be uneven across space (and time) (Hall et al., 2020). Although several studies point to a positive effect of the pandemic on rural tourism, in Portugal, the overall effect was negative, both on the demand and revenue side. There was the closure of several units (16.4%) due to pandemic circumstances (Silva, 2021). Also, an increase in expenses with cleaning and frequent disinfection of houses and tourist entertainment equipment, as well as personal protective equipment.

This impact poses several challenges to companies in the short and long term. In the short term, it is essential to ensure sufficient liquidity to reopen activities; in the long term, it is necessary to be prepared and reactive to activities in tourist demand. Some opportunities can still be explored, such as the quality of the health response, the exploitation of a less mass tourism offer based on social and environmental sustainability issues, the increase in tourism among the elderly population of countries with greater purchasing power and acceleration of the digitization of tourist operations (Almeida and Silva, 2020).

Following the pandemic context and the emerged risks, new trends and changes arise in the tourism sector. One of the trends is the safety and cleanliness in the sector - this tends to remain and to be strengthened (Villacé-Molinero, 2021). The increase in cleaning environments, the use of masks, hand disinfection and distancing in places could become definitive actions in certain spaces or moments. In addition, with the increase in cleanliness concerns, the "Clean & Safe" seal emerged, aiming to reinforce confidence in Portugal tourist destinations. This measure is optional, free of charge and covers the entire tourist sector chain. This is a relevant issue because the government must be in unison with the public health for the tourists and community safety. There are already websites comparing safety for travellers and incentives from different countries (Grech et al., 2020). The second trend is to avoid travelling abroad, promoting domestic tourism. For example, the regional government of Azores Archipelago create incentives to take a holiday exclusively for residents. The incentive covers air transport services, accommodation, food, tourism activities, car rental and booking expenses (Couto et al., 2020). Solo trips are also a good and recurrent alternative, and it will foster the tourism sector to rethink strategies for this kind of public. The third trend, with notable growth, is the use of contactless cards, avoiding contact with cash and streamlining payments.

An important change is a resource to virtual reality, a growing tendency due to technological evolution. This is a valuable tool for customer decision making, allowing them to visit tourist attractions, restaurants or hotels online and interact with them. According to Sousa et al. (2020), online communication facilitated the interaction with the citizen/tourist and strengthened the ties between the population and tourism entities. The digital revolution is increasingly present in people's daily lives and the operations of societies. In a very competitive environment as the tourism sector, the relationships with the consumer are very important even in a digital way (Martins et al., 2015). Related, there is the increasing use of artificial intelligence. It became easier to personalize the customer experience, finding trips and activities that are fully customized to their profile.

These trends and changes, along with the epidemic stress on the tourism sector, will lead to readjustments in the tourism supply, developing new tourist products, and a deep analysis of the operating costs. This will also affect the workforce, leading to its reduction and the lay-off solution, forcing the restructuration of companies. The social impacts require special attention from the policymakers to define support policies, especially for the most tourism-dependent regions (Henriques et al., 2020).

3. Method

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the perception of tourism managers about the relationship between the existence of internal control and risk mitigation in their companies. We seek to understand the knowledge in the companies about the ICS, whether they implement it, as a way of facing business risks caused by the pandemic. We also studied the relevance and nature of support granted by the Government and if it was decisive for tourist activities. In this way, four research questions were defined:

- Question 1: Is control intern related to the operational effectiveness of organizations?
- Question 2: The implementation of an ICS is reachable to all companies?
- Question 3: What is the role of the ICS in the recovery of companies, given the business risks caused by the pandemic?
- Question 4: What is the importance of Government support to recover tourism activities affected by the pandemic?

This study follows a quantitative method and data was collected through a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire is divided into two parts: one, on sociodemographic issues and company information (such as gender, age, academic qualifications, area of training, the branch of activity and number of workers); another, related to the research questions. There are questions with open-answer and multiple-choice, using a Likert scale, numbering the options from 1 to 5, ranging from Totally Disagree, corresponding to 1, and Totally Agree, corresponding to 5. The questionnaire ends up with two optional and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was prepared using the Google Forms platform. Before sending it, a pre-test was carried out that allowed its validation, checking the accessibility and ease of understanding of the questions. In addition, it helped to detect errors or doubts that, if not detected, could threaten the credibility of the study. Subsequently, the questionnaire was sent by email to companies in the tourism sector and their response was anonymous and voluntary. The questionnaire was available from August 27 to September 12, 2021. In total, 830 questionnaires were sent to companies in the tourism sector, from Porto, listed on the *Tourism de Portugal* website. The number of valid answers was 54 and the response rate was 6,5%. Quantitative data were analysed with the IBM SPSS V26 © program. The Alpha Cronbach shows a moderate correlation on the construct, presenting a value of 0,642.

4. Results and discussion

The questionnaire was mostly answered by tourism managers, the predominant fields of activity were Accommodation and Travel Agencies and 68% of the companies have up to 10 employees. The study showed that the vast majority of respondents agree with the importance of the relationship between internal control and the operational effectiveness of organizations (Figure 1), namely for maximizing their performance.

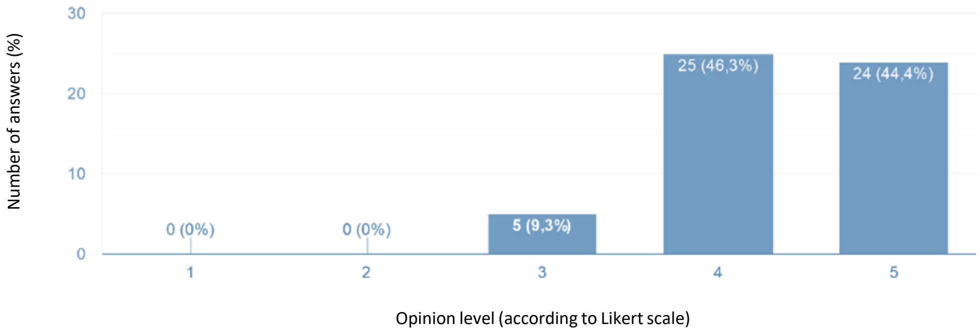

Figure 1: Perception of respondents about the relationship between Internal Control and the operational effectiveness of organizations

Although they recognized the importance of internal control to ensure greater organization, security and strategic planning, 57.4% of the participants consider that the implementation of an ICS is not accessible to all companies, particularly due to the costs and the human resources needed to be allocated to perform these functions.

There was a significant positive correlation between participants' perception about this issue, the *operational effectiveness of organizations* (V1), and *their maximization of performance* (V2) when organizations have procedures of Internal Control $r(52) = 0.73$, $p < 0{,}001$ (Table 1).

Table 1: Spearman correlation between operational effectiveness and maximization of performance in organizations with internal control procedures

			V1	V2
Spearman's Rho	V1	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,737**
		Sig. (2 tailled)	.	<,001
		N	54	54
	V2	Correlation Coefficient	,737**	1,000
		Sig. (2 tailled)	<,001	.
		N	54	54

In the pandemic context, the specialists in tourism consider ICS important to face business risks and for the recovery of companies. Moreover, 74.1% totally agree that the role of the Government is crucial to ensure this recovery (Figure 2).

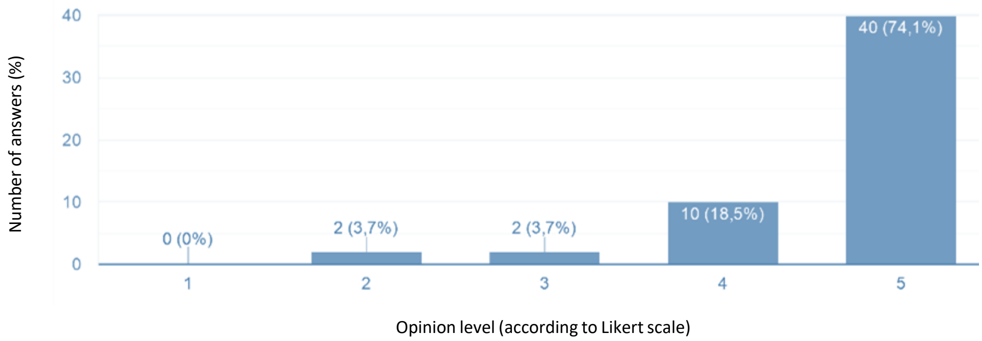

Figure 2: The role of Government to support tourism activities recovery

Despite the recognized importance, 38.9% of respondents mention not having ICS. However, 55.6% ensure that risk analysis routines are being carried out to manage unexpected events, such as the case of the pandemic. According to them, the absence of a department of risk management does not necessarily make the organization more fragile. To overcome financial difficulties 48.1% resort to Government support, 22.2% had to resort to salary cuts and 14.8% to dismissals. To maintain the operation of activities the companies reinforced the cleanness measures (66.7%), use new technologies (42.6%) and promote or create new services to maintain the loyalty of regular customers and even attract new ones (64%).

Regarding risk management, spearman's Rho presents a positive correlation between participants' perception regarding the importance of the internal control to manage risks (V3) and its identification and support to deal with the break of the tourism sector (V4) $r(52) = .54$, $p<0{,}001$ (Table 2), however, this correlation is not so strong as for the previous variables (Table 1).

Table 2: Spearman correlation between risk management and break of the tourism sector

			V3	V4
Spearman's Rho	V3	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,540**
		Sig. (2 tailled)	.	<,001
		N	54	54
	V4	Correlation Coefficient	,540**	1,000
		Sig. (2 tailled)	<,001	.
		N	54	54

In sum, the existence of ICS is very important to implement risk analysis routines and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of operations. The Portuguese Government also have an important role in the survival of tourism activities.

5. Conclusion

Internal control enables risk management and increases the possibility of achieving organizational objectives. The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic brought out financial and social crises. This paper analyses the perception of Portuguese tourism managers about the internal control in risk mitigation arising from the pandemic. Most respondents consider ICS to be important to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their operations, as well as to implement risk analysis routines to manage and prevent risks that could threaten the proper operative of their activities. The Government's role was also crucial in overcoming difficulties through the implementation of several measures such as the strengthening of cleanness measures, a greater commitment to new technologies and even the creation of new products and/or services that would become more attractive for consumers.

The crisis had significant impacts on the labour market with the contraction of the economy and the increase in unemployment. In the medium and long term, employees have to get education in new technologies to keep up with tourism digitization guidance. We suggest for future research to study procedures, such as digitization of activities, to enable companies' operationalization in the context of unforeseen events, such as the pandemic case.

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Preserving Ritual Food as Intangible Cultural Heritage Through Digitisation: The Case of Portugal

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Abstract: Ritual food and gastronomy, as intangible cultural heritage, is important for preserving cultural identity and traditions of a country, as well as a tool for promoting tourism. Due to globalisation and the mixture of different cultures, there is a risk that ritual food and associated traditions may be lost. In this context, the EURICA project aims to contribute to the preservation and safeguarding of European ritual recipes. The present work reflects the perspectives of the project´s target group, represented by cultural organisations and stakeholders on the importance and ways of preserving this intangible cultural heritage, focusing on digital presentation and promotion. The results of the work are intended to raise the awareness of the target group about the process of digitisation of intangible cultural heritage, which in turn leads to the preservation of traditional Portuguese gastronomy in a long-term context.

Keywords: intangible heritage, ritual food, gastronomy, culture, digitisation, Portugal

1. Background

Cultural heritage is part of our daily lives. At national and regional level, we are offered natural landscapes and archaeological systems. We are also benefited with objects, literature, art and not least, the cultural heritage left to us by our ancestors, in the stories that accompany us, our children, in the foods we enjoy, in the smells we recognise, our history and values common (Lowenthal, 2005; Nilson, & Thorell, 2018). It also represents a wealth and diversity of our cultural traditions. Cultural heritage, in its different aspects, constitutes a singular expression of a territory and its history whose preservation is essential to guarantee the understanding, permanence and construction of the national identity and for the democratisation of culture. On the other hand, the cultural heritage values the territory and constitutes an important economic resource, constituting a factor of competitiveness that interest to enhance as an element of differentiation and attraction. In turn, the intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is particularly important within the scope of sustainability insofar as its principles lie in the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted from one generation to the next, constituting a via and dynamic bridge connecting the past to the present (Lenzerini, 2011; Petronela, 2016). Intangible cultural heritage assumes a leading role especially in the tourism sector in various ways. ICH promotes the increase of tourism attractiveness (Esfehani, 2018) by adding value to the offer. In addition, ICH promotes the commercial aspect without compromising its' safeguarding, maintaining its authenticity and genuineness while allowing to enhance and expand new market segments (Mendonça & Lopes, 2015). ICH in revealing itself as a conservation tool, as a driver to facilitate culturally and naturally sensitive visitor behaviour, with the cooperation of tourists with local communities (Petronela, 2016). The General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation Culture, hereinafter referred to as "UNESCO", meeting in Paris on 29th June September to 7th October 2003 at its 32nd session, considering the importance of intangible cultural heritage, a melting pot of sustainable development, as highlighted in the UNESCO for the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore, 1989, in UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2001 and the Istanbul Declaration of 2002 adopted by the Third Round Table of Ministers of Culture, recognising that communities, in particular indigenous communities, and, in certain cases, individuals, play an important role in the production, safeguarding, maintenance and recreation of intangible cultural heritage, as contributing to the enrichment of cultural diversity and human creativity, considering the need to raise awareness, in particular of the importance of intangible cultural heritage and its safeguard. In this convention, the concept of *intangible cultural heritage* is defined as *"(…) the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills - as well as* *the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated with them - that communities, groups and , as the case may be, individuals recognize it as being an integral part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, passed on from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups according to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, instilling a sense of identity and continuity, thus contributing, to promote respect for cultural diversity and human creativity".*

The "intangible cultural heritage" as defined, in the following areas:

- (a) Oral traditions and expressions, including language as the vector of intangible cultural heritage;
- (b) Performing arts;
- (c) Social practices, rituals and festive acts;
- (d) Knowledge and uses related to nature and the universe;
- e) Traditional craft techniques.

Each State Party shall endeavour by all appropriate means to ensure the recognition, respect and enhancement of the endeavour cultural heritage in society, in particular through (I)Education, awareness and information the public, in particular young people; (ii) Specific education and training programs within the communities and groups involved; (iii) Training activities in the area of intangible cultural heritage and, in particular, management and scientific; and (iv) Non-formal means of transmitting knowledge;

1.1 Intangible Cultural Heritage in Portugal

The focus on ICH follows the publication of the Convention for World Heritage in 1972, which expressed the concern on an international scale in the preservation and protection of heritage assets of relevance. A decade later, the UNESCO Section for Non-Material Heritage was created and from that time on intangible cultural heritage was considered a priority, resulting in the publication of the final text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003. Portugal is one of the States signatories to the Convention for Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Directorate-General for Cultural Heritage (DGPC) is the entity responsible for ensuring compliance with the State's obligations regarding the study, safeguarding, enhancement and dissemination of intangible cultural heritage (PCI). This entity also has the function of processing the respective legal protection process and defining and disseminating methodologies and procedures to safeguard the entire national heritage, namely the intangible cultural heritage. In this context, the DGPC is responsible for the inventory process of this type of heritage. In the Portuguese case, in the early years of the UNESCO Convention, the application for World Heritage was direct and was not subject to prior inventory by each country. Fado was the first artistic expression to be declared an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in Portugal. Currently, we can identify a set of 8 elements that are part of the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO (Table 1).

Table 1: Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in Portugal

Cultural Imaterial Heritage	Year of inscrition	Further information
Fado, popular urban song from Portugal	2011	
Mediterranean Diet	2013	Present also in countries such as Cyprus, Croatia, Spain, Greece, Italy, Morocco
Cante Alentejano, Polyphonic Corner of Alentejo, Southern Portugal	2014	
Manufacture of rattles	2015	ICH of Humanity that needs Urgent Safeguard.
Falconry, Living Human Heritage	2016	Present in other countries: United Arab Emirates, Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Syrian Arab Republic, Germany, Kazakhstan, Italy and Pakistan.
Bisalhães black crockery making process	2016	ICH of Humanity that needs Urgent Safeguard.
Production of Clay Figurines from Estremoz	2017	
Winter Party, Pondence Carnival	2019	

Source: DGPC[1]

[1] http://www.patrimoniocultural.gov.pt/pt/patrimonio/patrimonio-imaterial/inventario-nacional-do-pci/patrimonio-cultural-imaterial-da-humanidade-unesco/

However, there are still other events registered in the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage, such as: *Capeia Arraiana* (*Sabugal*); Kola San Jon (*Bairro do Alto da Cova da Moura, Amadora*); Traditional Dances of *Lousã* (*Castelo Branco*); Feast in honour of *Nossa Senhora da Penha de França* (*Vista Alegre, Ílhavo*); *Endoenças of Entre-os Rios* (*Penafiel* and *Marco de Canaveses*); Traditional knowledge, ethnobotanical and artisanal, used in the toothpick production process (*Lorvão, Figueira de Lorvão, Penacova*); Arts and knowledge of construction and use of the avieira battery on the Tagus River (Caneiras, Santarém); *Caretos* of Podence Carnival Party (*Macedo de Cavaleiros*); Xávega Art (*Costa da Caparica, Almada*); Festivals of *Campo Maior* people; Dances, Ballet Dancers and Comedies of Terceira Island (Azores); Cult of *Nossa Senhora da Piedade de Loulé* (*Algarve*); *Cantar os Reis* at *Ovar.*

All this information is accessible online through the website of the DGPC. However, this entity still uses the platform called MatrizPCI. This constitutes a reference internet resource in Portuguese for the area of intangible heritage through which the expressions of intangible heritage subject to legal protection by the Portuguese State are published online, through their registration in the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage. This platform presents itself as a database that also makes available, in addition to the National Inventory, of all the expressions registered in the Lists and Registration established by the UNESCO Convention (2003), it allows access to all documents included in each legal protection process, regardless its format (text, image, video, sound), legislation and regulations, publications, educational content, and updated information about the activities developed by DGPC (courses and training actions in the context of cultural heritage), as will be reinforced in the following points of this report.

The Directorate General for Cultural Heritage (DGPC), in partnership with the IMC (Institute of Museums and Conservation), has developed kits for the collection of Intangible Heritage. Namely in the dematerialisation of procedures for legal protection of cultural heritage, this institution developed a database, through a manual, with free and universal access, which allows the inventory of intangible heritage with exclusive use of information technologies, enhancing the broad participation of communities, groups and individuals in the process of patrimonialisation of this “living heritage”. This Manual, an electronic edition with free download from the DGPC website, has the fundamental objective of supporting entities, public and private, involved in processes of safeguarding intangible heritage.

The completion of this edition, prepared by DGPC within the scope of its normative role and the dissemination of good practices in the area of intangible heritage, is linked to another of its structural work lines for this same area, that of technical training for safeguarding of PCI in Portugal, expressed, on the one hand, in the technical support provided permanently to numerous entities, namely municipalities, museums and NGOs, and, on the other, in their training actions to safeguard the PCI, in person and in distance learning.

1.2 National legislation for preserving Cultural Heritage in Portugal

The recognition of its importance has enabled the organisation of various initiatives, of public and private character, which aims to its promotion and dissemination, as well as the definition of normative documents with the purpose of guaranteeing its preservation.

The Basic Law of the policy and regime for the protection and enhancement of Cultural Heritage | Lei de Bases da política e do regime de proteção e valorização do Património Cultural (Law 107/2001, of 8th September) defines Cultural Heritage *as being made up of all assets that, being testimonies with a value of civilisation or culture, of relevant cultural interest, should be the object of special protection and enhancement.* In this context, the knowledge, study, protection, valorisation and dissemination of the cultural heritage constitute a duty of the State, which thus ensures the transmission of a national heritage, whose continuity and enrichment will unite the generations in a unique civilizational journey.

The Basic Law of Cultural Heritage distinguishes between: Tangible Heritage and Intangible Heritage. According to the same document, the Intangible Cultural Heritage integrates the realities that, whether or not supported by movable or immovable, constitute “structuring portions of Portuguese collective identity and memory” and that, simultaneously, represent “ethnographic testimonies with value of civilization or culture with meaning for identity and collective memories”.

The legal regime for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, published in 2009 (Decree-Law No. 139/2009) established the basis for the policy and regime for the protection and enhancement of cultural heritage, recognising its importance in articulation with other sectoral policies. This document is developed in harmony with international law, namely with the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, adopted at the 32nd UNESCO General Conference in Paris on 17 October 2003, approved by the Resolution of the Assembly of the Republic n 12/2008, of 24 January, and ratified by the Decree of the President of the Republic no. 28/2008, of 26 March.

The Decree-Law No. 139/2009 identifies the areas of Intangible Cultural Heritage:

- a) Traditions and oral expressions, including language as a vector of intangible cultural heritage;
- b) Artistic expressions and performances of a performative character;
- c) Social practices, rituals and festive events;
- d) Knowledge and practices related to nature and the universe;
- e) Competencies within the scope of traditional processes and techniques.

In 2015, the Decree-Law 149/2015 (4 August) approves the creation of a system of legal protection: the «National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage». This initiative appears in compliance by the Portuguese State with the provisions regarding the preparation of inventories of intangible cultural heritage in paragraph 1 of article 12 of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, adopted at the 32nd UNESCO General Conference, in Paris on October 17, 2003.

In this context, it is the responsibility of the General Directorate for Cultural Heritage (DGPC) to coordinate, at national level, the safeguarding initiatives in Intangible Cultural Heritage, through its Department of Cultural Property - Division of Immovable, Mobile and Intangible Heritage. The directive 11142/2012 of 7th August of 2012 created the structure of the General Directorate for Cultural Heritage and defined the competences assigned to the Immovable, mobile and intangible heritage.

1.3 Digitisation of intangible cultural heritage in Portugal

Since 2015, UNESCO considers that the digitalised forms of documents as a primary *"means of Knowledge"* with enormous impact in humanity as a record of human thoughts, events, languages, cultures and world understanding in a precise time and place. This recommendation reinforces that the documentary heritage is crucial in scientific and technological development. In this context the access should be conveniently implemented and encouraged to the institutions of the sate members select, collect and preserve those memories. In 2016 UNESCO worked on digital management guidelines for heritage institutions, in particular libraries, archives and museums, institutions that are the main responsible for the cultural and heritage preservation in a digital way. This is a real basis to the implementation of long-term sustainable digital preservation. Those guidelines open a new era in digital preservation and the use of sustainable and durable practices. Following those international guidelines, Portuguese libraries, archives, and museums began an intensive practice of culture and heritage digitisation in web platforms.

Libraries, in particular National Library that opens the Nacional Digital Library platform that aims to offer the open and free access to digitized contents of books and manuscripts of three libraries: National Library, Ajuda library and Évora Public Library. As main priority, their intents were to promote, in an international way, historic collections to democratise the access and contribute to preservation of ancients, rare or fragile documents of their collections. The National Digital Library also collaborates in international diffusion of digital contents of other Portuguese libraries. In this way, through a National Registration of Digital Contents, it is possible to find more than 40 Portuguese institutions that are disseminated through Europeana, Digital Library of Ibero-american heritage, Digital Luso- brazilien Library and World Digital Library.

Since 2003, the Portuguese Archives created DigitArq a platform that aims to open the access through internet to digital historic documents that can be read in the platform. In case the document is not digitalized, DigitArq offer on-line and at distance services. The National Archive – Torre do Tombo and Porto Distrital Archive were the first to create conditions to support the web platform.

In Portugal, museums collaborated with virtual visits and digitisation of collections, with more emphasis since 2003 after UNESCO Convention for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage. It was after 2006, that they developed the digitisation process. The Ministry of Culture acquires new format and new strategies to improve the intangible process of digitisation where identity and collective memory obtains new dynamic. In this way, the Portuguese Institute of Museums takes new designation to promote and increase the digitisation of intangible heritage. The new designation - Institute of Museums and Conservation – achieve to new competencies on heritage preservation and conservation. In this context, it was created the Immaterial Heritage Department, responsible for all policies in these domain (Law nº 97/2007, 29th March 2007).

In 2010, the Immaterial Heritage Department created an inquiry – "The Immaterial Heritage in Portugal" – that was distributed among museums and other cultural institutions to develop and disseminate good practices of immaterial heritage safeguard. In parallel, this department improves a debate and reflection about the inventory, study, safeguard, protection and valorisation of immaterial heritage.

In 2019 the Sound Nacional Archive was created with the mission of developing the preservation of Portuguese documents that preserve sounds in any technical support or format (Missão | (arquivonacionaldosom.gov.pt)) This archive will manage the diffusion of sounds as tangible or intangible heritage for future generations and improve the research in Portugal. This archive is an important moment in the preservation of immaterial culture and immaterial supports of information.

For the near future Portuguese government announce that the power of the culture for societies is evident in all forms of manifestations tangible or intangible. The heritage and expressions of practices and traditions enriches our lives, and it is a way of social cohesion and inclusive participation of all societies and construction of open world. As vital factor in our lives need to be preserved for future generations (Património Cultural Imaterial em Portugal - Proteger o nosso património e promover a criatividade - Temas - Comissão Nacional da UNESCO (mne.gov.pt).

2. Methodology

The present study aims to provide the results of the survey questionnaire applied to the representatives of the cultural, ethnographic, tourism organisations to understand their perspectives regarding the digitisation process of the intangible cultural heritage, namely ritual and traditional recipes in Portugal. In order to examine the processes of ICH digitisation and safeguarding and to provide information systematised on a national level the survey questionnaire methodology was applied which takes into account several aspects and dimensions, namely digitisation methodologies currently used in the cultural organisations, awareness on national policies and legal frameworks for ICH digitisation in Portugal, capacity of the cultural organisations regarding the ICH digital presentation, sharing and preservation from the perspective of the personnel's knowledge, skills, competences, and expertise regarding the digitisation processes implementation.

The questionnaire content was elaborated together with all the partners involved in the EURICA *"Europe ritual cuisine– digital presentation and preservation"* project, with a special focus on the cultural and ethnographic organisations perspectives as a target group. The questionnaire includes several sections, starting from socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, as well as a section which is dedicated for ICH, namely experience in digitisation of cultural heritage, capacity and competence for preparing, recording, storing, and publishing digital presentations of ritual food's recipes in the terms of institutional programs and practices for digitisation, staffing and costs of digitisation, technological infrastructure as well as the analysis of the competences of the staff. It was revised and approved by all the partners involved in the EURICA partnership.

Afterwards the questionnaire was translated from English to Portuguese language to guarantee that the national respondents perceive better and easily understand the objective of the project EURICA. The questionnaire was distributed among 40 representatives of cultural and ethnographic organisations, regional and local museums, research centres and institutions in Portugal in February 2021. The Portuguese partners Portucalense University and Lousada Municipality contacted the potential respondents using various tools in order to assure high responding rate and explain the project aim and questionnaire objectives. As a result, a total of 26 responses were obtained, which means 65% responding rate. The findings and results from the analysis of the survey responses received are described in the next section.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Table 2 provides a detailed information about the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample, namely gender, age, education level, field of education, type of organisation where the respondents work and their role within organisation.

Further the respondents were asked about duration of working in the cultural or heritage sector, 65.4% of the respondents referred for more than 5 years, 11.5% between 3-5 years, and 7.7% less than 1 year. Next question was addressed to the interviewees to understand where they have previous digitisation experience. As results demonstrate 69.2% of them do not have any experience in digitisation, only 19.2% of the respondents have some experiences, related to cultural tangible heritage, while 7.7% stated that have some experience, but in other institutions not related to cultural heritage.

It was also important to analyse the skills of the respondents in relation to the use of different technological tools and equipment, such as cameral, drone, video, and photo editing. Most of the respondents stated that they are (80.8%) are average computer user (office, excel, mail, social networks, etc.), while 38.5% can use other digital tools and equipment (camera, drone, video / photo editing, etc.)

Table 2: Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency	%
Gender	Female	13	50%
	Male	13	50%
Age	Between 20 and 30 years	4	15%
	Between 31 and 40 years	8	31%
	Between 41 and 50 years	10	38%
	Between 51 and 60 years	4	15%
Education	Doctorate	7	27%
	Bachelor	13	50%
	Master	5	19%
	Other	1	4%
Field of Education	Archaeology	3	12%
	Social studies	2	8%
	Cultural management	1	4%
	Cultural management	6	23%
	Art history	4	15%
	Other	10	38%
Type of organisation	Private company	4	15%
	Government / Local Authority	7	27%
	Cultural organization (beyond the museum)	2	8%
	Other	4	15%
	University	9	35%
Role in organisation	Collaborator / Freelancer	4	15%
	University Professor	6	23%
	Employee	4	15%
	Manager	6	23%
	Researcher	2	8%
	Other	4	15%
Total		**26**	**100%**

The next objective was to define what digital and non-digital formats an individual has used or searched for in the past regarding the cataloguing and storage of intangible assets. The respondents indicated the following options: PDF TEXTS; VIDEOS in Google drive, clouds, video, photos, external disk and PC, inventory digital platforms; design programs, excel, document scanning and 3D drawing, magazines, books, films, photos, tape recorder, 3 interviewees were not able to answer and 7 of them mentioned that they have not used any formats.

Regarding the legal framework for cultural heritage (tangible and intangible) in their country, namely Portugal the positive situation can be observed in the responses, 42.3% stating "Yes" and another 42.3% stating "No, but I would like to explore it", while only 15.4% do not have knowledge about the legal framework in Portugal.

3.2 Digitisation of a ritual and traditional recipe

Most of the organisations do not have a program or policy to digitise cultural collections of intangible heritage. However, they understand an importance to record and preserve their country traditional ritual recipes, 81% answered very important and 19%, important. Moreover, the importance of preserving traditional recipes for ritual dishes stems from the danger of losing their recipes, a danger that is considered real by 84% of respondents.

As for accessibility question, according to them the main accesses to get a ritual recipe in Portugal, is through recipes books, bibliography, local community, witness passage, movies, local restaurants, confraternities, online channels, and social networks. Regarding the criteria to be used when selecting recipes for traditional dishes to be digitised, priority is given by the respondents to the historical and cultural value of the recipe and the desire to preserve it. For the traditional ritual recipe's digitisation, it is necessary and of key importance for the recipes to be carefully pre-selected, an activity that needs the opinion and support of experts from different domains. According to the opinion of the respondents, when choosing stakeholders to improve the identification of such a list of recipes, they would mainly rely on cultural associations (92%). In the following question, respondents were that should be used to preserve traditional recipes. The possibilities are audio presentations, video presentations, documenting, photography, biographical storytelling and other. The results for the different opinions are similar, highlighting video presentations (26%) and scanning the old recipes (25%) (Fig.1).

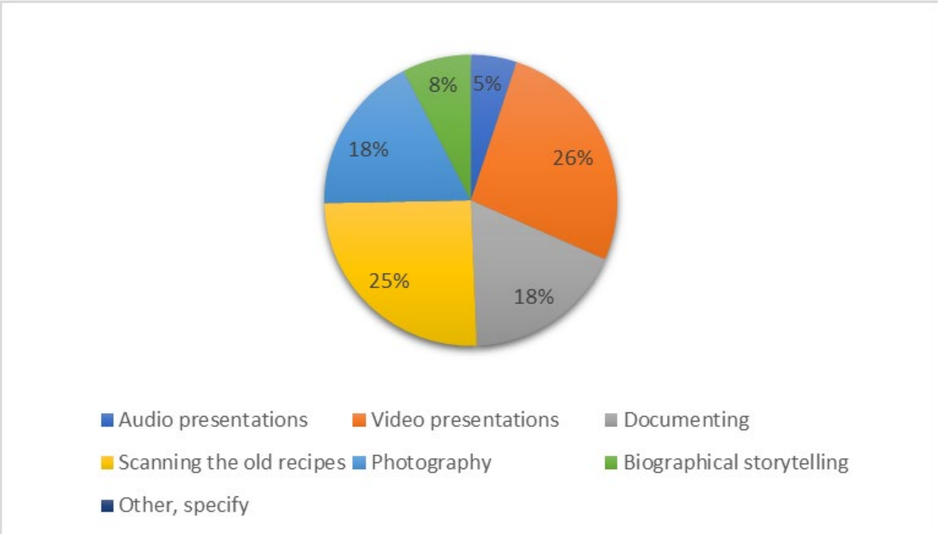

Figure 1: Necessary tools to be used to preserve the recipes of ritual dishes

An important point in the digitisation of documents is the assessment of digitisation costs. The cost of digitising items varies greatly in different organisations, partly because much digitisation related activities are carried out by a third party under contract which may make it difficult for the respondents from the participating organisation to determine the approximate costs estimation.

Despite the respondents are not aware about the costs of the process, it can be stated that they show sensitivity, awareness and conscious regarding the relevance of preservation, which makes it much easier for organisations to build teams able to fulfil the job. If most of participants not having information about can mean that the organisations are in fact not actively working towards the goal of the preservation of the ICH such as gastronomy.

Continuing with a digitisation, the respondents were asked how a digital recipe should look like. As we can see in the figure 2, they consider that a digital recipe should be available as text, image and audio (69%) or as video with subtitles (65%). No one referred image and audio or only text.

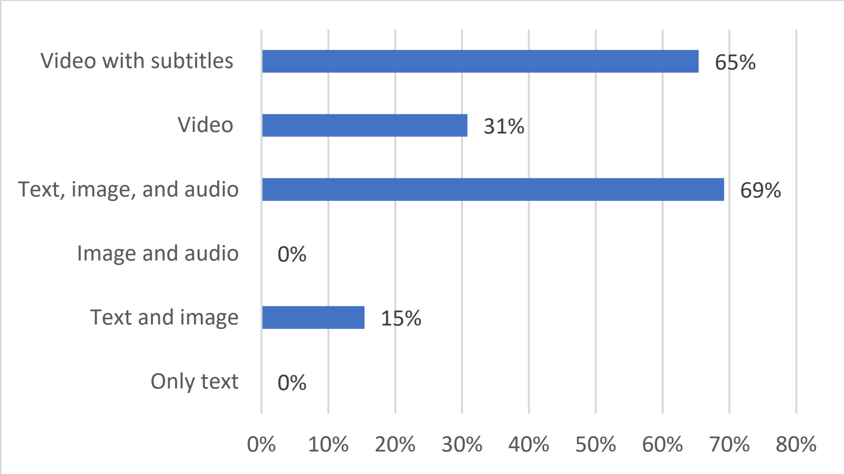

Figure 2: How a digital recipe should look like

The most used format are JPG and PDF, as we can see in the graphic below. Nevertheless, the respondents identified MP4, DOC, and GIF as other type of formats used in their work, being used by more than 40% of the respondents. Regarding the compression methods used, 54% of the respondents referred that they use ZIP compression method. There are 38% that do not know or do not answer to this question. Concerning the basic tools needed of digitising ritual cuisine, the answers varied according to the graphic. Most of the respondents use professional video camera (39%) and mobile phone with camera (37%). There are also 19% that refer the use of simple video camera (Figure 3). The best option for digitizing recipes, according to the data, is the use of a dedicated recipe-management app.

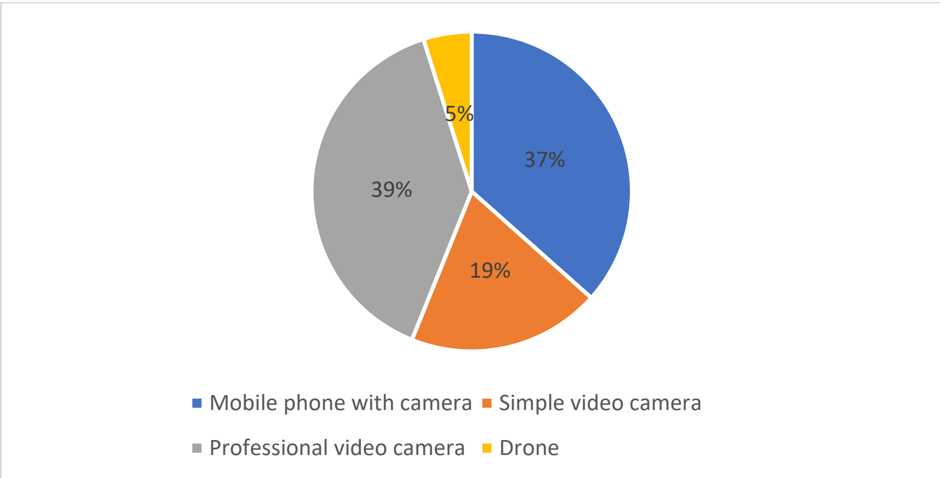

Figure 3: Which option do you consider best for digitising recipes?

The respondents described the sequential steps that digitising a ritual recipe, being first a recipe search and collection, digitising the recipe and introduction of the collected elements in a text file, selection of the products (ingredients) and materials for the recipe elaboration, recording of the cooking process (in a traditional place, and save all the process in a server).

Regarding the question what is the best place to digitise a ritual food recipe, most of the respondents mentioned that is indoor, in restaurants (65.40%), 46.20% referred to outdoor, during local events and only 30% mentioned indoor, in libraries or museums or other cultural places (Figure 4).

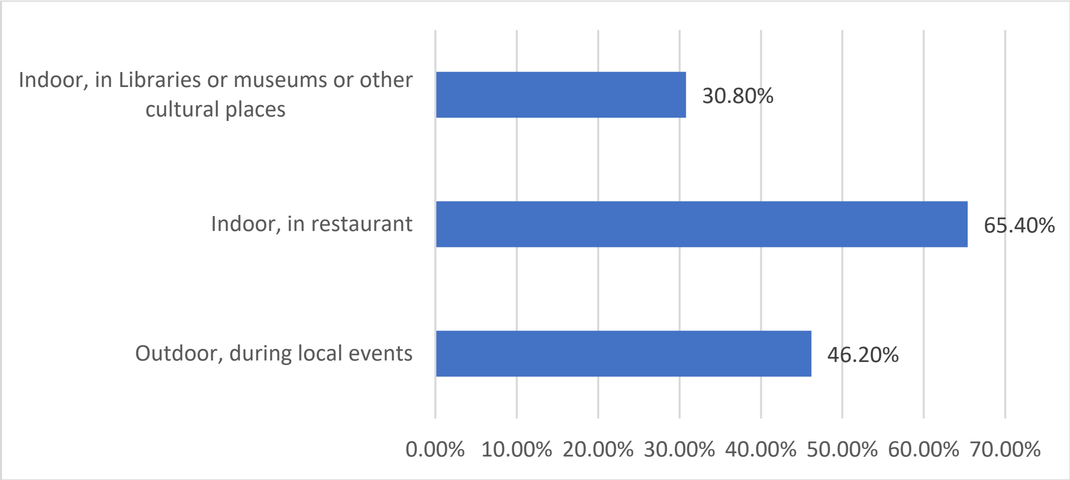

Figure 4: Where do you think you will most likely digitise ritual food recipes?

As for the best platform for digitally displaying the traditional cuisine recipe. The figure below indicates that Facebook and Youtube are the most selected options, following by Instagram, Tik Tok.

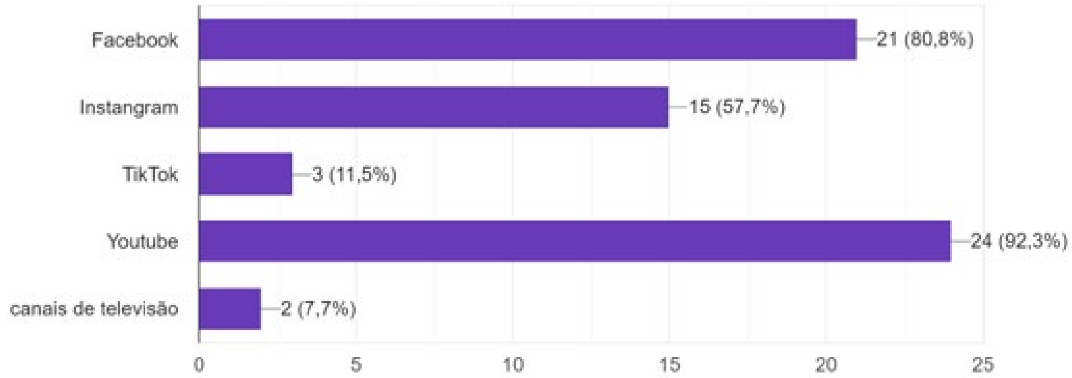

Figure 5: The best platform for digitally displaying the traditional cuisine recipe

The 76.9% of our target group do not aware whether their organisation own copyright in the digitalised form of the documents, only 11.5% replied yes to this question. This result requires organisation to take steps towards increasing awareness of employees about the copyright issues.

Regarding the skills needed to digitise the intangible cultural heritage the respondents referred to competences in video production (88%), skills in digitisation (77%), skills in taking photographs (77%).

Moreover, the residents were questioned about materials needed to make traditional digital kitchen recipes as accessible as possible to audience or visitors. The mentioned options are video recording equipment and related end-editing and editing accessories, multifunctional cultural space, own quality equipment, online platforms, digital tools, scanners, photo, and video cameras. The most important thing is to have human resources available and dissemination through partner networks and web site.

Media and newspapers adequate to inform the public about a database of traditional digital cooking recipes are special magazines and televisions, local newspapers, facebook, local radio, social networks, posters, online platforms, wines magazine, tourist office, TV, Lousada TV, Porto Canal. Organisations could support the dissemination of traditional digital cooking recipes are Turismo de Portugal and eventually gastronomic Brotherhoods, General Directorate of Culture, Route of the Romanesque, Alentejo Tourism, Porto and North Tourism, County public and cultural entities, restaurants, Cultural Associations and Brotherhoods linked to Gastronomy, Social networks, Town hall and restaurants, Gastronomic fraternity, Brotherhoods, Route of the Romanesque / CIM TS / TPNP, ER., Cultural associations, brotherhoods town hall.

4. Conclusions

The results of the present study indicate that overall, participants show awareness on the importance of protecting the intangible cultural heritage of the country and extend the gastronomy patrimony. In this context they recognise the value of working the digitisation of traditional recipes and its promotion. Though, data collected can be seen that 99% of the organisations do not have any program so far regarding the digitisation of ICH. The findings require organisation to document the value and process of preservation of the ICH within their entities. Moreover, they should inform the employees about the capabilities of the organisation. The analysis of the collected information also demonstrates that the level of the respondents' awareness about the price for digitisation is very low. There are also respondents who have answered that they do not know, or they have no information regarding the available equipment for digitisation in their organisation, which can be explained to total ignorance of the process of digitalisation of cultural heritage. Thus, it is not surprising that some of the respondents do not have a clear idea how the digitisation of the ICH should be done, in particular traditional and ritual cuisine.

Taking in consideration that participants that replied to this questionnaire are above 30, they may not be sensibilised to the technology era. However, they are confident on the necessity to preserve and record the traditional recipes and rituals of their country and their answers show sensitivity, consciousness, and discernment on knowing exactly what is needed to build a project. They demonstrated interest in exploring various tools used for digitisation, they have a general idea how a digital representation of a revie should look like and selected some option as the best to present and promote a specific recipe.

The solutions they demonstrate here demonstrate creativity and assertiveness, as well as being technically savvy enough to lead to marketing campaigns that can make a difference on a global scale. It seems that there is a big generational weight and that organisations should have a big role here, giving their participants education, necessary equipment, and basic tools for digitisation. Therefore, the EURICA projects contribution is highly essential on order to reinforce the value of the intangible cultural heritage such as traditional gastronomy, its promotions among the cultural and ethnographic organisations, involvement different stakeholders from the mentioned organisations, contribute to the enhancement of their skills and competences in digitisation process, which will preserve the traditional European gastronomy in a long-term context. The present methodology can be applied in other countries, striving to contribute to the preservation of ritual cuisine with the support of local stakeholders.

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User's Profile of Thermal Establishments: A Literature Review

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Abstract: Contemporary society has an increasingly broad and holistic perspective on health and wellness. It is scientifically proven that thermalism perfectly combines these two aspects. It provides a better quality of life and a complete state of well-being, physically and psychologically. Several studies have been carried out over the years, reflecting a paradigm shift in the conception of thermalism establishments. For this reason, the sector's stakeholders need to be prepared and have the necessary knowledge to respond to the different needs, characteristics, and motivations of both usual and new thermal users to define better action strategies. In this context, the research's main objective is to present a literature review and content analysis on the thermalism topic, through the most recognised databases, exploring the offer, identifying its users' profiles and pointing out some trends for the market. As a result of the analyses, the growing interest and relevance of thermalism in scientific production stand out, particularly in tourism, as a social science. There are several studies that present a direct link between thermalism and tourism activity. It is notorious that thermal activity has both a recreational and medicinal dimension, all over the world. Literature analysis has also revealed the power of thermal waters for the treatment of a wide range of diseases and health issues, related to different medical specialities. Although the more traditional thermalism is still very present, the most recent studies portray some gradual changes on the demand and supply side, with a constant adjustment of both. Particularly in the user profile, there is evidence of a rejuvenated, healthier and heterogeneous demand, with different motivations to frequent the thermal spas. On the supply side, it can be seen that these establishments are seeking to reinvent themselves in order to complement their basic offer related to medical dimension, also focusing on the leisure, to enrich the experience of their regular users and attract others. Regarding the expected trends, they are mainly related to 1) Increased demand for prevention, leisure and well-being dimension; 2) Changes in the user profile; and 3) High potential for tourism activity.

Keywords: thermalism, health and wellness, users' profile, literature review, trends

1. Introduction

Entities such as the World Health Organisation (WHO), many leisure and healthcare practitioners and also academics are aware of the intersections between leisure, health and well-being (Young et al., 2021). Several sectors, activities, and particular elements are connected to health and well-being, such as the water. Moss (2010) states that water has been used to promote health in the past and nowadays. According to Taofeek et al. (2020, p. 99) the "use of thermal mineral water is a very rich historical therapeutic remedy having developed into a popular therapy in many countries of the world". In this context, the thermalism market has received more attention and credibility in recent years. Maseda et al. (2018) consider that thermalism arises from a primary natural resource, the water, specifically the mineral-medicinal thermal water and its commercial exploitation, related to health, wellness, leisure and tourism. According to Gonçalves and Costa Guerra (2019), thermalism is associated with trips whose motivation is the experience of treatments and therapies based on mineral-medicinal waters and other complementary means to prevent, rehabilitate and promote health. Rama et al. (2018) identify three similar services that use water as the main resource for their treatments: thermalism, thalassotherapy and spa. The difference between them is the type of water that they use. Thermalism uses mineral-medicinal water, thalassotherapy uses seawater and spas normal water. To be medicinal waters, they must necessarily have a medically proven healing effect (Strack and Raffay-Danyi, 2020).

Although the literature on the profile of thermal users is limited, some studies are beginning to emerge. Brandão et al. (2021) and León (2017) understand, there is very little knowledge about these consumers, namely thermal tourists. For this reason, this type of article with a literature approach is very important since it contributes to the knowledge of thermalism, specifically about its supply and its users. This paper is organised in the following topics: first, the introduction provides a framework for the whole paper. Secondly the presentation of the methodological options. Then a literature review and content analysis, exploring different aspects: the different types of thermal establishments, the users' motivations for wellness services, the users' sociodemographic profile of thermal spas, the health dimension of thermal establishments and finally some emerging trends for thermalism. At last, a conclusion of the analyses is presented.

2. Research design and methods

This study uses literature review and content analysis as research methodology. These types of studies provide a comprehensive overview of the literature related to a topic/theory and analyse previous studies, consolidating existing knowledge under new approaches (Synder 2019; Paul and Criado 2020). The literature selection followed a logic of Narrative Review, in which the most important thing is the gathering of relevant information that provides context and substance to the overall purpose of the study (Xiao and Watson, 2019). The main objective is to analyse the most recent literature on thermalism, exploring relevant associated themes that will allow an effective understanding of the current state of thermalism and the direction it will take in the coming years. The analysis was conducted using the most reliable databases, primarily the Web of Science and Scopus (Pranckutė, 2021), also ScienceDirect and PubMed. The selection of articles and other scientific papers was based on the identification of their keywords and the reading of their abstracts, analysing the most relevant ones for the purpose of the study. Fifty scientific papers were analysed, most of them in English and carried out in the last five years and few slightly older ones. Three key themes were identified: Health and wellness; Thermalism; and User's profile of thermal spas. Papers that linked these themes simultaneously were privileged. Other articles that were unrelated to any of these three themes were excluded and articles before 2008.

3. Thermal establishments

A thermal establishment is a health care unit in which the therapeutic properties of natural mineral water are used for the prevention of illnesses, therapy, rehabilitation and maintenance of health, with the possibility of practising complementary and adjunctive techniques, as well as thermal wellness services (Associação das Termas de Portugal, 2021). The Global Wellness Institute (GWI) considers many categories and types of thermal establishments, including hot spring swimming pools and waterparks; thermal/mineral water bathing facilities, spas and resorts; and health resorts/sanatoria that used thermal/mineral waters for treatments. The Thermal/mineral springs sector are "revenue-earning business establishments associated with the wellness, recreational and therapeutic uses of waters with special properties" (Global Wellness Institute, 2021a). As can be observed in Table 1, GWI counts thermal/mineral springs establishments that operate as a business and do not include springs that do not have any built facilities and/or do not charge any fee or establishments that do not have naturally sourced thermal/mineral water.

Table 1: Types of thermal establishments

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">Types of Thermal/Mineral Springs Establishments</th></tr>
<tr><td>Primarily recreational</td><td>Primarily wellness</td><td>Primarily therapeutic or curative</td></tr>
<tr><td>Thermal/mineral water swimming pool facilities</td><td>Thermal/mineral water bathing facilities</td><td rowspan="2">Health resorts and sanatoria that use thermal/mineral waters for treatments</td></tr>
<tr><td>Thermal/mineral water-based waterparks</td><td>Thermal/mineral water-based spas</td></tr>
<tr><td>Hotel/resorts with thermal/mineral water swimming pools</td><td colspan="2">Thalassotherapy spas and resorts</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Thermal or hot spring resorts</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Source: Global Wellness Institute (2021a)

Thus, there are essentially three types of thermal establishments, which differ according to their purpose or function: Recreational, Wellness, Therapeutic or Curative. Thermal establishments have been increasingly successful, mainly due to the growing importance and concern with the state of health and well-being in recent decades. Society, in general, is more aware of health and wellness issues, both physical and psychological, also due to the recommendations of the WHO (Pereira et al., 2017).

4. The wellness segment: Motivations of consumers

According to Edlin and Golanty (2015) the wellness model of health emphasises self-healing, health promotion and the prevention of illness, rather than solely the treatment of disease symptoms. Wellness is not a passive or static state but rather an active pursuit that is associated with intentions, choices and actions towards an optimal state of health and well-being. It is linked to holistic health that extends beyond physical health and incorporates many different dimensions that should work in harmony (Global Wellness Institute, 2021b). As the wellness dimension is also related to leisure, many consumers of wellness services and products are tourists, so the motivations of wellness tourists have received more attention.

Numerous factors can influence wellness consumer purchasing behaviour, namely push factors, in other words - motivations, as argued by Dryglas and Różycki (2017) which also indicates that behavioural characteristics have the most impact when it comes to matching products to the needs of a particular group concerning marketing. According to Dimitrovski and Todorović (2015), the wellness market is divided into two groups based on their motivations: socially active and self-focused tourists. Their main motivations are socialisation, excitement and relaxation. The Wellness Tourist Motivation Scale (WTMS), presented by Kessler et al. (2020), is composed of seven dimensions: 1) Movement and Fitness; 2) Healthy Food and Diet; 3) Meditation and Mindfulness; 4) Rest and Relaxation; 5) Learning about Wellness; 6) Self-care; 7) Nature and Disconnect.

Based on motivations for booking in a wellness hotel, Kim and Yang (2021) identify two distinct groups: the "seeking healing" and the "explorers of local history". The ones seeking specific treatments, in a more health dimension, and those seeking the territory's culture, in an escape and leisure dimension. Kessler et al. (2020) analyse the motivations for wellness tourism by generation groups. The Baby boomers' motivations relate mainly "to look and feel better" and "to experience activities outdoors". In contrast, Generation X relate mainly "to escape the demands of everyday life" and "to experience activities outdoors". For Millennials, the highest-scoring motivations include "to escape the demands of everyday life", "to return to everyday life feeling rejuvenated", and "to feel grounded in nature." Several studies are exploring the profile of the wellness practitioner, looking at different dimensions across generational groups. Aleksijevit (2019) found two markets - people aged 35-54 (Generation X) and 55-74 (Baby Boomers) and the results indicate that most have a high level of education, with higher average incomes and preferences for travelling with friends or family.

Regarding the motivations for selecting a wellness destination, Aleksijevits (2019) concludes that wellness consumers/tourists, for example, purchase their wellness trips through travel agencies. The author also found that these tourists do complete research about the destination's valences and visit various review sites such as "Trip Advisor" before booking. This study still reveals that wellness tourists assign importance to these online recommendations more than a recommendation from word of mouth. According to Strack and Raffay-Danyi (2020), the four most important factors for users choosing spas in the Hungarian market are price, cleanliness of the facilities, types of pools, and the recommendation of family and friends. Several aspects can be studied concerning wellness consumers, not only their motivations but also their purchasing behaviours and the reasons behind their decisions to acquire wellness services.

5. The thermalism: Characteristics and demographic variables of users'

Brandão et al. (2021) concluded that the sociodemographic profile influences not only the motivations of thermal tourists but also the choice of services made available, the determination of operations, the creation of new spa services, marketing and its strategy. Also, according to Liberato et al. (2021), there is a relationship between the services provided and the sociodemographic profile of thermal spa visitors in Portugal's North and Centre regions. It is important to note that there are many types of thermal establishments. Some authors refer to thermal establishments as spas and thermal spas.

According to Strack and Raffay-Danyi (2020) findings, in Hungary, the most frequent profile in spa establishments are families, the elderly, and couples without dependent children. The young people were identified as the least common segment. The most significant group is the users enjoying social insurance financed healing services and a considerable number of users take spa services due to their doctor's recommendation. Similarly, Esiyok et al. (2018) mention that seniors are more likely to participate in thermal tourism than other age groups, such as the middle age group. Dryglas and Różycki (2017) report that beneficiaries of health insurance or social security plans are mostly older with chronic diseases, while, people who have no support and pay from their private resources are mostly younger and healthier. Regarding the length of stay in a spa establishment, Pinos Navarrete et al. (2020) discovered three groups of consumers: thermalists supported by the *IMSERSO* with an extended stay (10 and 12 days), individual thermalists (more than 4 days) and the group of thermal tourists (lower than 5 days). This research also concluded that the largest number of users belongs to the Social Thermalism group, through the Social Thermalism Programme (*IMSERSO*) and the group of thermal tourists is the group that has experienced the most notable increase (13%). Regarding age and gender, the average age of users in the *IMSERSO* programme is 72 years, indicating that these users are older people. The so-called private users, those who do not receive any type of subsidy, also account for a significant amount of the population over 65 years. The group of thermal tourists usually comes in pairs, groups of friends and families.

The Anaya-Aguilar et al. (2021) also analyse the profile of spa tourists, particularly in Andalusia, southern Spain. The methodology used was a quantitative study based on a stratified cross-sectional survey. Findings indicate that the average age is 56 years ± 0.8. Female users are a clear majority (61.8%). In terms of occupation, two large groups stand out among the tourists: retirees (53.1% ± 2.1) and employed [34% ± 2.0]. Regarding monthly income, the sample includes three main income brackets. These are, first, those who have an average monthly income of less than 500 euros (29.8% ± 2.0); second, those who earn an average of 501 and 1,000 euros per month (33.1% ± 2.0); and, third, those who have a monthly average income of between 1,001 and 1,500 euros (26.6% ± 1.9). Thus, a high percentage of the study population fall inside the low-income brackets.

Brandão et al. (2021) developed a research on the North and Centre of Portugal, applying a questionnaire survey to thermal tourists, through a non-probability sampling by convenience technique and the results indicate that in terms of gender, the sample is mainly composed of women (nearly 60%). With regard to age, there was a prominent proportion of people between 55 and 64 years and 65 and 74 years. For academic qualifications, 25% have a higher education degree. Almost half of the respondents are retired and as for their monthly income, one third earns between 1,000 and 2,000 euros. Liberato et al. (2021) research was based on a sample of 201 participants in the same region of Portugal, but in a pandemic context (COVID-19) and the results show that most of the respondents are female, and the percentage of respondents aged 45-54 years or over is increasing. In terms of academic qualifications, basic education, high school, and university degrees are dominant. In terms of employment situation, it is possible to ascertain that around 50% of the respondents are retired/pensioners, and almost 40% are full-time workers. Regarding the net monthly income, 49.8% of the respondents earn up to €1,000, and 33.8% between €1,001 and €2,000.

Silvério et al. (2021), also in Portugal, through the face-to-face and random application of questionnaires, obtained a sample of 107 people, which allowed them to draw a sociodemographic profile of thermal spa users, in Chaves. Concerning the profile of thermalists who visited Chaves thermal spa, almost 70% of the sample were women and 30% men. The average age resulted in 58 years. Regarding the level of education, 44% had a higher education degree. Regarding employment, most of the respondents were inactive, mainly retired individuals. Concerning nationality, the majority were Portuguese (about 80%), of these 72% came from the Northern region of Portugal, where the Chaves thermal spa is located. This is in line with one Pinos Navarrete et al. (2020) conclusions, who indicated that thermal spa visitors make trips considered short from their usual place of residence to the thermal spas.

6. Thermal establishments: Evidence of their treatments

There is evidence from the literature that validates the real effects of thermalism on different pathologies and health/well-being issues (Martins et al., 2021). According to Pereira et al. (2021), the therapeutic effects of thermal water cover several pathologies and disorders, namely respiratory, digestive, dermatological and musculoskeletal. Taofeek et al. (2020) also indicate multiple sclerosis, type 2 diabetes, dermatitis, fibromyalgia, chronic low back pain, cardiovascular disease, chronic venous insufficiency and stress. As stated in Taofeek et al. (2020), one approach often recommended for some of these disorders are the complementary/integrative therapies as the use of thermal mineral water from hot springs known as balneotherapy/spa therapy, one practice that is common in Turkey, Hungary, Romania, Germany, Portugal, Japan, Poland, Spain, Italy, and France. As refer Cacciapuoti et al. (2020), thermal water' therapeutic effects result from the combination of chemical, physical, immunological, and microbiological properties. Masiero et al. (2020) also give the idea that many spas (thermal spas) are real multi-specialist structures with a potential rehabilitation value, with an adequate rehabilitation staff and rehabilitative and assistive technologies.

As Pinos Navarrete et al. (2020) refer, the traditional spa (thermal spa) in Europe are still heavily dependent on traditional "thermalists", with an ageing profile and interest in medical treatments for their illnesses. Because, as indicated by Robson and Troutman-Jordan (2015), older adults are particularly vulnerable to disease and health decline. For that reason, they are the most common group in thermal establishments (Esiyok et al., 2018). In relation to older people, Karagülle (2008) refer that these therapies (hydro, balneo and thalasso) can be considered from three different aspects: firstly, the antiaging effects, the preventive effects on the biological and physiologic processes that develop in the elderly or therapeutic effects on the pathological consequences. Secondly, the prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of the diseases that frequently occur in the elderly. Thirdly, they complement and support other treatment modalities for this population segment. These are the main therapies that use water: Balneotherapy; Thalassotherapy and Hydrotherapy (Karagülle, 2008; Moss, 2010; Corvillo et al., 2020). Moss (2010) refer that in hydrotherapy, as in balneotherapy and thalassotherapy, there are three ways of taking the waters: externally (through immersion, either total or partial), internally (through drinking), and into the lungs and respiratory tract (through the inhalation of aerosols).

Balneotherapy treatment employs bathing in thermal or mineral waters, gases or peloids; drinking water or inhaling gases or water. Thalassotherapy uses seawater, sea products and shore climate as a form of therapy believed to have beneficial effects on the skin. Hydrotherapy treatment immerses a part of or the whole body in plain water, often employing exercises or applying water jets (Rawlinson and Heap, 2017). According to Matsumoto (2018), balneotherapy is mainly used to prevent, treat, and rehabilitate musculoskeletal diseases. It is even used in the rehabilitation of psychiatric patients. As Cacciapuoti et al. (2020) indicate, dermatologic or skin diseases are frequently treated by balneotherapy, with a high success rate for psoriasis and atopic dermatitis. Beyond these, thermal medicine can treat: Acne; Contact dermatitis; Seborrheic dermatitis and Collagen vascular disorders (Gianfaldoni et al., 2017). Some of the many scientific proofs of thermal water in terms of diseases or disorders and their treatment or therapies are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Some diseases/disorders and their treatment/therapies with thermal water

Diseases and Disorders	Treatments/Therapies	Reference
Respiratory	Inhalations with thermal waters	Zajac, 2021
Heavy smokers	Sulphurous thermal water inhalation	Carubbi et al., 2019
Cardiovascular and chronic venous	Physical fitness in a thermal aquatic environment	Menegatti et al., 2021
Chronic low back pain	Balneotherapy	Gáti et al., 2018
Osteoarthritis	Thermal mineral waters	Hanzel et al., 2018
Rheumatoid arthritis	Balneotherapy	Verhagen et al., 2015
Allergic rhinitis	Intranasal administration of thermal water	Ciprandi et al., 2016
Benign prostatic hyperplasia	Water vapour thermal therapy	Miller et al., 2020
Dermatology (psoriasis)	Balneotherapy	Khalilzadeh et al., 2019

Source: Authors' elaboration

7. The future of thermalism: some emerging trends

Today thermal establishments are re-emerging with new offerings that complement the classic thermalism. The thermal establishments are going through a new phase of evolution, from classic thermalism, focused on health, to a growing integration of wellness. For example, in the particular case of Portugal, in 2011, wellness represented 43% of the total enrolments in spa establishments and in 2014, it became about 61% (Gonçalves and Costa Guerra, 2019). As the consideration of wellness has evolved through the adoption of practices linked to self-care, nutrition, meditation and other related aspects, wellness can now be seen as a necessity for a complete state of health and a better quality of life, rather than as a luxury (Thorne, 2021). Tourism is a sector that has high strength in the area of health and wellness. Smith and Puczkó (2015, p. 217) show that "tourism is playing an increasingly important role in spas and wellness facilities with 43% of all customers being tourists, either domestic or international". Thorne (2021) refer that this happens because consumers are becoming more aware of their health and well-being, encouraging them to travel to meet their personal wellness requirements. For Strack and Raffay-Danyi (2020), another reason could be population ageing. Sousa and Barros (2021) refer to the changes in thermal tourism and the subsequent diversification of its offer that have impacted the profile of thermal users. Therefore, in the last decades, thermalism has been reinventing itself and conquering more users and attracting new market segments and has impacted contemporary society in several aspects. For example, as stated by Araujo et al. (2015), beyond its economic impact, thermal spa tourism affects the well-being of the local populations through other types of infrastructures and services, including but not limited to the preservation of heritage, job creation and territorial anchoring of populations, as well as the overarching effects of the region's image in the community. Some of the many trends that are prospective for the future of the thermalism sector and its market have already emerged in the literature. Some of these trends are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Some evidence from the literature for the future of thermalism

Predicted trends	Evidence in literature	References
Increased demand for prevention, leisure and well-being dimension	In the future, an important challenge will be to adopt strategies to the changing profile of typical spa customers, who are nowadays more oriented towards medical prevention than towards healing.	Dimitrovski and Todorović, 2015
	Spas still attract people for health and rejuvenation purposes and increasingly for wellness purposes (a combination of health improvement, self-pampering, and self-development.	Koskinen and Wilska, 2019
	There is a clear aim to empower thermal establishments to develop a diversified offer that effectively enhances health, wellness, and tourism.	Gonçalves and Costa Guerra, 2019
Changes in the user profile, younger, healthier and heterogeneous	The 374 Millennial (generation of 1980 to 2000) respondents had positive experiences and affirmed that they enjoy noteworthy feelings of wellness after visiting a thermal bath.	Tang et al., 2020
	The profile of thermal baths has not changed markedly, although it is evolving. The demand is gradually rejuvenated, following other European spas. The number of traditional thermalists is stagnant.	Pinos Navarrete et al., 2020
	Individuals benefiting from public health or social insurance are mostly older and chronically ill, whereas people who pay for their stay at a spa resort with private funds are mostly younger and healthy.	Dryglas and Różycki, 2017
High potential for tourism activity: thermal tourism, health and wellness tourism	Thermal tourism has an uppermost position in terms of the continuous growth rates regarding the number of tourists and the economic benefits.	Brandão et al., 2021
	Health tourism, namely thermalism, is currently an emerging and recognised touristic product due to the association of leisure, wellness and global health rehabilitation.	Pereira et al., 2017
	Thermal tourism has become an emerging market segment, also for those seeking disease prevention, physical improvement, spiritual balance or cultural and relaxation programs.	Sousa and Barros, 2021

Source: Authors' elaboration

8. Conclusion

This article has highlighted some important aspects that identify thermalism as a central service in the larger field of health and well-being. The analyses made it possible to identify some important aspects of thermal users and understand thermalism as a product of health, well-being, and even tourism. It is notorious that thermal activity has both a recreational and medicinal dimension, all over the world. It is also evident that the thermal waters with unique properties help treat different types of disorders, being also very important for the prevention of certain diseases related to different medical specialities. The characteristics of thermal users reveal some gradual changes over the last few years, but the more traditional demand is still very present. The sociodemographic profile of these users indicates that women stand out in terms of gender, so there are generally more women than men. In terms of age, it is also evident that the majority of users are between 50 and 75 years old, mostly retired, pensioners and elderly people. The vast majority of studies report that young people are less common. In terms of income, the results are less uniform; however, several studies indicate that these users are financially capable people with above average incomes. Many users access thermal spas by medical recommendation. The same goes for educational level, there are different results, but it is noted that a large proportion of users have an academic degree. This may mean that thermal spas appeal mainly to more instructed consumers. There are other interesting data, namely the fact that most users live near or in the region where the thermal establishments are located. Thermalism, as a high growth sector, increasingly explored even as a complement to other services, has revealed important trends for its market. In this study it was possible to identify three of them: the increase in prevention, leisure and well-being as complementary dimensions of health; the changes in the profile of the user, younger, healthier and heterogeneous; and the high potential for tourism activity for different types of tourism.

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The Potential of Voluntourism in Central Finland

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Abstract: Voluntourism is a relatively new type of tourism considered to contribute to the sustainability of the industry because of its ties to the local community and the destination. In recent years, with the strong impact of covid-19 crisis on the travel economy new practices and directions of tourism development were driven, and the requirement for sustainability has been emphasized. This research investigates the question: What is the potential for voluntourism in the province of Central Finland? Three studies were conducted. Firstly, existing secondary data was investigated, such as online reviews, blogs and media articles regarding voluntourism in Finland. Secondly, a questionnaire was conducted, which targeted municipality actors, such as mayors, business representatives, as well as regional developers and Leader local action groups, rural entrepreneurs, farm owners, village associations and other parties of interest. Thirdly, theme interviews were conducted with key actors about their current activity and interest in voluntourism to discover examples of existing uncoordinated voluntourism activity in the region. The results, which regard the identification of the voluntourism term, the existing concepts in Finland and the activity in Central Finland, revealed both opportunities and challenges. The term is unknown, and it does not cover all the activity that could be developed in Central Finland. The need is evident for multifaced and complex networking, as well as for the planning and funding of concrete piloting actions of voluntourism in the province. The data gathered could also be applied to the building of a national operating model of voluntourism. This study is a part of "The Value Project: Central Finland as a Leading Province for Volunteer Tourism", which is implemented in cooperation between Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences and Central Finland Villages Association, and co-funded by the European Union.

Keywords: voluntourism, sustainable tourism, live-like-a-local, Central Finland

1. Introduction

There has been relatively little research on volunteer tourism in Finland, but a few studies have shown that there is interest towards volunteering. Internationally, volunteer trips are widely offered and there is a variety of themes. Voluntary tourism in Finland exists, but there is probably more demand than supply. (Kangas & Heinonen, 2011; Konu et al 2017.) The purpose of this research is to investigate the potential of voluntourism in the region of Central Finland, starting from observing the phenomenon on a global level, in order later to identify the existing elements of voluntourism locally and the potential for further development in the region.

1.1 Defining voluntourism

According to Wearing (2001), voluntourism describes a form of tourism in which people visit and participate in local projects, usually related to nature, the local community, or the restoration of buildings and objects. In other words, voluntourism has two faces - travel and volunteering, vacation and work. According to the Finnish Tax Administration, volunteering is unpaid, temporary and does not require professional skills (Sademies & Kostiainen 2014). From the tour operator's perspective, voluntourism is defined as a purchasable trip during which is possible to volunteer (Brown 2005). In non-scientific literature there is a range of interpretations of the term voluntourism. Some parties perceive it only as an international activity (Serve the World Today, n.d.), although covid-19 has clearly revealed its domestic dimensions (Gharib 2021). Others distinguish it from volunteering in terms of duration, with voluntourism being the short-term activity (Scott 2021). Also, it is acknowledged that in volunteering the purpose of travelling is the volunteering activity without any tourism-driven motivation, while in voluntourism there is a combination of volunteering and tourism activities (Scott 2021). In addition, some authors classify voluntourism as "altruistic travel" (Kumar 2020), but this is in direct contradiction to the previously presented division between volunteering and voluntourism, where only pure volunteering is seen as altruistic.

There is the parallel use of the terms voluntourism and volunteer tourism. Here again there is no resolution about the use of the terms globally. Some authors expressively mention that these are synonyms (Kumar 2020). Others speak of voluntourism as a form of volunteer tourism but do not bring any specific evidence of the existence of two separate phenomena (British Council 2016). In this case Finnish language does not make any difference linguistically. Since the aim of our research is not augmenting this distinction, we use both terms as synonyms.

Wearing (2001) provides an explanation for why this form of tourism is so little known. According to him, volunteer tourism has generally suffered from the fact that it is not separated from other forms of tourism or volunteering, but belongs to, i.a., alternative tourism, international volunteering and social work.

Voluntourism is not a new concept. Volunteering while travelling has been globally practiced over time. (Tourism Research and Marketing 2008.) Scholars use various perspectives to evaluate the motives of voluntourists (e.g., Callanan & Thomas 2005; Benson & Seibert 2009; Holopainen 2015; Yeung 2004). Tourists who choose to travel for volunteering have both selfish and unselfish motives (Raymond 2007; Pekurinen 2014). The experiences, attributes, and benefits as well as motivation of the volunteering tourists are broadly researched. The motivation can be split to push and pull factors (Benson & Seibert, 2009), that demonstrate the main motives in five categories: experiencing new or different, meet local people, learn about cultures, live in abroad and broaden one's mind. The latter one refers to self-awareness approach which is also presented in the previous studies (see e.g., Coghlan & Weller 2018; Han, Lee & Hyun 2020). Voluntourism as community-based tourism is referring to a desire for experiencing authenticity (Brown 2005; Kontogeorgopoulos 2016), which is typically present in the studying. Also, the live-like-a-local trend is an attempt to experience authenticity and get closer to the everyday life of locals (Pitkänen 2020; Koutonen 2018). Journal articles refer to lots of field work from development countries but Wearing, Young and Everingham (2017) identified that voluntourism has distanced itself from development aid on the path towards intercultural mutuality and decommodification.

1.2 Voluntourism and sustainability

Voluntourism is considered a form of sustainable tourism because it offers a deeper understanding of the nature, history, and local community of a destination than traditional sightseeing tours (Holopainen 2015; Konu et al. 2017; Kangas & Heinonen 2011). In the best case, by volunteering the tourists can minimize or prevent the negative effects of their trip, for example by rehabilitating nature sites or by animal protection (Kangas & Heinonen 2011). From climate change point of view, voluntourism to faraway destinations and short stay experiences cannot be considered low-carbon volunteering tourism (El Geneidy & Baumeister 2019), and then is not the most sustainable voluntourism.

If the volunteering project is genuinely community-based, voluntourism can promote community-based tourism by nurturing local culture, supporting local services, and reducing poverty (Spenceley & Meyer 2012; McGhee 2014; Waller 2018). However, there are many warning examples globally that voluntourism can be harmful and exploitative (Konu et al. 2017; Waller 2018), mainly when it concentrates on the commercial instead of local benefit (Guttentag 2009; Wilkinson, McCool, & Bois 2014). McGhee (2014) suggests more research to be done on how social media impact on such a type of tourism. Sometimes volunteer work is organized as a mere attraction for tourists, not derived from the genuine need of the destination or the locals. The most notorious example worldwide is of orphanages where children are not orphans (Gharib 2021; Pitkänen 2020). Activities are not sustainable either when the operating environment of the destination has not been considered. Sometimes volunteering takes the jobs away from the locals (British Council 2016). The critical perspective is brought when the residents desire is not considered (Lee 2020).

The pandemic had a strong impact on tourism and forced a reassessment of the sector's structures. Like all crises, it brought not only negative effects but also opportunities to develop tourism, e.g., in a more sustainable direction (Vărzaru 2021). For some, it is even a "once in a lifetime opportunity" for tourism industry to change (Muller 2020) by turning its lessons into strategies and concrete actions to bring about organizational change and build a more sustainable business (Vărzaru 2021). Resilience could mean diversifying both target groups and forms of tourism. During the pandemic lockdowns, the focus turned to domestic tourists and short-distance tourism, but in the long run, international tourism is still a viable goal (i.e., Council of Central Finland, n.d.). International volunteering is recognized as one alternative type of tourism, and this concerns especially the interrelation with the host and volunteer. Pompurová, Marˇceková, Šebová, Sokolová & Žofaj (2018) found out that engagement of voluntourists could be more effective in the events in Slovakia in which the half of the event organizers utilized this type of tourism.

Even earlier, solutions were sought in tourism for negative phenomena, such as overtourism, littering, reducing biodiversity, trampling on local culture, etc. (Goodwin 2014). The importance of niche tourism is increasing as a contrary of mass tourism (Callanan & Thomas 2005). Domestic market has its potential, but the motives for participation in domestic voluntourism activities are volunteer-specific, while in international voluntourism tourist-specific motives prevail. (Pompurova et al. 2020.)

Modern humanists as an emerging tourist segment seeking to influence the problems of mass tourism through their own behavior and by demanding sustainability (Visit Finland 2014). They care about the future of the world and society, appreciate genuine encounters, and want to learn something new during their journey (Rannisto 2012). Modern humanists are a key target group for Finnish tourism (Visit Finland 2014). They are associated with another yet closely related to voluntourism travel trend – transformational travel, where the traveler aims at learning and developing as a person during the journey and at gaining new perspectives (Rupp 2020; Pitkänen 2020; Mueller & Scheffer & Closs 2020). McIntosh and Zahra (2007) found out that the traditional cultural tourism product was not experienced as transformative as volunteer activity strictly participating in Maori community. In addition, regenerative tourism is connected to these phenomena. While transformational travel builds the traveler, the regenerative tourism aims at influencing the destination. It is an upcoming travel trend that seeks an answer to the question: What do we want to leave behind and what do we want to take forward? (Ateljevic 2020). Coghlan and Gooch (2011) applied transformative learning theory into existing voluntourism literature, and they created 10 steps model on how to ensure such an experience in volunteering tourism projects. They stated that especially the voluntourism products should be improved by adding more sustainability in the outcome, such as reintegrating this type of tourism into society.

2. Research methods

This research investigates the potential for voluntourism in the province of Central Finland. It is an early stage of the development of coordinated voluntourism in the region, by which we aim at evaluating its current stage with its opportunities and threats. We have conducted three studies. We first investigated existing non-scientific data such as online reviews, blogs and media articles and video presentations, as well as more systematic sources such as bachelor's and master's theses. They describe the existing voluntourism activity in Central Finland and nationally, and also the global services available in Finland. This data presents the standpoints of hosts, intermediary organizations, as well as the experiences of voluntourists. Secondly, we conducted an online questionnaire which targeted municipality actors, such as mayors, business representatives, as well as regional developers and Leader local action groups, rural entrepreneurs, farm owners, village associations and other parties of interest in Central Finland. The questionnaire contained separate sets of questions for developers and for associations and enterprises, who actually host voluntourism activity. The questionnaire was sent by email to all 22 municipalities of Central Finland, to the four Leader action groups in the region, as well as to associations and companies of convenience. The recipients were asked to spread it further as the snowball sample. Thirdly, we interviewed key actors about their current activity and interest in voluntourism in order to discover examples of existing uncoordinated voluntourism activity in the region. Altogether 22 theme interviews were conducted either face-to-face or online, due to covid-19 restrictions. Most of the interviewees represent farms and rural enterprises of Central Finland, village, youth, and culture associations. However, some were also representing Finnish institutions and national or regional associations supporting volunteerism, tourist operators and destination management organizations.

3. Findings

The findings of the research describe the identification of voluntourism phenomenon in Finland, the existing concepts, and operational models nationally, as well as the actors and activities related to Central Finland.

3.1 Identifying voluntourism in Finland

Already as a start, we discovered that voluntourism is a multi-dimensional and complicated term, which is almost completely unknown in Central Finland. Although its investigation was not an aim of our online questionnaire, these conclusions became its mere outcome. The potential respondents, even those who organize voluntourism activity, did not identify with the term already stated in the title of the questionnaire – and consequently decided not to answer or further spread it.

Simultaneously, we were conducting interviews with actors of rural Central Finland, such as farm owners, tourism entrepreneurs, business developers, village association representatives – partially the same ones targeted by the questionnaire, so we were able to gather the missing information. Some actors reported carrying out tourism activities, others volunteer activities, but not any combination of both.

Even when the term is familiar, it involves plenty of prejudice, image factors, conditions of financing, and legal clauses. Voluntourism exists both nationally and in Central Finland, but it is not socially agreed that this activity is specifically called so. There are a variety of terms used instead: long-term volunteering, international volunteering, cultural exchange, volunteer camps, regenerative tourism, adventure holidays, woofing, twaming, etc.

One reason for avoiding the term voluntourism is that it is globally perceived negatively because of ethical issues (Wendelius 2019; Häkkinen 2019). However, this does not explain the problem when it comes to Finland, where there is a functioning legislation and a healthy, active society (Konu et al. 2017).

Another reason for the avoidance may be that hosting and intermediary organizations tend to differentiate by naming similar activity differently. For example, Maailmanvaihto, representing ICYE in Finland, talks about international volunteering (Takalo 2021) and KVT, the national representative of Service Civil International, about long-term volunteering (Viitaniemi 2021). These terms emphasize the longevity of activity, and, in comparison, tourism is seen as short-term. According to these organizations, tourism could, at best, be an added value or complement to a visit, and they do not recognize the touristic motives behind the mobility of volunteers. Regarding duration, tourism is considered as a visit lasting from one night (Theobald 1998) to a year (Statistics Finland n.d.). The duration of volunteer trips usually varies from a couple of weeks (WWOOF n.d. a) to a year (Takalo 2021; Viitaniemi 2021). Due to the overlap duration cannot be a diversifying factor. There are also organizations like WWOOF and TWAM that use their own brand as a verb, unwilling to define precisely what is at the core of their activity (WWOOF n.d. b; Travel with a mission 2018).

Some parties emphasize the activities taking place during the visit or its added value instead. According to Workaway (Workaway n.d.), Purola Farm and Cafe Meijerinliiteri, voluntourism is primarily a cultural exchange. According to KVT (Viitaniemi 2021) and Äijälän talo, volunteer camps are carried out. When a part of a commercial tourism product, the word “volunteering” is avoided, and the concept of regenerative tourism is preferred. Commercialism may rule out altruism, but not the potential benefits for society. However, tour operators do not take the risk of confusing potential customers by offering them a volunteering holiday with a price tag.

Sometimes the use of the term can be an actual prerequisite of the activity. The Ministry of Justice no longer uses the term “volunteer work” because work involves certain legislation and obligations. Instead, the terms “volunteerism” and “volunteer activity” are preferred. Tourism is not an activity to get funded by the EU Solidarity Corps, thus this international mobility is seen as volunteer activity and active citizenship for young people (Kivimäki & Lehto 2021).

Parks & Wildlife Finland organizes shepherd's weeks. It is a concept, by which the state-owned enterprise maintains nature sites under its governance by letting livestock graze the land and tourists spend a week at a time as shepherds. The organization, however, does not want to get involved in the tourist business, so shepherds only pay for their accommodation and shepherd's weeks are described as a “holiday with woolly scent” (Hakkarainen 2021). In its guidelines WWOOF emphasizes that the primary reason for volunteers to travel is vacation because the organization is not an employment agency, and in this way wwoofers are able to cross borders on a tourist visa without further explanation (WWOOF Independents n.d. b).

We also revealed that the parties coordinating volunteering in Finland, such as the Citizen Forum, the Ministry of Justice and NGO Support in Central Finland, had not encountered the term voluntourism before, but after getting acquainted with it, consider it a form of volunteering, which is a significant step towards promoting voluntourism. Voluntourism is better known in the tourism industry in Finland, which does not fear using the term. So far, no significant investment has been made to its development, but voluntourism is mentioned as an alternative and responsible tourism trend (Business Finland n.d.; Konu & Tyrväinen & Tuulentie 2017).

3.2 Voluntourism concepts from Finland applicable in Central Finland

The voluntourism is as fragmented nationally, as it is in Central Finland, thus it has been difficult to discover the good practices scattered across Finland.

A very strong example of a successful voluntourism concept, that was initially developed in Koli National Park and later spread nation-wide, are the shepherd's weeks organized by Parks & Wildlife Finland. In 2021 there was a total of 15 destinations and almost 15 000 applications of people, wishing to try the voluntary shepherding for a week. The target customers are domestic voluntourists, which has worked particularly well during the pandemic. The concept incorporates several beneficiary groups, which justifies activity's public benefit. It is not only the organization hosting the voluntourists who benefits from the visit, but also local farmers, the nature site, as well as the visiting volunteers (figure 1). Another reason for this concept to be successful is the clear division of touristic and voluntary elements: the voluntourist pays only for the accommodation, the price of which does not differ from the regular price of the facility at other times (Hakkarainen 2021). Added value, however, comes from the shepherd's activity, and some customers admit, they wouldn't visit the same place or pay the price if it was not for the shepherding. Parks & Wildlife Finland's concept has been so attractive, that it has spread out to privately-owned farms. Also, the variety of animals has increased – cow camps in Karelia, various sheep farms offering shepherd's holidays, including one in Central Finland, and husky farm activities in Eastern Finland. Sheep-related activities are reaching such a supply density that in near future the demand may not be enough to cover it. The activities, involving other animals hold more potential, because the supply is still very scarce. In Central Finland there are a lot of horse farms, which could benefit from volunteer-based animal care. Many of them are too small and not eligible for holiday replacement service, which in Finland gives the farmers the opportunity to spend some days off intensive farming, thus voluntourists could offer a much-needed help. Shepherding in Finland is nowadays so popular, that the concept is applied even to plants, e.g., "shepherding of herbs".

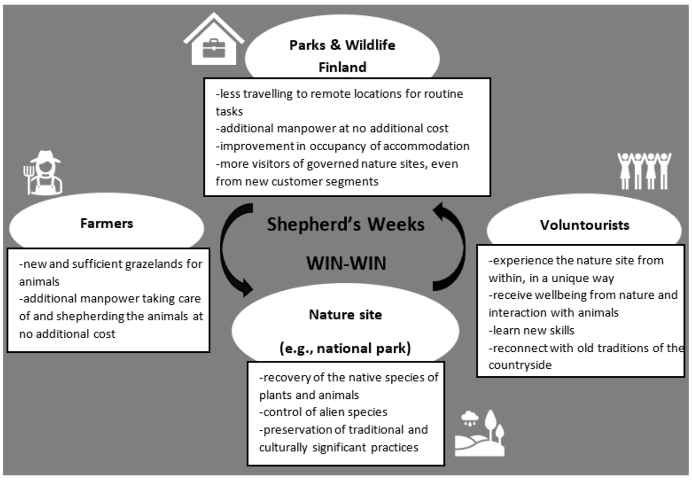

Figure 1: The beneficiary groups and benefits of shepherd's week concept

There are no other distinct concepts in Finland to take example from regarding voluntourism. In fact, even tourist agencies, specializing in voluntourism and regenerative tourism, have difficulties tracking down and establishing relationships with actors, who could provide such tourism activity. The non-profit international intermediary organizations represented in Finland, have small-scale domestic activity, mainly based on reciprocity of the general action. They usually count on Finnish tourism pull factors to attract the volunteers from abroad, but rarely intentionally include touristic elements into their programs or require such from the hosts (Takalo 2021; Viitaniemi 2021). The non-profit volunteer mobility, whether it is called voluntourism or not, is not well represented in Central Finland, and the intermediary organizations have a hard time naming any host partners from the region (Takalo 2021; Viitaniemi 2021), but Central Finnish parties could benchmark activities from other regions. Some online platforms, mainly the ones focusing on agriculture, have a few destinations from Central Finland (WWOOF Independents n.d. a), but others, e.g., the ones invested in social volunteering, don't have any Finnish entry, nor they perceive Finland as a potential destination. Finland does not need social volunteer work as an aid, in the same meaning as countries of the Global South, but socio-culturally oriented voluntourism could bring practical benefits such as event organizing and language teaching help, companionships for elderly people, as well as affect bigger processes, such as the reform of life in Finnish countryside.

3.3 Active and potential destinations of voluntourism in Central Finland

The study discovered altogether 12 actors, hosting voluntourism in Central Finland, yet it is possible that there are more. The activities organized in these active destinations focus on green care, gardening, animal care, youth work, work for the disabled, and less often also on culture, and are produced in co-operation with EU Solidarity Corps, international non-profit intermediary organizations, and online platforms. In addition, we interviewed about 10 potential actors. We sought geographical clusters of activity types but did not find any (figure 2). The voluntourism hosts have much in common, but do not know about each other's activity. The disadvantage of the voluntourism field in Central Finland is not the lack of activity, but its fragmentation and the miscommunication between actors, and geographical clustering might be beneficial at least in terms of co-operation.

Figure 2: A map of the active (in black) and potential voluntourism hosts (in gray) in Central Finland

About 90% of the associations in Central Finland base their activity on volunteerism, however, they mostly rely on local resources. For example, the associations of national park friends regularly involve in prevention of alien species, as well as guiding or reconstruction work, but only recruit locals because of the lack of own accommodation capacity. Voluntourism could be the future for such associations since they already have the know-how of coordinating volunteers. However, in building volunteer products they need partners, which could also come from the travel industry, that is from the private sector.

It was first during the covid-19 pandemic that commercial incoming voluntourism activities were developed in Finland. Currently, there are only two tour operators that implement such trips. They work in co-operation and are actively seeking host partners, which is an opportunity for Central Finland.

3.4 Themes to incorporate in the voluntourism in Central Finland

As voluntourism has two cores, we describe the potential themes from two standpoints:

- the touristic factors - in terms of attractiveness of the region,
- the benefit of volunteerism for the region - in terms of help which local actors need.

Finland's pull factors are nature and cleanliness, safety, the education system, happiness, and the welfare state. Central Finland could also attract by lake landscapes, Alvar Aalto sites and the abundance of national parks.

The interviews revealed that volunteering is often associated with hiking, biking, snowshoeing, skiing, berry and mushroom picking, concerts and events, sauna, swimming, boating, and kayaking. The area, attractions, local recipes, and village togetherness are also of interest.

The countryside of Central Finland needs both visitors and helping hands to stay lively. There is a lot of work on farms that is not completed because the farmer does not have time and the nature of the work does not allow hiring anyone. There are large empty farms in the countryside that could potentially provide both accommodation and volunteer activities. Villages do not have the means to renovate or maintain buildings, trails, or summer theaters. For rural tourism companies, volunteering can mean extending the short active season. In addition, volunteers bring new ideas, practices, and know-how to serve locals.

4. Discussion and recommendations

In terms of identification of and with the term of voluntourism, our research discovered substantial problems both in the international term and its Finnish equivalent. Although the global knowledge about voluntourism is yet to be applied to Finland, the notorious examples of abusive practices are well-known even in Central Finland and decrease its potential due to prejudice. The rural actors of the region have versatile activity, sometimes combining farming, tourism, and volunteerism, but rarely put a name to each one. The lack of resolution on the term makes it extremely difficult to exchange knowledge, benchmark concepts and good practices. This can be overcome by communication or replacing the term. It is also important not to label the tourism-emphasizing activity as less worthy than pure volunteerism due to lower altruism level. After all, voluntourism is a combination of two sets of values – tourism and volunteerism in coexistence (see also McIntosh & Zahra 2007).

In terms of applicable concepts, we identified a strong one, the shepherd's weeks. Also, animal care is a suitable activity for voluntourism in Central Finland because of the province's large number of small-size farms. It should be considered, however, that it is almost impossible for a single farm, firm, or association to deliver as versatile benefits to as wide range of beneficiary groups as Parks & Wildlife Finland has. The chain of services of voluntourism in Central Finland is yet to be built and the only way is through co-operation. In the post-covid era, innovative concepts, especially involving domestic travelers and sustainability, are much needed. In fact, although our primary reason to research the possibilities of voluntourism was sustainability, and even though the region is certified by the Sustainable Travel Finland programme, none of the respondents identified this as a potential factor for their voluntourism activity. Volunteering and tourism must meet within the voluntourism concept, to accept and adopt each other's features. However, this study provide a limited and subjective perspective on the topic since the he informants are met based on project researchers' networks and snow ball sampling. In terms of actors and activities, our research found a vast potential in Central Finland. Finland and its central region may not be attractive to voluntourists in the same manner as developing countries, but cultural exchange, learning, self-development, and wellbeing, as in transformational tourism, are factors that could attract tourists to volunteering tasks as well. Central Finland can offer versatile nature and cultural experiences and needs the help of volunteers to stay lively and reform itself. There are many potential host organizations which wait an opportunity to connect to intermediaries and get their first, path-defining experiences with voluntourists. This cannot happen, however, without communication and coordination within a network. Reflecting the credibility of this study, it notable that the previous empirical knowledge is in major based on less developed countries in which is the originality of volunteering work. Similar stereotype might be a case in Finnish mind-set, and commercializing potential requires a local in-land role model action.

Our research is only a small step towards voluntourism in Central Finland. In fact, we discovered a nation-wide need for development of this tourism type. First, the spectrum of volunteer tourism forms should be conceptualized in Finnish context. Necessary next steps are the examination of relevant legislation and practical matters to answer the concerns of actors, building of customer profiles and defining reasonable pricing. Later, the conceptual work should be piloted as well.

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COVID-19 Outbreak and Tourism: The State of the Art

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Abstract: This paper looks at tourism and hospitality pandemic literature and asks two research questions. The first identifies the main topics analyzed, while the second investigates future research avenues. Manual coding of 230 studies using a grounded theory approach identified 11 topics. An empirical research framework was proposed and organized around four blocks: companies, tourists, destinations, and the whole tourism system. Current literature focuses mainly on the business aspect and analyzes the strategies implemented by companies to deal with the coronavirus outbreak. Intention to travel is the main focus for the tourist block, while impact studies attracted the majority of studies at the destination level. The main tourism topic that is analyzed is post-coronavirus tourism. The conclusions of this paper identify possible research avenues for each topic (analytic research agenda) and also consider the framework as a whole (holistic value).

Keywords: COVID-19, Coronavirus outbreak, Literature review, Post-pandemic tourism, Impact studies

1. Introduction

The pandemic has disrupted the tourism industry on a scale not seen since the Second World War. All travelers, companies, destinations, and countries have felt the impact of COVID-19. Furthermore, although vaccines provide some hope for the future, the current situation remains uncertain. Not surprisingly, academic researchers have attempted to understand some of the key aspects of the pandemic and tourism. Academic journals have supported this unprecedented research effort by proposing special issues and focused research areas. This literature review contributes to this research area in two ways. First, this paper identifies the main topics explored in pandemic research studies. Second, based on the findings, future research avenues are identified. Therefore, the following research questions are explored:

- 1. What is the state of the art regarding pandemic tourism literature?
- 2. What are the promising future research avenues?

2. Methodology

This paper is not based on a bibliometric approach. For 18 months, the author continuously researched leading tourism and hospitality (T&H) journals for pandemic papers. Articles were included in this literature review if they explicitly refer to COVID-19 and focus on the T&H industry. This wide approach allowed for a broad research scope, especially in term of topics analyzed (presented later), and this corpus was expanded to include additional studies published in more niche journals. These papers were identified using common databases, such as *Web of Science* and *Scopus* (Sainaghi & Baggio 2020). Only papers published in English were considered. The final sample includes 230 papers, including full-length articles, research notes, letters, and commentaries. This is also in line with previous literature reviews (e.g., Zenker and Kock 2020) that focused on fast-emerging new areas of inquiry, such as the sharing economy (Sainaghi 2020). Considering that pandemic literature is quite new, grounded theory was applied (Glaser & Strauss 1967).

The author manually coded each article to identify the main topic and sub-themes. To establish reliability, the coding was repeated twice. Furthermore, a final check was performed by randomly selecting 50 papers (using the random function in Excel) and coding this sub-sample again. As COVID-19 is a new topic for the T&H industry, a grounded theory approach was used for the coding (Eisenhardt 1987). Therefore, any classification developed in previous studies was applied.

3. The proposed model (first research question)

Figure 1 depicts the proposed model, centered around four blocks and 11 topics. As explained in the methodology section, the themes (topics) were identified using a grounded approach. The four blocks represent the objects to which these topics refer. Focusing on the model, the blocks are identified by the four circles, three of which are centrally located. These include two supply blocks (companies and destinations) and one demand block (tourists). The companies include tourism providers, such as hotels, peer-to-peer accommodation platforms, restaurants, agencies, tour operators, air carriers, and cruise lines.

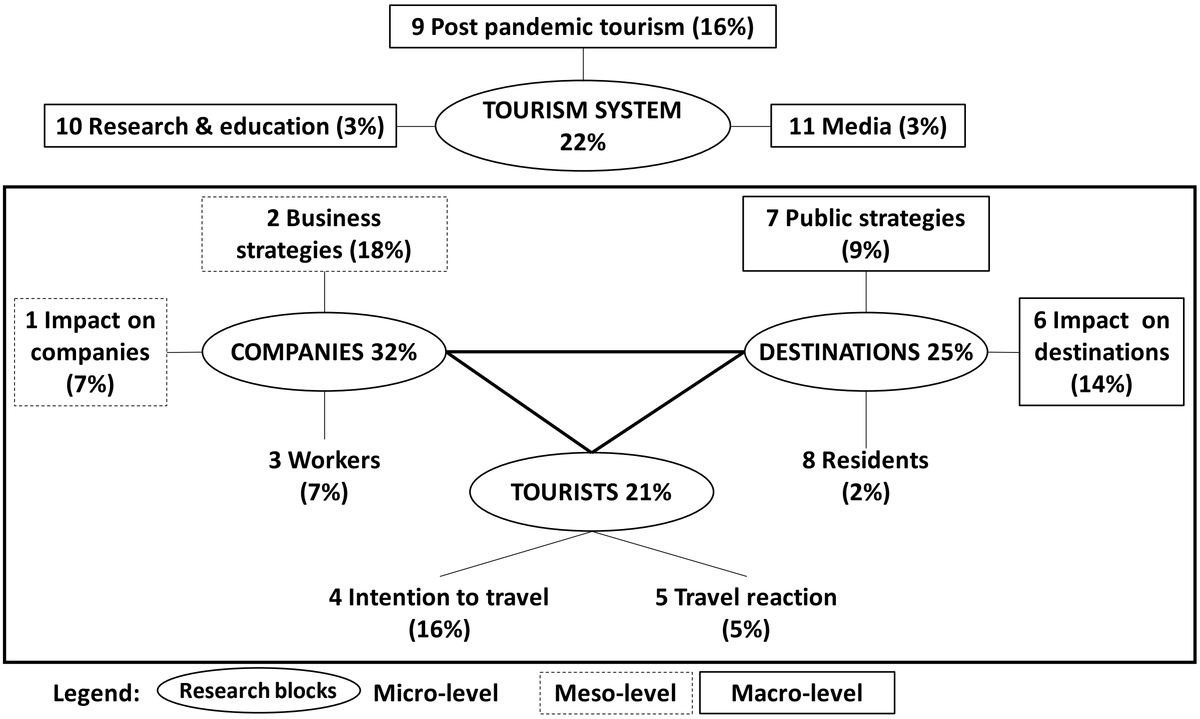

Figure 1: The grounded framework

Destinations are on the right. While companies focus on single providers, destinations embrace the entire local supply system. In the middle are tourists and travelers, who represent the demand side of the approach. Guests are positioned in the center due to their relationships with both companies and destinations. The space outside the rectangle in Figure 1 represents the overall tourism system (fourth circle) and includes demand and supply, companies, and territories.

The percentages in Figure 1 show the number of papers related to each block and were calculated using Excel. As no decimal places are reported, the sum may appear higher or lower than the simple sum. The company level accounted for 32% of the sample and was the most-researched area, followed by destinations (25%). Therefore, the supply side received the highest value (57%). Tourists (21%) and the tourism system (22%) accounted for the remaining 43%. In the following sections of this paper, each block is presented and the individual topics are discussed. Due to the high number of papers (230), the discussion cannot refer to every study individually.

3.1 The company level

The company level was the most-researched block. Three topics were identified: the economic impact of COVID-19, strategies implemented by businesses to combat the pandemic, and new challenges for tourism workers.

3.1.1 Impact on companies

The first group of papers explored the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak on tourism companies. The impact of the pandemic was usually operationalized using performance indicators (such as price or occupancy for lodging companies). Two main types of companies were analyzed—hotels and airlines—as these are usually identified as the most affected by the pandemic. The journals involved in this first topic were mainly tourism journals, with *Current Issues in Tourism* being the most prolific.

Many of the papers simply measured the effects of the pandemic using secondary data related to the number of guests (such as arrivals, overnights, passengers, rates, and revenues) and rarely looked at other types of data, such as stock returns and employment. Therefore, these studies had very poor theoretical backgrounds. Other articles used the resilience paradigm or looked at the effects of previous events and outbreaks on hotels and tourism companies. These studies were also mainly empirical in nature and simply analyzed the evolution of the metrics in use. The methodologies were mainly based on descriptive statistics, t-tests, or regressions.

The study results tend to show that COVID-19 led to an unprecedented drop in business, particularly for airline companies and hotels. The impact of the pandemic is also described as an economic tsunami for other types of companies and other sectors, such as sports companies, museums, and the performing arts (Khan et al. 2020). Furthermore, the pandemic increased company risk, especially for businesses that have high debts and large assets and have registered a large reduction in sales and profits. The effect on the hotel industry tends to be described as homogeneous; i.e., the outbreak disrupted the hotel sector in a similar way both in countries dependent on tourism and in countries less dependent on tourism.

3.1.2 Business strategies

A wide group of papers focused on the strategic changes implemented by companies to try to “manage” the effects of the outbreak. This research tended to use case studies and qualitative data. The methodologies were often built around content analysis and employed both manual and software coding procedures. The studies tended to involve lodging companies and could be divided into two sub-themes: marketing and business strategies, and technology. The studies were mostly published in hospitality journals, with the *International Journal of Hospitality Management* being the most prolific.

The papers in the marketing and business strategies group tended to be based in the field of management, particularly in the sub-fields of business model innovation, supply chain management, performance management, crises management, and innovation. The companies implemented various tactical and strategic decisions, and researchers have developed different classifications for these. Some of these sub-topics are succinctly presented below.

Crisis management, sometimes called disaster management, usually identifies some of the stages involved and how to manage key strategic variables. During the early stages of the pandemic, resilience (planned and adaptive) was a crucial asset for small tourism companies, and this characteristic positively and directly influenced business performance.

Focusing on operations, companies have introduced social distancing, new sanitation protocols, and the closing of some services (such as buffets) and areas (such as swimming pools, spas, and fitness areas). Generally speaking, all the departments, areas, and services were deeply changed by the pandemic. The strategies usually implemented first by a company are closing and cost-cutting, putting employees on furlough (to avoid lay-offs), and transforming rent from a fixed cost to a variable value related to sales.

New product development and service delivery include a wide area of innovation that was mainly analyzed from the perspectives of restaurants. To make up for the drop in indoor dining sales, some restaurants have expanded their takeaway and delivery options, increased their off-premises catering, and even started home meal-replacement programs.

Supply chain management represents a key action during the pandemic to help preserve a domino effect on the value system. In the past, the main approach of supply chains involved cost reduction and operational efficiency, whereas the new challenges are to assure the liquidity of hotel companies, preserve labor, increase direct relationships with final clients, and create a favorable regulatory framework within the industry.

Revenue management (RM) has been strongly affected by the pandemic and all the RM phases had to be completely reconfigured. In the past, RM was mainly performed using historical data, competitor benchmarking, and software procedures. In the current situation however, where demand modeling and forecasting are unreliable and human rather than technological, specific actions are necessary to define new rates.

The second group, composed of a smaller number of studies, focused on technologies, particularly on the use of robots to reduce guest-employee contact. Robots and artificial intelligence can be primarily used to manage hygiene and cleanliness. To implement this technology, however, it is suggested that operations (value chain), internal competences, and stakeholders be aligned, with a particular focus on workers and guests. The paradigm of Industry 5.0, which postulates a strong collaboration between humans and machines, can be especially applied to the hospitality industry. Hospitality 5.0 would assure social distancing and high hygiene standards, both of which will also be required in post-pandemic tourism.

3.1.3 Workers

The COVID-19 outbreak has deeply affected both company-employee relationships and guest-worker links. Therefore, it is not surprising that a special research theme focuses on T&H workers, with the most prominent journal being the *International Journal of Hospitality Management*. The theoretical backgrounds included human resource management, corporate social responsibility, and resilience. The data were largely collected by giving questionnaires to workers and then analyzing them using statistical models such as regressions, structural equation modeling, and factor analysis.

The pandemic was found to have modified daily operations and increased employee uncertainty and stress. Within this context, corporate social responsibility was identified as an important determinant of employee psychological capital. Another key variable related to surviving the pandemic is organizational resilience, the main antecedents of which can be identified as human and economic capital. Job insecurity generated by the pandemic has led to a decrease in worker engagement as well as negative effects on turnover intent. The outbreak has also significantly changed occupational stressors and their effects.

For many workers, COVID-19 has led to an increase in job insecurity, anxiety, and depression; however, resilience (i.e., being able to cope with stressful situations) has been shown to have an important and positive impact on workers' performance. The pandemic increased worker isolation and the financial strain (due to the risk of job loss) increased depression and deviant behavior.

3.2 Tourists

Tourists represent the micro-level and account for 21% of the sample. Two sub-topics are proposed: the impact of COVID-19 on the intention to travel and tourists' reactions to companies and destination products.

3.2.1 Intention to travel

This first topic explores tourists' travel intentions. The studies were mostly carried out during the coronavirus outbreak and the majority of the articles are based on consumer behavior theory, risk perception and health risk, and the theory of planned behavior. The data were mainly collected using questionnaires, while the methodologies include well-known statistical models. The articles were mainly published in tourism journals, with *Current Issues in Tourism* accounting for the highest number of papers.

Intention to travel has been widely researched. The results suggest that tourists want to travel once they are allowed, but will prefer to use their own cars, remain in their countries, and choose destinations with good hygiene and reliable health systems. Risk perception and its effect on travel intention is not usually homogeneous, and the studies based on cluster analysis identified different risk perception groups and diverse implications for travel intention.

The perception of health risks has influenced mental wellbeing, with perceived uncertainty reducing the willingness to travel internationally and increasing short-term and long-term avoidance behavior. Perceived risk negatively influences attitudes to travel and perceived behavior control, both of which influence intention to travel. Important differences exist between people who are in a high-risk group and those who are not. Age and health status influences tourists' sense of control, with younger people showing a higher sense of control than people with health problems (Pappas 2021).

3.2.2 Travel reaction

This theme focuses on the reactions of tourists to companies' and destinations' anti-coronavirus strategies. The data were mostly collected by using questionnaires or analyzing user-generated content. The methodologies were based on statistical models when questionnaires were used and on content analysis when reviews were used. The number of relevant studies was quite small and they were not published in prominent journals.

The COVID-19 outbreak increased risk aversion and reduced the intention to travel. Some companies (typically lodging businesses) have stimulated demand by implementing various strategies such as price reductions, corporate social responsibility actions, and measures to ensure that public areas are less crowded. In relation to prices, tourists had negative emotional reactions when faced with price inequality. Tourists whose income had decreased accepted lower rates, while the opposite was true for tourists whose income had increased.

Corporate social responsibility by international tourism companies was found to positively influence both attitudes toward international travel and behavioral intentions toward international tourism products. The pandemic has changed tourists' preferences for some tourism products. Another topic that has been researched is the degree to which tourists accept technology. As previously discussed, the coronavirus outbreak led to many companies increasing their use of technology, especially robots. Despite some differences, the studies suggest that guests tend to accept technology; however, companies must avoid giving the impression that robots are replacing workers.

3.3 Destinations

The destinations block was the second most researched (25%) and three sub-topics are explored: the impact of coronavirus, public strategies employed to sustain tourism destinations, and the role of residents.

3.3.1 Impact on destinations

This topic explores the effects of the coronavirus outbreak on destinations. Tourism journals were prominent in this area, with the *Annals of Tourism Research* being the most prolific. This group includes two sub-topics: studies that simply measure the impact and articles that develop new models or indices. The first sub-topic is more empirical and less theoretical, while the second tends to be based on well-defined research approaches such as time series analysis, performance measurements, and the approach used by the proposed index or model.

The first sub-topic (impact) is largely empirical. This issue is based on secondary data (demand data first of all) able to measure the effects of the pandemic at the destination level (variously operationalized). This impact is described as a disruption in the flow of tourism to certain destinations or for specific industry segments, such as MICE (meeting, incentive, congress, and exhibitions). A common exception is rural tourism, which showed an increase for some destinations during the summer of 2020, and in more peripheral areas that did not have large amounts of tourists before the pandemic.

A dynamic stochastic general equilibrium model has been proposed to measure the effects of coronavirus on tourism. The model includes health status and health disaster, as well as three different decision makers: households, producers, and governments. A correlation was found between the level of inbound and outbound tourism and COVID-19 cases and deaths. Similarly, multipliers have been used to forecast the impact of coronavirus on international travel receipts, employment levels, and trade balance. Other models have used stock prices to measure the impact of COVID-19 and to evaluate the presence of stock bubbles.

A small (but not marginal) group of studies have developed new indexes for measuring the impact of COVID-19 on tourism. Generally speaking, they include new metrics such as the World Economic Uncertainty Index, Google search data, performance metrics of different tourism industries, and the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases.

3.3.2 Public strategies

A small group of papers have explored public strategies at the destination level. These studies are mostly multiple case studies based on qualitative data (collected by analyzing public plans and conducting interviews) and secondary quantitative data (such as industry metrics and disease spread). The theoretical frameworks include crisis management, resilience, and specific topics related to the studies' objectives. *Current Issues in Tourism* accounted for the largest number of papers, followed by other tourism journals.

A comparison of public strategies carried out by a small group of international destinations to the three strategies proposed by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), i.e., crisis management and impact mitigation (stage one), stimulus and recovery acceleration (stage two), and preparing for tomorrow (stage three), showed high disparity. The analyzed countries were found to have adopted few of the UNWTO's recommendations, focusing more on crisis management and on stimulus and recovery (Kreiner & Ram 2020).

The three UNWTO phases were used to explore other studies, which tended to focus on only one precise phase. During crisis management and impact mitigation (first stage), a key public decision is the adoption of lockdown or other restrictive decisions, and a methodology has been proposed to help governments decide when to adopt these measures.

Regarding stimulus and recovery acceleration (second stage), the Chinese recovery phase can be divided into four phases: prophylactic measures, tourism recovery and development, policy support, and departmental management (Shao et al. 2020). Their public strategies focus more on the short-term rather than the long-term, and the pandemic has been described as an opportunity to restructure the T&H industry. Governments have adopted larger economic stimulus for tourism in countries where this industry is larger.

Finally, looking to the future and preparing for tomorrow (stage three), a longitudinal analysis explored how American destinations have managed their image after previous crises (in the last 20 years) and identified three main recovery strategies: source (media), message (combat negative perceptions), and audience (Avraham 2020).

3.3.3 Residents

Residents is the smallest sub-topic and includes only a few papers, all of which were published in tourism journals. The paucity of studies does not diminish the relevance of this topic, as residents are key stakeholders for tourism destinations. These articles used data collected via surveys and are based on stakeholders, social costs, and risk perception theory.

Despite the specific topics developed by each study, the unifying theme of this sub-stream is the relevance of residents as key stakeholders for tourism destinations. A crisis can change residents' attitudes towards tourism and reduce the economic benefits of the latter, especially for those involved in business activities. In contrast, the pandemic has increased the risks associated with tourism as perceived by residents. In this context, the estimation of social cost is relevant. Other studies have explored residents' perceived risk and found that it has a negative relationship with tourism support, but that it is mediated by emotional solidarity.

3.4 Tourism system

The tourism system refers to the entire industry and considers both demand and supply. It accounts for 22% of the sample and post-pandemic tourism is the leading sub-topic, followed by research, education, and media.

3.4.1 Post-pandemic tourism

Post-pandemic tourism includes all the studies that have attempted to identify what will change in tourism systems after the pandemic. Due to the focus on future scenarios, this research stream is based on different theoretical frameworks (e.g., the evolutionary tourism paradigm, space theory, alternative hedonism, and disruptive theory), with a central point of sustainability (variously operationalized). The large majority of these papers are research notes and conceptual articles and were published in tourism journals, with *Tourism Geographies* being the most prolific. The contribution of top tier journals was more marginal, as these conceptual papers tend to be based on the authors' insights rather than on traditional data analysis.

A large group of papers has looked at COVID-19 as an opportunity to think about the future of tourism and implement new development models that are different from the so-called neocapitalism (or neoliberalism) approach. The main neoliberalism tenets are that globalization is an irreversible process, that economic growth is a never-ending process, that consumer activity defines personal identity, and that neoliberalism is the best way to allocate resources (Higgins-Desbiolles 2020). Each paper proposes some interesting ways to change the neoliberalism approach. Space (a key ingredient for tourism) can be refocused by moving from global to local and reengineering all the tourism relationships, networks, and connections.

Thinking local and removing the time-space compression paradigm could help the tourism system reduce its negative effects such as environmental degradation, economic exploitation, and overcrowding. In line with this approach, tourism must be more equitable and inclusive, and the new paradigm (sometimes defined as "slow down") requires a deep rethinking of the tourism phenomenon itself. There is a need to move away from the pessimistic post-modern view towards a regenerative paradigm based on a circular approach and a triple-bottom line approach, including the economic, environmental, and social effects of tourism.

The key driver of this change is the supposed ability of coronavirus to instigate an "evolution" or "expansion" in human consciousness that is more aligned with sustainable development. This evolution should occur at both the demand and supply levels and must be promoted by institutions.

3.4.2 Research and education

This very small group of papers explores the implications for tourism academic research and education. All the studies were published in tourism journals; however, as they are mostly conceptual studies, they were not published in any top tier journals.

Regarding research, there is a need to move away from descriptive to more theoretical studies based on promising research areas such as chaos and complex theory, destination image, consumer behavior, resident behavior, changes in tourism industries, and long-term and indirect effects. Resilience has been proposed as a key theoretical paradigm.

Regarding both theory and methodology, an approach called "partigraphy" (a combination of the words particle and ethnography) has been proposed as a promising framework for analyzing current and future tourism industry evolution (Jensen 2020). Some papers also explored implications of the pandemic for tourism education. The outbreak has created two different schools of thought. The first is more oriented toward supporting the T&H industry to reduce social and economic cost ("pro-industry boosters") while the second ("pro-limits critics") has the opposite vision and considers the pandemic to be an unprecedented opportunity to downsize the industry, improve localism, and change the consumer approach (Higgins-Desbiolles 2020).

3.4.3 Media

This last group includes a few papers that explore the so-called media discourse on COVID-19 and the T&H industry. The articles are mainly empirical and designed around content analysis of the news. These studies explore the influence of the news on tourists, identify some stages in the public debate, and propose some clusters in the media discourse. They are mostly research notes that were published in tourism journals. Due to the small number of studies, no journal was identified as prolific.

The media can influence the perceived risk to travel, and it represents the primary source of information for potential tourists. In this context, destination management organizations and other key stakeholders in the T&H industry must provide ethical and accurate information about the health situation. During the pandemic, however, misinformation has influenced public discussion, increased the perceived risk of travel, and potentially increased the amount of time it will take the T&H industry to recover.

3.5 Conclusions about the first research question

The first research question focuses on the state of the art regarding pandemic tourism literature. Figure 1 provides a clear answer to this first question and suggests that researchers have perceived the ability of COVID-19 to influence all levels of T&H research, including company, tourists, and destinations as well as the entire tourism system. The richness of sub-topics (eleven, as reported in Figure 1) confirms the pandemic's pervasiveness.

4. Future research avenues (second research question)

This section identifies future research avenues and represents the conclusion of this study. The first level of analysis (defined analytic) identified some lines of research for each topic based on the results illustrated in the previous section. The second level (defined holistic) discusses some promising relationships between the four blocks. Finally, some study limitations will be identified.

4.1 Analytic research agenda

Research avenues, promising theories, and data and methodology development are shown for each topic. Due to space constraints, a more general discussion is provided that focuses on each block, even though each topic was analyzed. Regarding company, it is only the impact on business that requires theoretical development. Some promising approaches are resilience, time series analysis, and chaos and complex theory. A general shift from short to medium term is required (especially in the next few months when more data will be available), as well as new supply segmentations (different T&H sectors, diverse types of tourism, impact on firms of different sizes or with different qualitative positioning). Given the paucity of studies, new research is necessary for some of the sub-topics, such as technology and risk perception and turnover intent.

Tourists (second block) will play a pivotal role in the restarting of the industry. Consumer behavior should be corroborated by marketing (segmentation) theory that considers the differences among tourists. The need to cluster and segment the market is relevant, especially when trying to understand intention to travel and risk perception. Given the paucity of studies, new empirical articles are necessary to understand travel reactions. Currently, these reactions are subjectively measured using surveys, but future studies can also use case studies.

At the destination level (third block), a general theoretical development is required in the three topics identified. In particular for impact studies, resilience, a time series approach, and chaos and complexity theory could be promising. For public strategies, the theory of dynamic capabilities (and especially destination capabilities) could play a pivotal role. Finally, to understand the role of residents, a community approach to destination development is required. Future studies should use more mixed data that integrates qualitative information (impact studies) and uses content analysis (public strategies). The advancement of these themes requires new evidence and more comparative studies.

Finally, at the tourism system level (fourth block) there is a need for theoretical development, especially for research and education (resilience, chaos and complexity theory) and the media (political theory, media discourse, communication management). Also, data collection should integrate conceptual papers with case studies, data-driven papers, and mixed methods (post-pandemic tourism), literature reviews and qualitative studies (research and education), and a bibliometric approach (media).

Regarding research gaps, specific insights are suggested for each block. In particular for post-pandemic studies, if the new paradigm is to move to a more sustainable, equitable, inclusive tourism, new studies must identify the conditions that will favor this shift. Future studies proposing new scenarios and long-term ideologies are also required. In fact, there is currently a contraposition between growth and decrease and unsustainable and sustainable tourism. Research should focus more on different types of data and methods. Generally speaking, education and the media are very underdeveloped research fields; therefore, new studies are required. Finally, the analytical research agenda should be updated based on emerging topics and facts, one of which will surely be the effect of vaccines and the progressive reopening of tourism facilities on different regional scales.

4.2 Holistic research agenda

In new research fields, it is important to create a dialogue between the different areas of inquiry. Due to the pandemic, research is currently fragmented, but each of the four research blocks can shed light on the others. Following are some examples to help clarify this statement. A deeper knowledge of tourists (consumer behavior and travel reactions) could help companies, destinations, and tourism systems refine and implement post-coronavirus strategies. At the business level, marketing and business levers, the use of technology, and new paradigms in human resource management could be adjusted based on post-pandemic tourists. This example can be repeated by focusing on each of the other blocks. If post-pandemic tourism differs from pre-pandemic tourism, each block (and each sub-topic) will be diverse and require dynamic adjustments to the others. In the tourism industry, the more relevant changes will most likely affect demand; therefore, comprehension of post-pandemic tourists will play a pivotal role.

To advance research in this area, segmentation is crucial, both on the demand side and on the supply side. Realistically, a homogenous post-pandemic tourist will not exist and well-known socio-demographic variables will continue to differentiate the guests. Therefore, the ability to understand the new clusters of travelers will provide an important way for companies, destinations, and tourism systems to gain a competitive advantage. To advance this knowledge, more multi-case studies are needed.

4.3 Limitations

Scopus and *Web of Science* were used to expand the sample of papers. Although these databases are authoritative and largely used, some studies can still be overlooked. This review proposes a classification of themes based on the four blocks and 11 topics depicted in Figure 1 and ignores other possible classifications.

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The Future of Brand Awareness and Brand Loyalty on Travel Agencies

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Abstract: Tourism has emerged as one of the great activities of the 21st century; however, due to globalization and the development of the Internet, travel agencies see some of their business principles being changed by new technologies. Furthermore, the impacts of the pandemic crisis (SARS-COV2) have been highly negative. In the field of tourism, travel agencies have been one of the parts that have undergone the most changes. Countless people have gone to a travel agency to book their trips in the past decade. However, this process is not always carried out in the same way. With the appearance and constant development of new technologies, the first online travel agencies emerged. In addition, the consumer becomes increasingly independent in their travel purchases, and the travel agent's work is limited. Online travel agencies advertise more, offering more attractive prices and other conditions that attract customers to buy their trips without going to a travel agency in a physical space. The relationship between agency and tourist is essentially online. Thus, it is essential to analyze the role of travel agents who have their physical spaces open and intend to increase their business by strengthening customer relationships. It is necessary to focus on consumer trust and loyalty while creating and establishing brand or company value. Thus, the results obtained in this study, through a self-administered questionnaire, from a sample of 512 observations, demonstrate that the perceived quality of the relationship influences the brand's awareness and customer loyalty: consumer satisfaction and trust. In this context, this study highlights the importance of the human relationship in selling tourist products and the tourist's previous experience in loyalty to the travel agency.

Keywords: travel agencies, customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, brand trust, brand awareness.

1. Introduction

Tourism contributes to the development of countries and regions and has various effects on economic activity (Lee and Back, 2010). For the development of this sector, it is vital to building a brand in the industry (Liao, 2006).

With the development of the Internet and the shift to online environments by travel agencies, customer loyalty has become an even more significant concern for this sector of activity (Shen, 2018, p.11).

In choosing a destination, brand awareness is a critical factor (Chon, 1992). It was identified as the main component of both destination brand equity (Gartner and Ruzzier, 2011) and brand performance in the tourism industry (Lee and Back, 2008).

Also, brand trust and satisfaction are the critical success factors to travel agencies' competition (Drosos and Tsotsolas, 2015). Therefore, this research aims to study the relationship between brand awareness and brand loyalty in travel agencies mediated by brand trust and satisfaction. The literature was reviewed, and collected data to test the research hypotheses.

2. Literature review

2.1 Brand awareness

Over the years, brand awareness has been applied in various tourism and hospitality contexts (Oh and Hsu, 2014).

Brand awareness refers to "the ability of a potential buyer to recognize or recall that a brand is a member of a certain product category" (Aaker, 1991, p. 61). Aaker (1996) stated that brand awareness includes brand recognition, brand recall, and top-of-mind awareness. When asked to think in a category and a brand comes to the consumer's mind first, it is considered top of mind. This concept is also used in tourism and hospitality research (Tsai et al., 2010).

Brand awareness corresponds to what extent consumers are well-informed (Santo and Cardoso,2021), recall, and are familiar with a brand (Keller, 1993), choosing their preferred brand (Aaker, 1996).

To create brand equity for destinations brands, it is essential to generate brand awareness in consumers' minds (Gartner and Ruzzier, 2011). This awareness led to the development of consumers' positive feelings about the brand and enhanced the possibility of destination visit behavior (Buil et al., 2013). A higher level of brand awareness contributes to destination brand equity and visitors' loyalty (Boo et al., 2009). Several studies demonstrated that brand awareness positively influences brand equity and loyalty (Pike and Bianchi, 2016) and consumer commitment to a brand (Hsu et al., 2012).

In tourism and marketing literature, different studies support that brand awareness contributes to positive and favorable brand image, brand loyalty, and high perceived quality (Pike et al., 2010).

2.2 Brand trust

The concept of trust has attracted the attention of researchers from different areas, thus becoming a concept of interdisciplinary interest and revealing the relevance that may have in other fields (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán, 2005). Among these fields is the consumption of a product or service, namely because the idea of trust is associated as a substantial value with the consumption of a product or service. This association aggregates the attribution of quality to the product or service (Parasuraman et al., 1985).

Thus, the results of different studies have shown that the quality of the product or services has been demonstrated as a variable capable of creating trust (Augusto, Santos, and Santo, 2020a) in the brand and even in the perception of the image of the brand itself (Abror, 2019; Chandio, Qureshi, and Ahmed, 2015; Kumar, Dash, and Purwar, 2013; Wang and Wu, 2012).

In this sense, it can be stated that «a trustworthy brand is one that consistently keeps its promise of value to consumers through the way the product is developed, produced, sold, serviced and advertised, even in bad times when some kind of brand crisis arises» (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán, 2005, p. 188). Moreover, this context is often based on experiences lived by the consumer with a particular product or service of a specific brand; these experiences also help in the evolution of trust in the brand (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999). In this sense, organizations must invest in a long-term relationship with their consumers (Sung and Kim, 2010) while transmitting the brand's message and making it credible to the consumer (Zehir, Şahin, Kitapçı, and Özşahin, 2011).

When awareness is high, consumers have a more positive opinion about destination characteristics (Nikabadi et al., 2015). Therefore, it is proposed to test the following:

H1: Travel agencies brand awareness positively influences travel agencies brand trust

2.3 Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is the key to the success of companies in various sectors of activity, especially concerning online travel agencies (Augusto, Santos, and Santo, 2020b; Dutta, Kumar Chauhan, and Chauhan, 2017), contributing to improving their performance (Kobylanski, 2012). Hennig-Thurau (2004) considers that customer orientation on the part of travel agencies strongly determines customer satisfaction and the success of service companies.

Kobylanski (2012) analyzed the attributes of the travel agency service and identified the characteristics that have a significant effect on overall customer satisfaction, namely the quality of the offer, safety, convenience, and comparison of the service delivered with the advertising message, influencing the positive word of mouth, as well as customer loyalty. The interaction of agencies with customers also affects customer satisfaction.

Kourtesopoulou, Theodorou, Kriemadis, and Papaioannou (2019) analyzed the effect of perceived quality on customer satisfaction and purchase intentions and concluded that quality factors, ease of understanding, response time, and intuitive site navigation are most important.

The study by Othman, Harun, De Almeida, and Sadq (2020) shows that after-sales service and marketing communication have a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, either directly or indirectly.

Dutta, Kumar Chauhan, and Chauhan (2017) identified the factors that affect travel agency customer satisfaction, concluding that customer expectations and perceived quality influence customer satisfaction. In addition, service quality, customer trust, corporate image, and awareness significantly impact travel agency customer satisfaction (Setiawan and Sayuti, 2017). Thus, it is proposed the following:

H2: Travel agencies brand awareness positively influences travel agencies brand satisfaction

H3: Travel agencies brand trust positively influences travel agencies brand satisfaction

2.4 Customer loyalty

Analyzing various perspectives on the concept of customer loyalty, Shen (2018) considers that online customer loyalty presupposes repeated behavior, preferences, purchases, and intentions.

Customer loyalty is fundamental in the travel agency sector, in a very competitive market (Richard and Zhang, 2012), so several authors have focused on researching the determining factors that influence customer loyalty. For Richard and Zhang (2012), the corporate image has a positive and significant influence on customer commitment and satisfaction, strongly influencing customer loyalty.

Moisescu and Gica (2014) analyzed the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on customer behavioral loyalty, considering service quality as a fundamental social responsibility factor. On the other hand, customer loyalty is essential to ensure the sustainability of travel agencies' business.

The perceived quality of the electronic service directly and positively affects the perceived value, which, in turn, directly and significantly affects consumer loyalty towards online services (Roger-Monzó, Martí-Sánchez, and Guijarro-García, 2015).

Setiawan and Sayuti (2017) also consider that service quality, customer trust, corporate image, and customer satisfaction are variables that significantly impact customer loyalty.

Shen (2018) developed a study to identify the determining factors that impact customer loyalty in travel agencies and concluded that customer trust associated with company integrity and customer perceived value, closely related to price and value and customer expectation regarding price, have a positive influence on online customer loyalty (Santo and Marques, 2022). The brand logo can also interfere with customer loyalty. In turn, switching costs and perceived risks, in terms of security and financial risks, negatively influence online customer loyalty. The quality of online service is not a determining factor in customer loyalty. Therefore, it is proposed the following:

H4: Travel agencies brand trust positively influences travel agencies loyalty

H5: Travel agencies brand satisfaction positively influences travel agencies loyalty

3. Methodology

This study used a quantitative methodology. A survey was conducted among travel agency clients to validate the proposed model. This cross-sectional research had as a unit of analysis these clients, whose data collected through a questionnaire, was analyzed through the valid answers of 512 clients, primarily female (73.5%), below 45 years old (79.5%) with higher education qualifications (70.4%).

Data was collected through a self-administered survey. It was used items adapted from previous studies to measure the constructs. Hence, four items were used for brand awareness from Kim et al. (2018). To measure brand trust and brand satisfaction was used the Silva and Gonçalves (2016) items. The loyalty was measured with five items proposed by Bezerra and Gomes (2019). All the items used in this study were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

4. Results

For data analysis, Partial Least Squares - Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was chosen to estimate the conceptual model because it enables the researchers to assess causal relationships. The PLS-SEM is appropriate for exploratory research and does not require normality of data (Hair Jr et al., 2016). Additionally, PLS-SEM is executed in two steps. First, the reliability and validity of the measurement model were analyzed and, after analyzing the relations between constructs as suggested by (Hair et al., 2016). The PLS-Algorithm was executed on SMART PLS v3.3.2 (Ringle et al., 2015).

4.1 Common method bias

The responses were collected from the same respondents, and there was a possibility of common method bias. Thus, it was performed Harman's one-factor test (Podsakoff et al., 2003), with factor one representing 28.22% of the variance. Furthermore, a preliminary data analysis was carried out to validate VIF - Variance Inflation Factor. VIF values are ranged between 1,832 and 4,413, which is below the threshold value (VIF <5). Therefore, there is no multicollinearity. Accordingly, common method bias would not be a concern. Moreover, it was analyzed the Skewness (Sk), and Kurtosis (Ku) and the items do not diverge from normality (Sk <3; Ku <7) (Hair et al., 2018).

4.2 Measurement model

The validity, reliability, and standardized loadings (λ) were analyzed. Therefore, table 1 shows that standardized item loadings are above the minimum threshold value of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2013), which were acceptable for further analysis.

Table 1: Items

Item	λ	*t* values
Brand Awareness (α = 0.774; ρA = 0.819; CR = 0.835; AVE = 0.512)		
The travel agency is recognised where I live	0.752**	6.208
The travel agency differs from others	0.839**	21.978
I am familiar with the products/services this agency offers	0.762**	18.708
When I think of traveling, this is the first travel agency that comes to mind	0.800**	23.785
Brand Satisfaction (α = 0.936; ρA = 0.936; CR = 0.954; AVE = 0.839)		
Overall, I am satisfied with this travel agency	0.925**	48.830
I am satisfied with my experiences with this travel agency	0.929**	51.961
I am satisfied with the support provided by the staff of this travel agency	0.923**	49.071
The services I enjoyed with this travel agency exceeded my expectations	0.886**	43.130
Brand Trust (α = 0.868; ρA = 0.869; CR = 0.938; AVE = 0.883)		
This agency can be trusted with its products and services	0.942**	70.740
This travel agency is honest	0.937**	55.915
Brand Loyalty (α = 0.894; ρA = 0.932; CR = 0.921; AVE = 0.701)		
In the future. I will use the services of this travel agency	0.894**	58.226
Even if other agencies offer lower prices. I will prefer this travel agency	0.788**	23.520
If possible, I recommend this travel agency	0.927**	86.167
I prefer to book trips to Europe through this travel agency	0.768**	16.983
I always choose this travel agency to book intercontinental trips	0.798**	19.037

λ - Standardized Loadings; ** p <0.01; α = Cronbach's Alpha; AVE - Average Variance Extracted; CR - Composite Reliability

Table 1 also shows that Average Variance extracted (AVE) (ranging from 0.512 to 0.883) and composite reliability (CR) (ranging from 0.835 to 0.954) are above the threshold values (AVE> 0.5; CR> 0.7) (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988, Bagozzi et al., 1991). These values showed convergent validity and reliability for all constructs.

To access the discriminant validity, first, it was examined the Fornell and Larcker criteria (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), and it was verified that the correlations between constructs are below than square root values in diagonals of the AVE (table 2).

Table 2: Discriminant validity - criteria from Fornell and Larcker (1981)

	BAW	LOY	SAT	TRT
Brand awareness (BAW)	0.715			
Loyalty (LOY)	0.719	0.837		
Satisfaction (SAT)	0.674	0.773	0.916	
Trust (TRT)	0.634	0.766	0.861	0.940

BAW = Brand awareness; SAT = Satisfaction; TRT = Trust; LOY = Loyalty

Second, the discriminant validity was examined through the cross-loadings criterion (Henseler et al., 2015). Table 3 shows a comparison of the column loadings, and each indicator exhibits that indicator's loadings on its construct is higher in all cases compared to all its cross-loadings with other constructs.

Table 3: Cross loadings

	BAW	LOY	SAT	TRT
BAW1	0.652	0.247	0.336	0.295
BAW2	0.839	0.568	0.531	0.481
BAW3	0.762	0.521	0.521	0.536
BAW3	0.800	0.774	0.644	0.600
SAT1	0.651	0.672	0.925	0.779
SAT2	0.643	0.724	0.929	0.837
SAT3	0.579	0.667	0.923	0.792
SAT4	0.595	0.764	0.886	0.744
TRT1	0.645	0.715	0.817	0.942
TRT2	0.544	0.725	0.801	0.937
LOY1	0.657	0.894	0.795	0.813
LOY2	0.582	0.788	0.515	0.461
LOY3	0.657	0.927	0.779	0.781
LOY4	0.536	0.768	0.513	0.500
LOY5	0.569	0.798	0.532	0.529

BAW = Brand awareness; SAT = Satisfaction; TRT = Trust; LOY = Loyalty

4.3 Structural model

The results of the hypotheses tests were analyzed by evaluating the significance of the path coefficients through bootstrapping procedure with 5000 subsamples. Table 4 shows the results of hypotheses testing.

Table 4: Hypothesis test

					95% Confidence Interval			
Hyp.	Path	Std β	t value	p-value	Lower	Upper	f^2	Result
H1	BAW -> TRT	0.186	2.282	0.023	0.034	0.357	0.051	Supported
H2	BAW → SAT	0.134	2.011	0.044	0.010	0.274	0.044	Supported
H3	TRT -> SAT	0.566	7.211	0.000	0.398	0.704	0.561	Supported
H4	TRT -> LOY	0.388	3.765	0.000	0.175	0.580	0.107	Supported
H5	SAT -> LOY	0.439	4.218	0.000	0.242	0.652	0.137	Supported

β = Standardized path coefficients; BAW = Brand awareness; SAT = Satisfaction; TRT = Trust; LOY = Loyalty

5. Discussion and conclusions

5.1 Discussion

This study explored the influence of travel agencies' brand awareness on loyalty. In the analyses of the structural model, it was examined the adjusted R^2 of the endogenous variables in the model, which are 0.637 for loyalty. In addition, it was obtained R^2= 0,792 for satisfaction and 0.636 for trust.

In hypothesis testing, the relationship between brand awareness and brand trust in the context of travel agencies was tested. H1 was confirmed ($\beta_{BAW\ ->\ TRT}$ = 0.186; p<0.05; f^2= 0.051) which confirmed that trust in travel agencies is a consequence of tourists' image and brand recognition (Abror, 2019).

Hypothesis H2 tested the effects of brand awareness on satisfaction, and it was found that there is a relationship ($\beta_{BAW\ ->\ SAT}$ = 0.134; p<0.05; f^2= 0.044). Similar to other studies (Setiawan and Sayuti, 2017), this study reveals that brand awareness has a significant impact on travel agencies tourists' satisfaction. Therefore, it is confirmed hypothesis H2.

The results obtained for hypothesis H3 ($\beta_{TRT\ ->\ SAT}$ = 0.566; p<0.05; f^2= 0.561) underline the close relationship between trust and satisfaction in travel agencies. The relationship between trust and satisfaction is high, and it is considered that, in the context of travel agencies, the main antecedent of satisfaction is trust in the brand.

In this study, brand loyalty was the dependent variable. Firstly, it was tested hypothesis H4 and the results ($\beta_{TRT\ ->\ LOY}$ = 0.388; p<0.05; f^2= 0.107) support that trust is an important antecedent of brand loyalty in travel agencies. Additionally, it was also found that satisfaction has important effects on loyalty H5 ($\beta_{SAT\ ->\ LOY}$ = 0.439; p<0.05; f^2= 0.137). These results are referred to by Setiawan and Sayuti (2017) as their study refers to satisfaction and trust as antecedents of brand loyalty.

Finally, the indirect effects in the model ($\beta_{BAW->\ LOY}$ = 0.177; p<0.01), and it was demonstrated that travel agencies' brand awareness influences brand loyalty. These effects are relevant since they identify that tourists' perceived brand awareness affects their travel agency visit behavior as referred to in the literature (Kwun and Oh, 2004).

5.2 Practical contributions

From the analysis carried out, this study is essential for travel agencies' management practice since it reveals that brand awareness is vital for travel agencies and contributes to greater loyalty.

Thus, it is suggested that travel agencies develop a marketing action plan to improve their target recognition. Moreover, it is considered that loyalty is enhanced through a relationship based on the trust and satisfaction of the tourist. Thus, it is suggested that travel agencies improve the orientation towards the tourist.

5.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research

Although this study has revealed essential conclusions, it was identified some limitations. Thus, it is important to highlight that the sample comprises young tourists (aged below 45 years) and with higher education qualifications. It is suggested that other studies analyze samples with older tourists.

Another limitation identified is that service quality and perceived value were not included as antecedents of brand loyalty. It is suggested to analyze research models that include service quality and perceived value.

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Winery Word of Mouth: The Role of Brand Prestige, Brand Credibility and Wine Experience

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Abstract: Although tourism has been heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, its potential as an economic activity that enables the economic and social development of the regions is recognized. As a result of concerns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, tourist agents seek to diversify their offers. In this situation, whether because of the knowledge and interest of tourists in the wine sector or because of the credibility and prestige of some brands with greater notoriety in the sector, wine tourism can be an essential stimulus for the attractiveness of tourists and international investors. Wine is a product of a highly differentiated experience, and tourists who visit wineries that produce wine seek to know the wine production process and have a unique experience with wine brands. These tourists who visit wine cellars seek information through specialized websites, blogs or magazines and highlight the role of word-of-mouth recommendations. Thus, this study aimed to investigate the influence of brand prestige, brand credibility, and brand experience on wine and wineries' word of mouth (WOM). It was carried out a cross-sectional study using a quantitative methodology. Data collected from a sample of 207 individuals were analyzed using PLS structural equation modeling using SMART PLS software. The main results obtained confirm that the credibility and prestige of the brands have a crucial role in the word of mouth of wine cellars.

Keywords: wineries, brand prestige, brand credibility, wine experience, tourism

1. Introduction

Wine experience has a positive influence on brand trust and satisfaction (Drennan, Bianchi, Cacho-Elizondo, Louriero, Guibert, and Proud, 2015), positively influencing the brand image (Madeira, Correia, and Filipe, 2019) and brand loyalty (Bruwer, Coode, Saliba, and Herbst, 2013). Santos, Ramos, Almeida, and Santos-Pavón (2019) add that wine tourism experiences are memorable, enriching, and stimulating experiences with a profound meaning, which is why they are crucial for wine tourism.

> *"A winery experience is considered to occur at the tasting room typically; however, in this article, a model is designed to address the issue that the experience starts from the initial perception when visitors arrive at the winery and finishes when they leave" (Bruwer, Coode, Saliba, and Herbst, 2013, p.400).*

The wine experience has gained a crucial role in tourism activity related to wine tourism (Ribeiro Dos Santos, 2021; Santos, Ramos, Almeida, and Santos-Pavón, 2019), as it allows to experience the destination itself (Ngan, 2019).

Wine tourism is classified as a form of special interest tourism and is a growing tourism activity, contributing to the economic development of wine regions (Vo Thanh and Kirova, 2018). With most goods and services, the general assumption is that price is the factor that influences the perceived quality of a wine (Augusto, Santos, and Santo, 2020). Consequently, the subjective experience of wine consumers is enhanced (Werner et al., 2021).

Our study, however, presents a different view. Thus, our study aims to research brand prestige and brand credibility as variables influencing wine consumer experience. Additionally, this study aims to research the influence of brand prestige, brand credibility, and brand experience on wine and wineries' word of mouth (WOM).

2. Literature review

2.1 Word of Mouth Communication (WOM)

Word of mouth (WOM) is a form of communication to advise and recommend visiting a specific winery very strongly (Bruwer and Reilly, 2006); it promotes the destination (Yen and Wang, 2020). For Jalilvand and Samiei (2012), WOM brings significant competitive advantages over other techniques and forms of communication in organizations because it is seen as independent from the company. WOM has a significant moderating effect on the relationships between brand image and brand attitude, driving brand equity (Ansary and Hashim, 2018).

Interpersonal communication or word of mouth (WOM) includes any information about a destination or destination object passed from one person to one or more people, either in person or through some means of communication (Bruwer and Reilly, 2006).

WOM gains even more strength when used in online media, as the "internet induces new ways of capturing, analyzing, interpreting, and managing the influence that one consumer may have on another" (Jalilvand and Samiei, 2012, p. 591). The study by Jalilvand and Samiei (2012) concludes that eWOM among tourists has significant, positive, and direct impacts on the attitude and behavioral intention of the other, creating a favorable image of the destination reducing promotional expenses.

Bruwer and Reilly (2006) point out that negative WOM will influence many more people than positive WOM. The study results by Xiong, Wang, and Yen (2021) reveal that visitor engagement have a significant and positive impact on satisfaction and word of mouth. This involvement implies that visitors understand the meanings and importance of wine culture, so managers must promote actions that increase the awareness and image of wine culture.

In their study of WOM and the cultural event of wine, Yen and Wang (2020) find that new experiences (novelty) influence perceived value, which influences satisfaction, which in turn influences WOM. The authors suggest that managers can foster more diverse, new experiences to improve tourists' perception and increase participants' willingness to recommend via WOM.

2.2 Brand prestige

The market is increasingly global, with prestige being a relevant indicator in terms of brand positioning; in this context, there is an opening for a brand positioned globally to achieve a strong level of prestige (Kapferer, 1994; Steenkamp, Batra, and Alden, 2003).

According to the literature, consumers tend to attribute quality and a more positive evaluation to brands when they associate prestige. This scenario also improves purchase intention increases trust, social status, and brand valuation. Thus, it becomes pertinent to work on brand prestige because the higher it is, the more impact it has on consumers (Baek, Kim, and Yu, 2010; Kazmi and Khalique, 2019; Kim, Stylidis, and Oh, 2019).

It should be noted that consumers who are more concerned with being valued by others in society are more likely to purchase prestige brands (Fenigstein, Scheier, and Buss, 1975; Lichtenstein, Ridgway, and Netemeyer, 1993; Truong, McColl, and Kitchen, 2009). Another pertinent fact is that consumers themselves prefer to buy a product or service that is identified as being of a prestigious brand, namely because they feel more valued in society because they associate it with a sign of social status, wealth, or power (Alden, Steenkamp, and Batra, 1999; Steenkamp et al., 2003).

Brand prestige is associated with the product's high status associated with a brand (Santo and Cardoso, 2021).

In this context, the relevance of quality and the consumer's involvement with the product is evident, as the consumer shows evidence of satisfaction when revealing a high level of involvement (Mittal, 1989; Suh and Youjae, 2006; Vigneron and Johnson, 1999). In tourism, it is essential to pay attention to the tourist destination and that the product carries tangible and intangible attributes. This product brings features such as price, design, image, brand, prestige. So, the tourist perception of quality, prestige, and brand image is significant (Dias and Cardoso, 2017).

Therefore, it will be tested the following hypothesis:

H1: Brand Prestige has positive impacts on word of mouth of wine and winery

2.3 Brand credibility

Consumers or tourists see the winery experience as something intangible and difficult to assess before the purchase, so it is influenced by the recommendation of others (Chocarro and Cortiñas, 2013) and brand credibility.

Increasingly wineries integrate "sustainability into their communication strategy to reinforce their brand and market positioning" (Sellers-Rubio and Nicolau-Gonzalbez, 2016, p. 96).

The notion of brand credibility was inspired by Erdem and Swait (1998), who examined consumer-based brand equity based on signaling theory. Brand credibility is defined as the trustworthiness of the information expressed by a brand; it means the way consumers perceive the brand and the value promises through the products it represents (Erdem and Swait, 2004; Erdem *et al.*, 2006, Santo and Cardoso, 2021).

This concept consists of two main components: 1) trustworthiness – consumer trust in what is promised and 2) expertise - ability in providing information about the company (Erdem and Swait, 1998, 2004; Nayeem, Murshed, and Dwivedi, 2019). Thus, brand credibility refers to the brand information that consumers evaluate through expertise or ability, which makes them trust or not trust it (Vidyanata, Sunaryo, and Hadiwidjojo, 2018). It has resulted from consumers' perceptions of the brand's services, experiences, and marketing strategies (website, events, advertising, etc.) (Dwivedi, Johnson, Wilkie, and Araujo-Gil, 2019). For building brand credibility, it is essential to spread information through marketing strategies (Erdem and Swait, 1998) because this credibility affects consumer choice of a brand (Erdem and Swait, 2004).

When credibility is high, consumers trust the brand more, generating a more positive attitude (Chin, Isa, and Alodin, 2019).

Some authors demonstrated that brand credibility impacts positive word-of-mouth (An et al., 2018), consumers' price sensitivity (Erdem, Swait, and Louviere, 2002), and it is an element of quality (Wu and Cheng, 2013).

Martín-Consuegra et al. (2018) consider that brand credibility contributes to overall corporate image and is also a predictor of customer loyalty (Folkvord et al., 2019).

Therefore, it will be tested the following hypothesis:

H2: Brand credibility has positive impacts on word of mouth of wine and winery

2.4 Wine Experience and WOM

Madeira, Correia, and Filipe (2019) explain the wine experience by four dimensions: the staff, interaction with the cellar door, education, and aesthetics. Santos, Ramos, Almeida, and Santos-Pavón (2019) and Ribeiro Dos Santos (2021) add to the dimension of the place the dimension of the landscape as an influencer of the wine experience and consider that the wine experience can be measured by the following dimensions: cultural experience, exciting experience, sensory appeal/experience, winescape, wine storytelling, and wine product/activity involvement.

Santos, Ramos, Almeida, and Santos-Pavón (2020) developed a scale to measure wine tourism experiences, considering four main dimensions: wine narrative, enthusiasm for wine tasting, involvement with wine, and the wine landscape and concluded that the winery narrative is one of the most relevant dimensions. "Wine storytelling appears as a most significant dimension because it visits the wine cellars begin and ends with the wine tour guide/winemaker/wine producer, where there are authentic stories related to wine and wine tourism, which wine tourists much appreciate." (Santos, Ramos, Almeida, and Santos-Pavón, 2020, p. 12).

In his study, in a holistic approach, Ribeiro Dos Santos (2021) argues that the winemaking experience comprises four main dimensions: the wine narrative, sensory emotion of wine, and involvement with wine and wine landscape.

For Santos, Caldeira, Santos, Oliveira, and Ramos (2019), the wine tourism experience influences the visitors' experience and recommendation intentions. Winery knowledge is closely related to the wine experience (Bianchi, 2015; Drennan, Bianchi, Cacho-Elizondo, Louriero, Guibert, and Proud, 2015). Leri and Theodoridis (2020) add that visitors with previous winery experience have a better perception of the experience, with positive emotions, generating greater satisfaction with the experience and willingness to recommend the experience.

A personal recommendation through the Word of Mouth (WOM) carries more weight than a declaration made by the winery (Bruwer and Reilly, 2006).

Thus, it will be testes the following:

H3: Wine brand experience has positive impacts on word of mouth of wine and winery

H4: Brand prestige has positive effects on wine Brand Experience

H5: Brand credibility has positive effects on wine Brand Experience

3. Methodology

The validation of the proposed model follows a survey conducted among wine consumers. This investigation was cross-sectional research with these consumers as a unit of analysis who answered a self-administered questionnaire. Their participation was selected by non-probabilistic sampling by convenience. The data was analyzed through the valid answers of 207 wine consumers, primarily male (66.3%), with ages between 21 and 40 years old in most cases (64.0%). Mostly of wine consumers has higher education qualifications (70.4%).

Data was collected through a self-administered survey, and we measured the constructs with items modified from previous studies, as we show in table 1. Hence, we used two items for brand credibility from Baek et al. (2010) to measure the constructs' items. We used three items from Baek et al. (2010) to measure brand prestige. The brand experience was measured with three items proposed by Pomarici et al. (2017). Wine and winery word of mouth was measured with four items from Quintal et al. (2015).

All the items used in this study were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

4. Results

For data analysis, Partial Least Squares - Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was chosen to estimate the conceptual model because it enables the researchers to assess causal relationships. The PLS-SEM is appropriate for exploratory research and does not require normality of data (Hair Jr et al., 2016). Additionally, PLS-SEM is executed in two steps. First, we analyzed the reliability and validity of the measurement model and analyzed the relations between constructs as suggested by Hair Jr et al. (2016). The PLS-Algorithm was executed on SMART PLS v3.3.2 (Ringle et al., 2015).

4.1 Common method bias

We collected responses from the same respondents, and common method bias was possible. Thus, we performed Harman's one-factor test (Podsakoff et al., 2003), with factor one representing 19.97% of the variance. Furthermore, we carry out a preliminary data analysis to validate VIF - Variance Inflation Factor. VIF values are ranged between 1,523 and 4,451, which is below the threshold value (VIF <5). Therefore, there is no multicollinearity. Accordingly, common method bias would not be a concern. Moreover, we analyzed the Skewness (Sk) and Kurtosis (Ku), and we saw that the items do not diverge from normality (Sk <3; Ku <7) (Hair et al., 2018).

4.2 Measurement model

The validity, reliability, and standardized loadings (λ) were analyzed. Therefore, table 1 shows that standardized item loadings are above the minimum threshold value of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2013), which were acceptable for further analysis.

Table 1: Items

Item	Code	λ	*t* values
Brand Credibility (α = 0.936; ρA = 0.939; CR = 0.969; AVE = 0.940)			
This brand is reliable.	CRD1	0,971**	134,747
This brand has a name you can trust.	CRD2	0,967**	106,652
Brand Prestige (α = 0.839; ρA = 0.862; CR = 0.902; AVE = 0.754)			
This brand of wine is prestigious.	PRT1	0,897**	60,372
This brand of wine is highly regarded by the population	PRT2	0,822**	21,266
This brand of wine is very sophisticated	PRT3	0,885**	50,747
Brand Experience (α = 0.915; ρA = 0.923; CR = 0.946; AVE = 0.854)			
I am interested in this wine.	EXP1	0,937**	71,689
Knowing this wine is very important to me	EXP2	0,909**	44,754
The experience with this wine is something important to me	EXP3	0,926**	67,842
Word of mouth (α = 0.915; ρA = 0.915; CR = 0.946; AVE = 0.854)			
I will suggest this wine to buy	WOM1	0,923**	71,247
I am happy to encourage family and friends to buy this wine	WOM2	0,935**	63,902
If you ask my advice, this wine and this winery are one of my recommendations for friends and family.	WOM3	0,915**	36,128

λ - Standardized Loadings; ** p <0.01; α = Cronbach's Alpha; AVE - Average Variance Extracted; CR - Composite Reliability

In addition, table 1 shows that Cronbach's alpha (α)(ranging from 0.839 to 0.936), average Variance extracted (AVE) (ranging from 0.754 to 0.940) and composite reliability (CR) (ranging from 0.902 to 0.969) are above the threshold values (AVE> 0.5; CR> 0.7) (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988, Bagozzi et al., 1991). These values showed convergent validity and reliability for all constructs.

To access the discriminant validity, first, we examine the Fornell and Larcker criteria (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), and we verified that the correlations between constructs are below than square root values in diagonals of the AVE (table 2).

Table 2: Discriminant validity - criteria from (Fornell and Larcker, 1981)

	CARD	EXP	PRINT	WOM
Brand Credibility (CRD)	0,969			
Brand Experience (EXP)	0,317	0,924		
Brand Prestige (PRT)	0,659	0,262	0,869	
Word of Mouth (WOM)	0,682	0,396	0,632	0,924

CRD = Brand Credibility; EXP = Brand Experience; PRT = Brand Prestige; WOM = Word of Mouth;

Second, we examined the discriminant validity through the cross-loadings criterion (Henseler et al., 2015). Table 3 shows a comparison of the column loadings, and each indicator exhibits that the indicator's loadings on its construct are higher in all cases compared to all its cross-loadings with other constructs.

Table 3: Cross loadings

	CRD	EXP	PRT	WOM
CRD1	0,971	0,315	0,658	0,683
CRD2	0,967	0,300	0,618	0,638
PRT1	0,725	0,248	0,897	0,606
PRT2	0,478	0,116	0,822	0,453
PRT3	0,491	0,290	0,885	0,567
EXP1	0,274	0,937	0,181	0,347
EXP2	0,297	0,909	0,274	0,325
EXP3	0,305	0,926	0,265	0,418
WOM1	0,654	0,313	0,596	0,923

	CRD	EXP	PRT	WOM
WOM2	0,602	0,433	0,592	0,935
WOM3	0,636	0,353	0,564	0,915

CRD = Brand Credibility; EXP = Brand Experience; PRT = Brand Prestige; WOM = Word of Mouth;

Finally, as the third step, the discriminant validity was examined through the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations and, as can be seen in the Table, the HTMT values are below 0.90 (Henseler et al., 2015). Therefore, discriminant has been established between variables.

	CARD	EXP	PRINT	WOM
Brand Credibility (CRD)				
Brand Experience (EXP)	0,341			
Brand Prestige (PRT)	0,732	0,284		
Word of Mouth (WOM)	0,736	0,429	0,711	

CRD = Brand Credibility; EXP = Brand Experience; PRT = Brand Prestige; WOM = Word of Mouth;

4.3 Structural model

To analyze the structural model, we examined the adjusted R^2 of the endogenous variables in our model, which are 0.554 for word of mouth. In addition, we obtained R^2= 0.106 for brand experience.

Following, we examined the results of the hypotheses tests by evaluating the significance of the path coefficients through bootstrapping procedure with 5000 subsamples. We display in Table 4 the results of hypotheses testing.

Table 4: Hypothesis test

					95% Confidence Interval		f^2	Result
Hyp.	Path	Std β	t value	p-value	Lower	Upper		
H1	PRT → WOM	0,305	3,597	0,000	0,132	0,466	0.118	Supported
H2	CRD → WOM	0,423	5,157	0,000	0,268	0,588	0.218	Supported
H3	EXP → WOM	0,182	3,243	0,001	0,070	0,292	0.067	Supported
H4	PRT → EXP	0,093	0,923	0,356	-0,096	0,300	0.005	Not Supported
H5	CRED → EXP	0,256	2,651	0,008	0,054	0,430	0.041	Supported

β = Standardized path coefficients; CRD = Brand Credibility; EXP = Brand Experience; PRT = Brand Prestige; WOM = Word of Mouth;

5. Discussion and conclusions

5.1 Discussion

The main goal of this study is analysing the role of brand credibility, prestige and wine experience in word of mouth of wine and winery. This research tested five hypotheses, and the results supported the research hypothesis framework.

H1 hypothesis verified that wine brand prestige influences word of mouth. According to Hair et al. (2016)*, f two* values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 for the significant independent variables represent weak, moderate, and substantial effects, respectively.

Therefore, we consider that brand prestige has positive and moderate effects on word of mouth of wine and wineries. This conclusion is also suggested by Dias and Cardoso (2017), who state that brand prestige influences word of mouth through brand value. Therefore, H1 was confirmed by our research.

Hypothesis H2 confirms that brand credibility has positive effects on word of mouth of wine and winery, and these effects are moderate. This confirmation of the hypothesis is related to the literature since positive attitudes towards the brand depend on brand credibility (Chin, Isa, and Aldoin, 2019) and impacts positively on word of mouth (An et al., 2018).

The wine tourism experience influences the recommendation intentions, and Hypothesis H3 also verifies that the effects of wine experience on word of mouth of wine and winery are positive, although weak.

Brand prestige is related to brand value, satisfaction, and brand experience (Santos, Caldeira, Oliveira, and Ramos, 2019). This research revealed no evidence confirming that brand prestige influences the wine experience. We considered that our research did not support H4 because the results did not reveal a high wine experience.

Although brand prestige does not influence wine experience, brand credibility has positive effects; however, these effects are considered weak. Even so, we consider our study supported hypothesis H5, and we consider that credibility is related to consumer choice and experience (Erdem and Swait, 2004).

5.2 Conclusions

Our research investigated the antecedents of wine and winery word of mouth and identified that brand prestige, credibility, and experience positively influence wine and winery word of mouth. Thus, we consider that the contributions of this study are relevant both theoretical and business.

We consider that this study reveals that brand perceptions influence the wine and winery word of mouth at a theoretical level. In this sense, our research found that brand prestige and brand credibility positively influence word of mouth.

Our research is relevant for wine tourism companies and wine producers as it identifies that brand marketing actions are relevant to enhance the prestige of wine brands and wine tourism company brands with the aim of wine consumers recommending the brands.

5.3 Limitations

In summary, we consider that our study is relevant; however, we present some research limitations. Thus, we observed that the sample is mainly young consumers. In addition, consumers claimed to have higher education qualifications. In this sense, we propose to conduct new studies with different samples that include older consumers.

Our study did not investigate subjective knowledge about wine. This variable may be relevant if included as a moderator in the present model. Thus, we suggest a research model that includes subjective knowledge about wine.

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Shift Work and Quality of Life on Tourism, Hospitality and Restaurant Industry: The Portuguese Context

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Abstract: This research aims to study the association between shift work and the quality of life of workers. On the one hand quality of life includes several aspects of life (e.g. personal, family, marital or social) and serves as an important aspect in understanding the well-being of individuals in relationship with work life. On the other hand, shift work can be defined as any work organization of working hours that differs from the traditional diurnal work period. Furthermore, they are two factors strongly related, considering the increasing use of shift work in industry and services, especially from tourism, hospitality, and restaurant sectors, where shift work has the potential to disrupt different aspects of quality life. The main objective of this study is to characterize the quality of life of shift workers in the tourism, hospitality, and restaurant industry. More specifically to characterize their workers' personal life, family life, marital life, and social life. Through an online questionnaire, data were collected from 122 shift workers linked to the tourism, hotel, and restaurant industry in Portugal. Data were analysed with IBM SPSS 27.0. Results showed significant differences between workers from fixed and rotative shifts for the personal life satisfaction level whereas workers from fixed shifts reported higher levels of satisfaction. Workers in the morning shift reported higher levels of personal life and family life satisfaction than workers that are not in the morning shifts. There are no differences between the satisfaction levels for workers from the afternoon, night, or weekend shifts. There are no differences among the marital life satisfaction according to the kind of shift (fixed or rotative; morning, afternoon, night, or weekend shift). This study provides several insights into the shift work theory and practice and contributes to knowledge of how human resource management will be reconfigured some practices to support the quality of life of shift workers in this industry. Limitations and future research suggestions are drawn in the last part of the paper.

Keywords: quality of work-life, sift work, quality of social life, quality of personal life, quality of marital life

1. Introduction

Most jobs, including those related to tourism, hospitality, and the restaurant services, operate on a continuum timetable. The shift work has grown rapidly covering 24 hours per day, with different workers on different shifts (Martins, Amaro & Silva, 2021). In many countries, a considerable number of workers could be considered associated with a non-traditional daytime shift (Wickwire et al, 2017; McElroy, Olney, Hunt, Glennon, 2020). According to the Eurostat website, between 2011 and 2019 shift work has been growing almost 1% (from 17,5% to 18,3%), although in 2020 this value decreased by 17,7% it is possible to explain this decrease can be associated with the covid-19 pandemic.

Despite growing interest in the concepts of shift work and quality life, the interaction between both is not well understood, especially the quality of life of workers linked with tourism, hospitality, and restaurant services (Penny & Joanne, 2013; Sun, XU, Köseoglu & Okumus, 2020; Wang, Berbekova & Uysal, 2022), missing empirical findings within this services sector related to job quality and which job characteristics make a "good or a bad" job (Findlay et al, 2013; Kalleberg, 2016; Myhill, Richards & Sang, 2021).

According to International Labour Organisation (ILO), good work is defined as "opportunities for work that are productive and deliver a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organise and participate in the decisions with affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all men and women" (ILO, 2017, n.p.).Thus, job quality represents a core issue in Human Resource Management (HRM) and is associated with employee satisfaction and motivation (Grote & Guest, 2017; Myhill et al., 2021). On the one hand, job quality is related to job security, safe working conditions, job satisfaction such as wages and benefits levels (Myhill et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2022). On the other hand, job quality can be influenced by individual and contextual factors, including worker characteristics and preferences as well as the broader labour market context (Loughlin & Murray, 2013; Myhill et al., 2021), such as career advancement.

Several studies (e.g. Kim et al., 2016; Martins et al., 2021; Penny & Joanne, 2013, Perrucci et al., 2007, Sirgy & Lee, 2018) have been raised concerning the quality of life of workers who perform their professional activities in the shift work regime. Furthermore, tourism, hospitality, and restaurant activities worldwide has been confronted with the problem of attracting and retaining talent, where turnover rates are high and employees leave for reasons including low job satisfaction, poor working conditions and a lack of work motivation (Penny & Joanne, 2013). Thus, this research would like to understand whether shift workers tourism, hospitality, and restaurant services have a good quality of life in order to contribution to enhance the job satisfaction of shift workers and to reduce their turnover intention.

This research aims to characterize the quality of life of shift workers in the tourism, hospitality, and restaurant services. More specifically to characterize their workers' personal life, family life, marital life, and social life.

The next section presents the main literature about the relationship between shift work and the quality of life of workers, particularly on tourism, hospitality, and restaurant activities. Then, on section three outlines, we present the methodological approach, and section four presents the main findings of the study. Lastly, we discuss the main results, and present at the end the main conclusions, limitations and some of the directions for future research.

2. Literature review

2.1 Shift work

Shift work refers to a wide variety of working time arrangements, including all working hours that are outside the normal daytime ones which may consequently lead to a different impact on employee's performance and well-being (Dall'Ora, Ball; Recio-Saucedo & Griffiths, 2016).

McElroy and colleagues (2020) identified some studies (e.g. Proper et al., 2016) about shift work, including workers from various industries and countries, and found strong evidence to support the relationship of shift work to weight gain, overweight, and impaired glucose tolerance. This risk rises when the job is doing night shift work and with rotating shift schedules as well as increase the risk of operational errors and accidents (McElroy et al., 2020; Sun et. al, 2020), fatigue, disturbed sleep, performance and safety (Dall'Ora et al., 2016; Mélan & Cascino, 2022; Wang et al., 2022). Furthermore, shift workers tend to be more difficulties in their family life, marital life (Perrucci et al. 2007).

Mélan & Cascino (2022) suggest that the main short-term effects of shift work include reduced sleep quality and daytime alertness for night and morning work as a result of circadian misalignment and a sleep debt with early starts of morning work.

In organisational context, shift work schedules according to ergonomic criteria are associated with a switch from slow to fast and from backward to forward-rotating systems, and self-scheduling improved health and work-life balance (Bambra et al., 2008, cited by Mélan & Cascino, 2022).

In recent years, the concept of work-life balance has become an important issue. According to Sun and colleagues (2020), work-life balance means the context of work and the activities outside of work. Thus, balance "is a metaphor and the state of work-life balance in an individual's subjective perception that his or her work and personal life are compatible according to personal values and preferences" (p. 2). Sun and colleagues (2020, based on Clark, 2000:751) clarifies that "work-life balance is generally measured by work satisfaction, life satisfaction and role conflict".

Considering that tourism, hospitality and restaurant activities are characterized by 24-h operations, shift work is common for several services. Thus, individuals who work on these services have more difficulties maintaining a work-life balance and a healthy lifestyle (Kim et al., 2016; Perrucci et al., 2007). Furthermore, shift work is frequently associated with rotative shift and night work and as referred by Kim et al. (2016) these regimes of shifts indicate more problems related to the worker *physical and psychological* well-being.

2.2 Quality of Life in the work environment

Quality of life in the work environment as introduced in decade 1970 is associated with conditions for the working life of workers (Penny & Joanne, 2013). Several researchers define the concept of quality of work-life as on specific facets of work-life in terms of life satisfaction, leisure, and well-being beyond the workplace and work-related behaviours such as absenteeism, job involvement, intention to quit, and organisational commitment (Ouppara & Sy, 2012; Penny & Joanne, 2013). Furthermore, Penny & Joanne (2013:349) define quality work-life "as the favourable conditions, opportunity to use and develop human capacities, opportunities for growth, development, and advancement, social integration to the work environment, constitutionalism, social relevance, and work-life balance".

Quality of work-life refers to a person's subjective perception of his/her work and the total working environment such as the compensation and development opportunities (Penny & Joanne, 2013; Sirgy et al., 2001; Sun et al., 2020). As refed by Sun and colleagues, (2020:3) "overall quality of life of individuals is a cognitive evaluation of satisfaction with various life domains such as physical health and psychological and social relationships". Good quality of life can increase job satisfaction and task performance, reduce absenteeism and turnover rate (Penny & Joanne, 2013; Sun et al., 2020). Although, when the quality of life is bad tasks, physical work environment, social environment in the organisation, and work-life balance are affected (Penny & Joanne, 2013). Thus, quality of work-life allows giving to workers the opportunity to participate in managing their work, make decisions about their jobs, as well as to receive more from their jobs (Ouppara & Sy, 2012).

Quality of life in the work environment has gained growing interest and importance among researchers and practitioners linked to the tourism, hospitality, and restaurant services, considering the high work stress among employees from these services, especially those who work on shift work. Thus, on the one hand, Penny & Joanne (2013) suggest that a shift work system leaves little time for the non-work environment such as family, friends, and their own health. Non-work life and work-life are two important fields affecting one another (Erdamar & Demirel, 2014). On the other hand, Erdamar and Demirel (2014) underline that these workers report more fatigue, work stress, worse performance and feel less competent at work, and consequently more dissatisfaction and a greater desire to leave the organisation. Furthermore, when shift workers are not given the freedom by the organisation to develop their work based on flexible working hours by choosing the desired shift, but instead are required to be fully available to work fixed shifts and especially night shifts, the quality of life at work tends to be affected.

Therefore, this paper analyses the workers' perception of professional, personal, family, social, and marital dimensions according to the kind of shift performed: fixed or rotative; morning, afternoon, night, and weekend shifts.

3. Design method

This study uses a quantitative methodology having a cross-sectional and descriptive nature to answer the research question "What is the relation between shift work and several dimensions of working life quality?.

3.1 Instrument

To answer the objectives of the study a questionnaire was built. The questionnaire had 27 closed questions organised in 2 sections. The first section was related to sociodemographic characterization with questions such as gender, age, marital status, kind of shift performed. The second group aimed to characterize the satisfaction level of the workers with the kind of shift in personal life, family life, marital life, and social life. The questions were 4-points Likert scale varying from 1 – very unsatisfied to 4 – very satisfied. We choose to use a 4-points Likert scale to have the same number of positive and negative options. None of the questions were mandatory. Therefore, participants could choose not to answer the question.

3.2 Sample

The population of our study was shift workers linked to the tourism, hotel, and restaurant service in Portugal. Therefore, using a convenience sample, participated in our study 122 shift workers, 61 (50%) males, and 61 (50%) females. Regarding their marital status, most of them were married (n=60, 49%) or single (n=57, 47%). They had a graduation (n=54, 45%) or high school graduation (n=55, 45%).

Regarding the kind of shift performed, 90 (74%) participants had rotative shifts and 32 (26%) participants had fixed shifts. Additionally, we asked during which period they had done the sift and workers could do several kinds of shifts whereas 112 (92%) have the morning shift, 90 (74%) the afternoon shift, 46 (38%) the night shift and 68 (56%) the weekend shift.

3.3 Procedure and data analysis

The questionnaire was elaborated to achieve the study objectives. It was sent an e-mail explaining the objectives with the questionnaire link. After the application of the questionnaires, a database was built using IBM SPSS, version 27.0, and all the answers were inserted. After entering the data, we proceeded to its analysis.

The analysis phase began with the descriptive analysis, whereas central tendency measures and dispersion measures were calculated for all the variables. To test our hypothesis, it was calculated composite variables for personal life, family life, and social life. These composite variables were the mean of the several items evaluating the dimension. Several t-tests for independent samples were performed to analyse the differences between the kind of shift for professional, personal, social, and family dimensions. For analysing the differences in the marital dimension, Chi-square tests were performed. The confidence level used was 95%.

4. Results

Regarding the satisfaction with the several life dimensions, our results showed that our participants had a positive satisfaction with these dimensions. These variables can range from 1 to 4. The most positive satisfaction is with social ($\bar{x}$= 2,67, SD=.72) and family ($\bar{x}$=2,67, SD=,93) and the less positive is the personal dimension ($\bar{x}$=2,27, SD=.64). The average of satisfaction with the professional dimension is 2,75 (SD=.66). When considering marital satisfaction, 81 participants (66%) are unsatisfied with this dimension.

To analyse possible differences according to fixed or rotative shifts, several independent t-tests were performed. Our results showed significant differences for the personal dimension (Z=10.32, p=.002) whereas the workers who performed fixed shifts reported higher satisfaction levels ($\bar{x}$=2,53). For professional dimension (Z=.94, p=.333), family dimension (Z=.1.19, p=.27), or social dimension (Z=.16, p=.69), there were no significant differences between fixed and rotative shifts. For the marital status, a Chi-square test was performed. The results did not show any difference between groups (X^2=.070, p=.791)

Concerning the differences in each kind of shift, our results did not show any significant difference. Table 1 presents the results of one-sample t-tests for the morning shift.

Table 1: Independent t-test considering the morning shift for professional, personal, family, and social dimension

	Z	Sig.
Professional	.152	.697
Personal	.263	.606
Family	1,607	.207
Social	.001	.975

Regarding the marital dimension, there are no significant differences for performing or not performing the morning shift (X^2=.777, p=.378).

Table 2 shows that there are no significant differences for the afternoon shift.

Table 2: Independent t-test considering the afternoon shift for professional, personal, family, and social dimension

	Z	Sig.
Professional	.003	.959
Personal	.068	.795
Family	.144	.705
Social	.073	.788

Regarding the marital dimension, there are no significant differences for performing or not performing the morning shift (X^2=.170, p=.68).

Table 3 shows that there are no significant differences for the night shift.

Table 3: Independent t-test considering the night shift for professional, personal, family, and social dimension

	Z	Sig.
Professional	3,327	.071
Personal	.046	.830
Family	.291	.590
Social	1,537	.218

Regarding the marital dimension, there are no significant differences for performing or not performing the morning shift (X^2=1.398.170, p=.237).

Table 4 shows that there are no significant differences for the weekend shift.

Table 4: Independent t-test considering the weekend shift for professional, personal, family, and social dimension

	Z	Sig.
Professional	.626	.430
Personal	.974	.326
Family	2,622	.108
Social	.506	.478

Regarding the marital dimension, there are no significant differences for performing or not performing the morning shift (X^2=.464, p=.496).

5. Discussion and conclusions

This study aimed to characterize the quality of life of shift workers in tourism, hospitality, and restaurant services. Shift work is a very common practice in tourism and hospitality activities. Moreover, previous research has defined quality of work-life as a person's subjective perception of his/her work and the total working environment such as the compensation and development opportunities (Penny & Joanne, 2013; Sirgy et al., 2001; Sun et al., 2020).

Therefore, most of our participants performed rotative shifts mainly in the morning and in the afternoon period. Regarding the satisfaction with the quality of work-life, we can observe that most of our workers reported a positive satisfaction level with the personal, professional, social, and family dimensions of this quality of life. These results did not reinforce previous studies that associate the shift work to lower quality of life and lower physical and psychological well-being (cf. Mélan & Cascino, 2022; Kim et al., 2016). Although we observe different results for the satisfaction level of the marital dimension, most of our workers reported that they were not satisfied with their marital quality of life. This result is in line with the Perrucci et al. (2007) findings.

Regarding the quality of work-life differences according to the kind of shift performed we only observed significant results for the personal dimension of the quality of work-life. Our results showed that workers performing the fixed shift have a higher perception of their personal quality of life. Furthermore, when considering the several shifts schedules, we did not observe significant differences in any dimension of their quality of work-life. These results are contradictory to most studies in this field. We can raise some possibilities to understand this issue. One of our main arguments is the fact that most of our workers are performing rotative shifts during the morning and the afternoon period. So, we are considering periods of working hours similar to a current work schedule. On the other hand, most of the studies associated less quality of life to the female gender and to the need for more time to take care of the children. In our study, we have an equal gender representation, and a significant number of workers are single, therefore, with less probability of having difficulties with work-life balance and reporting higher levels of quality of work-life (e.g Albertsen et al., 2008; Sirgy & Lee, 2018)

5.1 Limitations and suggestions for future research

The study is limited in terms of the kind of shift performed, that is, it is based on a modest sample of fixed shift workers and likened with the night shift. Findings are also limited in terms of marital dimension which have no significant differences on several kinds of shift. Thus, we suggest that future research includes more balanced among the several kinds of shifts and focus one sample exclusively on married shift workers. Consequently, a future longitudinal study could help understand, maybe, if more seniority on shift work regime, age group, and other demographics characteristics affecting satisfaction with the several life dimensions of these shift workers. In addition, a comparison between traditional and shift workers could be made to explore differences in the quality of life of workers.

5.2 Final conclusions

The findings provide a better understanding of insight related to the quality of life of shift workers. In this study, on the one hand, shift workers are more satisfied with professional, social, and family life but reported less satisfaction with personal life dimensions. Moreover, most of the workers are not satisfied with their marital quality of life.

Our results did not show significant differences between performing the rotative or the fixed sift work with the satisfaction of several dimensions of their quality of life. Although our results showed significant differences for the type of shift work in the personal life dimension, the workers from the fixed shift reported higher personal satisfaction levels for professional.

Considering the shifting schedules – morning, afternoon, night, or afternoon- there were no significant differences in the satisfaction of the workers with the several dimensions of their quality of life.

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The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Portuguese Events: The Case of Northern Portugal

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Abstract: Events, as forms of leisure and tourism, have had an exponential growth, visible in academic studies, but also as a new form of communication. Acting as important tools for territorial dynamization, they are assumed as generators of development opportunities for a region and leverage the positioning of a strong and positive image for tourist destinations. COVID-19 has had an impact on almost all aspects of our life. Many industries have faced significant revenue losses and contracted in terms of their growth and, naturally, one of the worst affected by the pandemic was the events industry. This pandemic crisis has introduced an unparalleled level of doubts regarding the type of events that will take place in the coming years and how they will be produced. Also, with restrictions and a population less willing to be in the physical presence of others, it's important to understand how participants are facing the possibility to attend future events. This research study aims to investigate and understand the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the tourism sector, particularly on the events industry, especially in the North of Portugal. It is also analysed how Portuguese were affected by the cancellation and/or postponement of events and also how they anticipate the future of this area. It is also analysed the risk and fear management and its relationship with the pandemic. In methodological terms we present a literature review to support the theoretical basis of the ongoing research work. We also used secondary sources of information, namely studies carried out among entrepreneurs of the sector, to identify supply concerns. In addition, an online survey was applied, via email and social networks, using snowball sampling. The study allowed us to collect data on how the Portuguese have been affected and what their expectations are regarding alternatives and the return to face-to-face events. The results show the importance of managing the risks, the resilience and adaptability of professionals and participants to a new paradigm in the events industry.

Keywords: events industry, impacts, Coronavirus (Covid-19), Portugal

1. Introduction

The contribution of events, in their various aspects, cultural, recreational, sports or leisure, are a strong attraction and an increasingly relevant element associated with the competitiveness of tourist destinations.

The Covid-19 pandemic brought with it several negative impacts that affect numerous areas of the labour market and, as many other industries, live events venues around the world were forced to close to prevent the spread of infection. As the event industry is connected with other sectors, including the hotels that receive participants, the aviation that transports them, the companies and suppliers involved in their organization, the catering and the spaces of fun in the places where the events take place, hundreds of companies and workers have been affected (Fox, 2020).

Since the beginning of the year 2020, events have been cancelled or rescheduled all over the world and this is a scenario that continued the following year. The pandemic generated a health outbreak and an unprecedented economic crisis on a global scale. It affected multiple sectors of activity of which the event industry, particularly targeted, since it only makes sense and exists when there is public.

In this context, this research work was developed in order to understand the impact of Covid-19 on the tourism sector, particularly in the events industry, by trying to see how the Portuguese, especially in northern Portugal, were affected by the cancellation and/or postponement of events. At the same time, it was intended to know how the future of this area of events is anticipated.

In the first part we review the literature on some concepts related to the events sector, referring to the environment created by the pandemic and what impacts have been observed in the sector. We also analyse and reflect on risk management and its relationship with the pandemic.

The second part analyses the results of the survey conducted in July 2020, as well as those of other studies carried out by various entities in different regions, with the same objective of bringing some light to the situation of the events industry induced by Covid-19. Finally, the main conclusions of the study are presented, as well as its limitations and directions that research in this field may take in the future.

2. Methodology

This study was conducted using primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were obtained through an online survey, with the aim of obtaining the perspective of demand. The questionnaire was designed by the authors, based on the literature review. However, since this is a recent topic, no bibliography was found to adapt a pre-existing questionnaire, so it was necessary to use the knowledge and experience of the authors in these subjects in order to create it.

The survey form was divided into two parts. The first part refers to the sociodemographic framework of the sample. The second consists of multiple-answer questions regarding the perceptions of the Portuguese towards the events scheduled in Portugal that have changed due to the coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19) and their future perspectives.

The sample was selected using the snowball sampling technique, a non-probabilistic sampling technique, in which individuals selected to be studied invite new participants from their network of friends and acquaintances.

The survey was shared online, via email and social media, for a period of three weeks between 4 and 24 July 2020. A total of 187 responses were obtained, of which 181 were considered valid. Invalid responses reported situations where respondents confused events with travel. The data obtained were later analysed using IBM SPSS v26 software.

Secondary data were obtained through the bibliographic review of scientific articles available in several platforms, selected according to the relevance of the title, abstract and keywords.

Due to the lack of published articles on this very recent theme, newspaper articles were also scrutinized, as well as surveys and various studies conducted by official entities, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) or the APECATE (Portuguese Association of Congresses, Tourism Animation and Events Companies). These secondary sources of information, namely the studies carried out among entrepreneurs in the sector, aimed to identify supply concerns.

Based on the data analysis, we perspective the perception of the Portuguese regarding the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and what is the near future of the sector.

3. Literature review: Event perspective

An event is a phenomenon that can be classified or categorised in different ways based on its size, shape and content, being very important for tourist's destinations, as they can generate a variety of benefits. By being unique and unrepeatable, those who experience them intend to be part of this unique moment, which will never happen again (Getz, 2007).

There are several types of events that can be classified, among others, as to their typologies and their dimension and function. Regarding typologies, i.e. the element that distinguishes them and makes them different, they are grouped into cultural celebrations; political and state; arts and entertainment; business and trade; educational and scientific; sport competition; recreational and private events (Getz, 2007; 2008).

With regard to the dimension and function, with implications for the experience and impacts it originates, the following stand out: mega-events, big events, affecting all communities, countries and continents, less frequent and only comparable, for example, to the London or Beijing Olympic Games (Müller, 2015); major-events, may involve tradition and symbolism, attract a number of nations; hallmarks, larges in scale, intrinsically linked to the community and quickly identified as members of a place, as is the case of the Tour de France; Local or Community Events, small in scale and size, which celebrate aspects of the community livelihoods (Getz, 2008).

There are several effects impacts on the community or the region that could be observed not only by economic aspects, but also by taking into consideration personal, social, political and cultural impacts. As for the impacts at a personal level, they affect individuals as participants in an event and those who do not participate feel their impact. The social, cultural and political impacts occur, especially when economically the local community is benefited by the influence that the event generates in tourism. Also, by the interaction it generates with the local population and by its participation in the event, but also by the effect created by the media.

The economic impacts are more visible in large-scale events as they generate infrastructure investments, which can be beneficial, but it can also contribute to the building of infrastructure that becomes useless after the event. It also generates a positive economic impact on tourism and all the activities that revolve around the event, such as accommodation, restaurants and tourist attractions. However, the opposite may happen, given the excessive concentration of activity at the event site, which translates into a negative and visible environmental impact visible in the increased production of waste, in the incorrect management of the territory, due to the construction of equipment, and in the pollution caused by travel. Thus, the costs and benefits of organizing an event should be weighted as potential transformers of places.

In general, events correspond to strategies for the development and promotion of destinations, contributing to improve their tourist image. As tourist attractions they can allow visitors to stay longer and residents not to travel out, spending money locally (Getz, 2007; Golob and Jakulin, 2014; Sutton, 2016; Wong, Xu, Tan and Wen, 2019).

With the global growth of events the ability to offer different experiences is essential for the event to remain relevant and competitive (Lockstone-Binney and Ong, 2019).

Virtual events, although different, do not fail to add value to consumers (Getz, 2008) and perhaps become the norm. The pandemic by Covid-19 will lead to, at least, a paradigm change, as happened after 9/11 (Young, 2020).

4. Risk management and Covid-19

The risk is the likelihood of a particular hazard causing injury and, if they do occur, how serious they may be. In this sense, the first responsibility of those organising an event is to ensure the safety of workers, participants and all who can potentially be affected by the event. To anticipate this, risk assessment is essential (Conway, 2008).

In 2015, the World Health Organization produced, alongside existing legislation on mass concentrations, a guide on public health at mass events. It provides guidance on risk management for various types of incidents and risk situations, including contagious infectious diseases (WHO, 2015).

The risk depends on several factors. The typology of the event, its duration and size, the location and conditions of the venue, catering, hygiene, the possibility of spreading diseases in the participants' countries of origin and in the country where the event is held. Therefore, in the planning phase of the event a risk assessment should be done, and the action plan should be drawn up and tested, shared with stakeholders and implemented during the event. The entire process must be monitored by local health authorities and communicated to staff and participants (WHO, 2015).

Everyone should be aware of their own vulnerability to the possibility of being infected and becoming potential agents of infection (Petersen et al., 2020). Measures such as social distancing and frequent hand washing can reduce the risk of infection (Petersen et al., 2020; WHO, 2015), but if this occurs, specific international and national standards of action should be applied.

The last known pandemics were H1N1 and SARS-COV-1 (2003). Although they did not have the impact of SARS-COV-2, several events were eventually cancelled in Canada, Singapore and the launch of the marketing campaign for the 2008 Olympic Games was also postponed (Mason, Grabowski and Du, 2005).

As far as the event industry is concerned, infections such as Covid-19 can be transmitted in gatherings, first during the trip, then while the event is taking place, and when they return home, they can carry the virus back to their home community. In view of this, international and national health organizations have prepared a set of guidelines for the events sector (WHO, 2020).

In Portugal, the Direção Geral de Saúde - Directorate-General for Health (DGS) published on 28 February 2020 a set of recommendations for public and mass events, which also refers to the risk assessment and advises some procedures in order to minimize it, namely the creation of a contingency plan and procedures that reduce the risk of contagion (DGS, 2020a). On March 16, it again published a guideline for mass events, but this time advises the postponement and cancellation of events, as a preventive measure to spread the disease and prohibits gatherings of more than 100 people (DGS, 2020b). A few days later, on March 19, following the implementation of the State of Emergency and several restrictions, all events in Portugal were postponed and cancelled (Presidência da República, 2020). The same has happened all over the world, which caused strong economic and social impacts, both nationally and personally (McCloskey et al., 2020).

In April, the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) conducted a survey of event professionals and obtained 1,776 responses. Many of the respondents said they were using this forced stop period to rethink the future of events, digitally and in-person. The survey results reported that the events planned over the next three months had been cancelled (87%) or postponed (66%), with the exception of those scheduled for the end of June and July, and there were even some that had already been cancelled for 2021. 25% of the events had not yet been rescheduled and those that were moved, was to dates after the summer and for the first months of 2021.

The main reasons presented for doing so were travel restrictions, mandatory social distancing, participant cancellation, worry and fear. Only 18% of respondents moved events to online platforms and 52% did so partially. Of all respondents, 400 said they had suffered economic impacts and were concerned about their business workers.

Regarding the future, they considered that it would be a combination of face-to-face and digital, because people will be hesitant to travel (44%) and certain events, such as exhibitions, are not yet technologically adapted to the virtual system (PCMA, 2020). They also considered that this was a time for companies to improve their skills, particularly in the field of digital technology. In the future they will further enhance hygiene measures and the economic aspects of events. They expected to be back in business in six to nine months (PCMA, 2020).

In Portugal, the industry's concern was evident. On February 17, 2020, there was still no record of postponed or cancelled events (Event Point, 2020b), but the situation quickly changed. A month later, APECATE recorded 90% of events, of its members, cancelled and losses of 300 million euros (Event Point, 2020a; Sousa, 2020b).

Many companies saw all events postponed or cancelled in a short time and the entire value chain was affected, persisting the doubt as to how long the situation would last. Added to this was the uncertainty of the future, of knowing under what conditions they would return, because countries will recover at different paces and, certainly, venues and suppliers will not be enough to respond to rescheduling in the last quarter of the year in question. At the same time there will be no public available to participate in events every day. In addition, all economic sectors have been affected, which means that the budget of companies for the organization of events will be limited in the short and medium term (Sousa, 2020a; 2020c).

Meanwhile, international and national industry associations rushed to provide information dedicated to Covid-19, scheduled webinars, held online trainings and promoted debates to understand the impacts, opportunities and future of events (Event Point, 2020a; 2020b). However, Dan Welsh, CEO of *Destinations International*, believes that new forms of virtual meeting have emerged, something that is likely to remain, at least in the MICE segment, but will also highlight the need to be together. Opportunities and new ways of planning events have arisen, as from now on companies are likely to establish plans B and C, being more precarious in case of sudden change of scenery (Salameh, 2020a). Craig McGee, founder of Panoptic Events, shares the same opinion on technology and believes that it is time to stop and rethink companies, bet on qualification and strengthen relationships between suppliers and customers (Salameh, 2020b).

June 1 marked the reopening of a few venues, concert halls, naturally adapted to a new normal (Event Point, 2020c). In order to understand consumers' future intentions regarding festivals, Festicket conducted a European survey of 110,000 consumers. The main results note that 82% of respondents intended to go to a festival in the next six months and only 11% estimated that they would do so between seven and twelve months, and even a smaller percentage (1%) would do so within a year. The majority of respondents (60%) would be willing to attend national and international music events in 2021. Regarding the duration of the event, 83% were available to attend a one-day festival and 68% a weekend. The concern with the hygiene, cleaning and disinfection conditions became very important factors for consumers, as well as the guarantee of social distancing and the possibility of having the ticket price refunded when the event is cancelled. During the confinement period, 60% said they had attended a live event online and 58% would be willing to pay for it (Festicket, 2020).

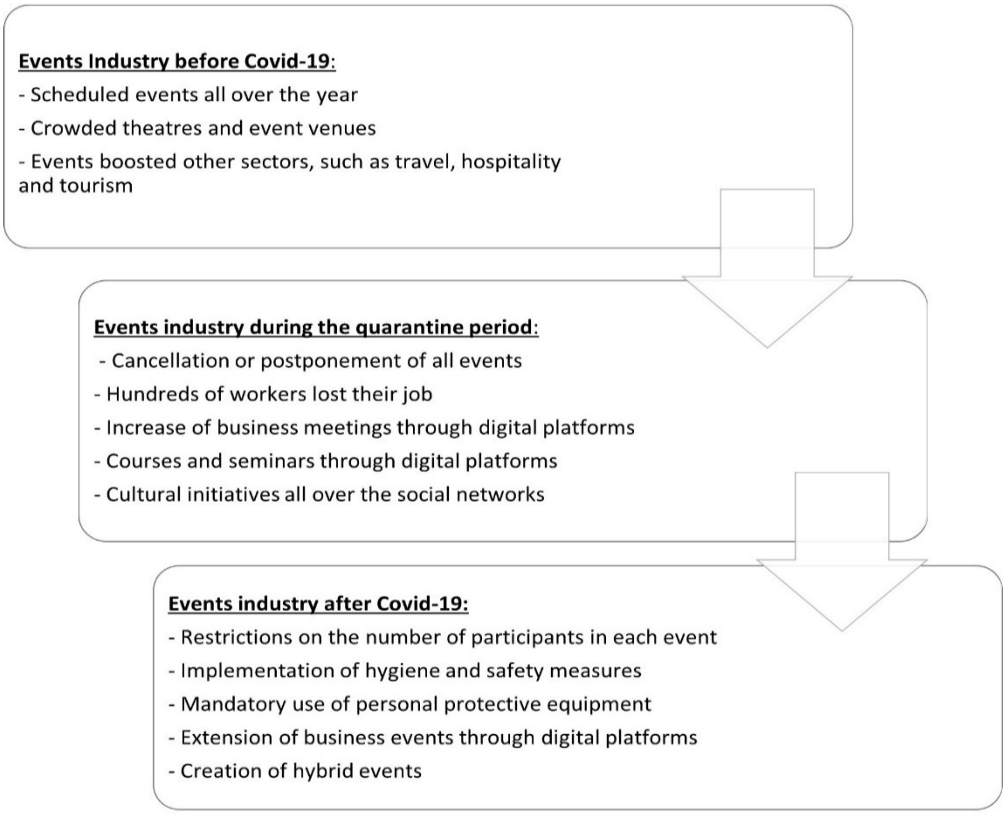

Figure 1: Covid-19 Impacts overview: Elaborated by authors

In order to better understand the evolution of the events industry before, during and after the first confinement, we built a scheme (Figure 1) that can synthesise and clarify the impact of the pandemic on Covid-19.

5. Findings

As mentioned above, the survey form was developed in Google search management application called Google Forms. It was organized in two parts: the first one related to the socio-demographic framework and the second one with multiple-answer questions, aimed at the perceptions of the Portuguese regarding the scheduled events that were changed due to the coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19) and the respondents' future perspectives.

Since the survey was made public, people from different locations in Portugal responded, although our focus was on the Northern region, which in fact accounted for 91.2% of respondents.

Of the 181 questionnaires that we considered valid, 56.9% were answered by females and 43.1% were male.

The majority of respondents (37.6%) were between the ages of 20 and 29, followed by the age group between 40 and 49 years (22.1%), 50-59 (18%), 30-39 (13%), equal or over 60 (7%) and only 2% for those under 20.

Regarding the area of residence, 91.2% of the respondents were residents in the Porto and North region. The rest was divided among the remaining geographical regions, with at least one valid questionnaire being obtained in each, except in Madeira, where no questionnaire was answered.

Most Portuguese who answered the questionnaire (87.8%) had planned to attend an event that changed due to the pandemic: 51.9% related to festivals, concerts and/or shows; 44.8% to social events, such as weddings, birthdays and/or parties; 24.3% to congresses, seminars and workshops; 23.8% to sport events and 18.8% to fairs and exhibitions. Only 3.3% of respondents mentioned other events, mainly religious events (Table 1).

Table 1: Distribution by type of events that have changed. Elaborated by authors.

Event Type	Frequency	%
Congresses/seminars/workshops	44	24,3%
Sports events	43	23,8%
Social events (weddings, birthdays, parties)	81	44,8%
Fairs/exhibitions	34	18,8%
Festivals/concerts/shows	94	51,9%
Others	6	3,3%

Most of the events would take place in Porto and North region (61.3%), followed by the region of Lisbon and Tagus Valley (11.0%) and only Alentejo region did not registered any event compromised by the pandemic (Figure 2).

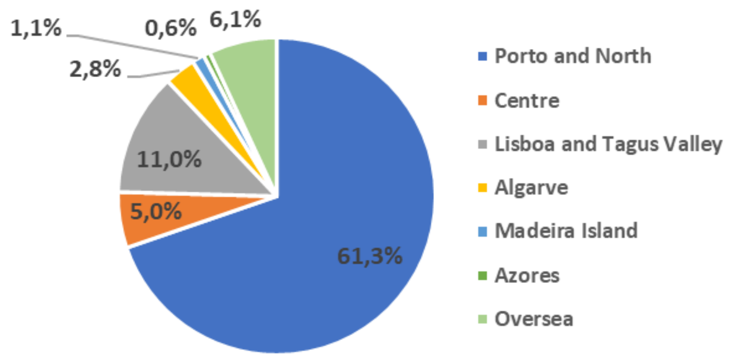

Figure 2: Distribution of planned events by geographical location. Elaborated by authors.

The percentage of cancelled events was the same as that of postponed events (41.4%) and 2.2% were replaced with an online version. Some respondents (2.8%), however, stated that they still did not know what the decision of the promoter would be regarding the event or, that the event took place without an audience.

84.5% of respondents who saw events changed considered the decision to be right. Most respondents had not yet paid for the events (61.3%), but those who had already done so saw the events postponed without a refund (14.4%), or postponed but with the choice, between accepting the new date or being refunded (8.3%). However, only 2.8% were effectively reimbursed.

During the period of confinement and up to the date of the survey, 47% of individuals had participated in online events (Table 2), as opposed to 53% who said they had not.

Table 2: Typology of online events in which participants took part**.** Elaborated by authors.

Event Type	Frequency	%
Congresses/seminars/workshops	28	15,5%
Sports events	8	4,4%
Social events (weddings, birthdays, parties)	15	8,3%
Fairs/exhibitions	4	2,2%
Festivals/concerts/shows	33	18,2%
Courses	41	22,7%
Webinar	40	22,1%
Others	2	1,1%

Of the 181 respondents, 112 considered that online events are viable (61.9%); 21 did not agree (11.6%) and 48 were unsure (26.5%).

Regarding the amount they would be willing to pay to attend or participate in online initiatives, 46.4% would not be willing to pay, 19.3% would be willing to pay between €6 and €10, 18.2% would pay up to €5, 9.4% between €11 and €6.6% and 6.6% would pay more than €20 (Figure 3).

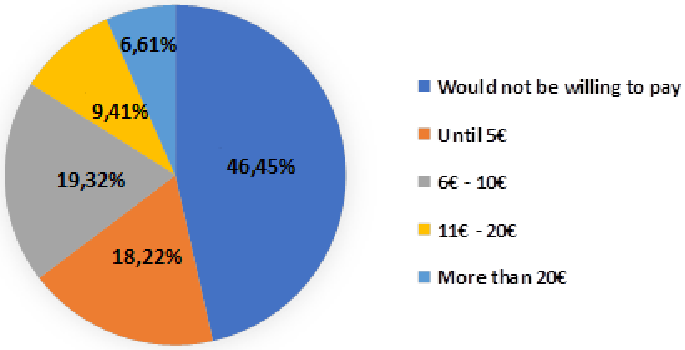

Figure 3: Respondents would be willing to pay for virtual events: Elaborated by authors

As for the future, only 47.5% of the respondents intend to attend some type of event until the end of 2020, including festivals, concerts, concerts (29.8%), social events (23.2%), congresses, seminars and/or workshops (14.4%), sport events (16.0%), fairs and exhibitions (9.9%) and other events, especially religious (1.7%).

Among the reasons pointed out by the 97 respondents for not participating in any event during the year 2020, we can summarise: fear of contaminating and/or being contaminated (52.5%), considered as the main reason (31.5%), social distancing (23.8%), fear that the venue does not comply with the necessary safety measures (16.0%), mandatory use of protective equipment (2.8%) and other reasons (5.0%), mainly the absence of habit of going to events or because they had not planned it regardless of the pandemic.

6. Discussion

The results of this research highlight the impact that the pandemic and the confinement imposed by it had on the events sector in Portugal, especially in the North region. Through the survey it was possible to collect data on how the Portuguese were affected by the cancellation and postponement of almost all events scheduled for 2020 and beyond, as well as their expectations regarding alternatives and the return to face-to-face events.

It should be noted, however, that this study only collected 181 responses, using snowball sampling, that has several limitations in sample selection. Furthermore, the number of responses is not representative of the Portuguese population in the north of the country, so generalizing is risky, especially for the whole country. However, the study allowed the collection of several valid data that can be the starting point for more detailed or comparative investigations regarding the second confinement after January 2021.

Unsurprisingly, for us, was the fact that respondents reported that many events, postponed or cancelled due to the pandemic, were mostly festivals, music concerts and shows that are preferred by individuals at younger ages. These age groups were also the ones who participated the most as respondents to the survey.

These types of events are characterised by a high concentration of public, so it is understandable that they were also been most affected by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the guidelines and impositions of the State Government (DGS, 2020b; Presidência da República, 2020). Likewise, private events were cancelled and postponed, as the pandemic extended into more favourable times for this particular type of events (in summer), namely weddings, continuing to motivate further postponements.

Economically the damage will be deeper as society adapts to a new model of participation and production of events. Companies need to readjust, something that almost always implies financial burdens that, after a downtime of several months of postponed and cancelled events, becomes more difficult to bear economically. For example, summer festivals, which mostly take place between June and September in Portugal, generated two billion euros in 2019, and by 2020 there was a drop to less than half of the festivals held. For 2019, it represented an 80% drop in turnover, generating only 400 million euros (Lusa, 2020).

In addition to the direct economic impacts generated by the festivals, there are several other economic activities, such as accommodation and catering that benefit from these events

Another nerve point of this crisis in the world of events is the great precariousness of the workers of the sector. Of the 2000 freelancers who would normally be hired, between March and June in Portugal, none were hired (APECATE, 2020).

On the other side of the equation is fear which is, by definition, an emotion triggered by danger, pain or harm (Hoog, Stroebe, and Wit, 2008). A viral outbreak such as Covid-19 naturally provokes fear in people (Mamun and Griffiths, 2020).

Regardless of the field of studies, anxiety and fear are considered two different emotions (Barlow, 2000). Theoretically, fear is a primary emotion that is experienced by all humans, regardless of age, race and culture. Fear is therefore an awareness of danger. Anxiety is the unpleasant feeling and physiological response when a person is frightened (Beck and Emery, 1979).

Considering the statistical data of 12 October 2020 from the SNS we can see that Covid-19 has affected more than 37 million people worldwide. Consequently, people feel fear, panic and anxiety. In the case of Portugal, on the same date mentioned, 87,913 had been infected, with the growing numbers seen as cases increased and the proximity of winter, so the states of fear and anxiety are also a constant and will persist. Thus, although face-to-face events have been held, people continue to adhere very little, with online webinar-type events proliferating more and more online webinar-type events.

The Portuguese's understanding of the changes in the events imposed by the pandemic shows the prudence and concern of individuals about the virus. This factor is reflected in the intention to attend an event in the near future, with values below 50%, according to our research, mainly for fear of being contaminated. These findings are in line with the perspective of APECATE (2020), which estimates the realization of only 284 events, between August and December, a number substantially lower than the 5900, held in 2019, in the same period of time, but contrasts with the European study of Festicket (2020).

Through data analysis it was also possible to observe that, despite the majority of respondents considering existence of online events feasible, the adherence to virtual events up to the date of the survey was surprisingly low (47%), especially since the majority of respondents are young, between 20 and 29 years old. This fact may be explained by the lack of promotion of these events, by their theme not being the respondents' preference or even by the lack of enthusiasm, as the experience of virtual events is not the same as that of the face-to-face. However, almost all those who considered it feasible to have virtual events would be willing to pay for the experience.

It is also important to note that, out of a total of 180 professionals in the events sector, 57% have not been involved in any digital event since the beginning of the pandemic. Rather, it was the technology or audio-visual suppliers that were most involved in this type of initiative. Still, the trend of hybrid events is continuing. According to the opinion of professionals in the sector, and given that only a small part of the professionals was involved in the organization of digital events, it is already possible to think that a new market is being created in the event sector and, on the other hand, that there is, on the part of professionals and companies involved in the creation and organization of events, a technological gap (EventPoint, 2020c) and even innovation.

7. Final considerations

Events research is multidisciplinary and complex, combining social and behavioural sciences, psychology, communication, culture, tourism, hospitality, leisure, entertainment, equipment, art and sports. There is, however, still a lack of studies on the evolution of events and, above all, of virtual events. This task requires that the focus of the academy effort on the applicability of new discoveries, working side by side with professionals.

In a crisis, such as a pandemic, the need for articulation is even more evident, since knowledge is the path to innovation, so necessary for companies to adapt to the new reality, remaining competitive. A proactive and positive attitude towards a time of crisis is essential to be prepared for change, encouraging creativity and problem-solving capacity.

It is too early to see how the hosting of events will evolve. It remains uncertain whether these will be temporary or permanent changes. However, state support has proved essential for many professionals to keep their jobs and for companies to remain operational, even if, for the most part, in telework and with few or no scheduled events (APECATE, 2020; EventPoint, 2020c).

The unpredictability of the virus makes predictions uncredible, so the general feeling is uncertainty, discouraged and fear that the closing of doors is even the future (EventPoint, 2020c).

The data collected in this study, although on a small scale, show the importance that events have on society and the effects that the Covid-19 pandemic had in the north of the country, and we can extrapolate, in Portugal, from the point of view of the Portuguese who saw the events, which they had planned to watch, postponed or cancelled.

Most of these events were the festivals, which are characterized by the high concentration of people, so it is natural that they have been the most affected. Also, by their cancellation, negative economic impacts resulted for the localities hosting them, for the promoters and for other economic sectors that also benefited from their realization.

The resilience of the professionals and the results of this survey show that Northerners and Portuguese, generally, value events and are willing to embrace online initiatives, at least as long as it is not possible to have this experience live. This will probably be one of the pathways that will lead to the recovery of the sector. However, investment will be needed in digitisation of business and innovation, but certainly, if they do that, they will be better prepared for the future.

This is a new situation and new information will emerge with new knowledge from research, changing attitudes and internalising new behaviours. For example, a study over time will make sense to verify whether the perceptions of the Portuguese change as the pandemic evolves.

From this work, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on events can be explored from other points of view, whether through the various changes it caused in professionals in the sector, in the economy and even in society at national and local levels.

Risk management and the way each country has managed the pandemic are other issues that also deserve the attention of researchers, as other crises will arise, even if this pandemic ends. The recovery process and the future of the industry will also be themes that will surely emerge in future research.

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Describing Skills in Hotel Management Syllabi: A View From the Field

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Abstract: Developing a course curricula is a complex and difficult task since it must reflect the fundamental technical competencies and skills, but also the soft skills that students must develop to practice a specific profession. In this sense, Higher Education Institutions have been struggling to find strategies and incorporate methodologies into their course curricula that will promote the balanced development of these technical and transversal competencies and skills. Therefore, this paper describes an exploratory study on how the competencies and skills dynamic is featured in the description of the learning outcomes of a 3-year Bachelor in Hospitality Management degree in Portugal. It analysed the forty learning outcomes of the different subjects of the degree and framed in the Reference Framework by The Council of the European Union. Moreover, it also analysed the application of the taxonomy of Bloom in describing the learning outcomes. The preliminary results show that there are some explicit learning outcomes outlined in the reference framework of the European Union but they still lack those related to soft skills development. Furthermore, the application of the taxonomy of Bloom is adequate and fully present in the learning outcomes. These results highlight the need of reviewing the description of the learning outcomes, mainly its alignment with the content and teaching and assessment methodologies adopted by the different subjects.

Keywords: bloom taxonomy, curricula, higher education, hotel management, skills

1. Introduction

In its position paper, OECD's The Future of Education and Skills 2030 project posits that future-ready students, faced with environmental, economic, and social challenges in an ever more interconnected and rapidly changing world,

> *need to apply their knowledge in unknown and evolving circumstances. For this, they will need a broad range of skills, including cognitive and meta-cognitive skills (e.g. critical thinking, creative thinking, learning to learn and self-regulation); social and emotional skills (e.g. empathy, self-efficacy and collaboration); and practical and physical skills (e.g. using new information and communication technology devices). (2019, p.5).*

The COVID-19 pandemic made a painful case for the need for education to focus on competences and skills. It impacted economies, institutions and organizations, and individuals. It changed the way we learn, work, and lead social lives but, perhaps more importantly, the way we think about those essential human activities – they do change abruptly and unexpectedly.

The politically charged issue of the purpose of Higher Education (HE) is not new. In the EU it has long moved on from whether skills' development is a purpose of HE. HE institutions (HEIs), especially publicly funded HEIs, are expected to play a part in the skills formation system to support the twin transition (digital and green) which will entail meeting emerging skills and competences needs for jobs yet to be invented if we are to ever fill the skills gap. Lest they become obsolete, HEIs must participate in the discussion about and in the skilling, upskilling and reskilling endeavour. If skills are the new canon, as Berret (2016) posits, this new canon's creation has been led mainly by non-academic bodies, policymakers, and regulators. And, if it such endeavour was focused mostly on primary, secondary, vocational education and training (VET), and lifelong training (Trier, 2003), it has shifted to include HE as early as 2009 with the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET

2020), the setting up the Higher Education Working Group, the inception of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in 2010, the 2011 Agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems, the 2017 EU agenda for higher Education, and most recently European strategy for universities, in January 2022. We can agree that, despite their willingness to contribute to the skills agenda, HEIs still struggle with a truly competency-based education, as in Gervais (2016) operational definition:

> *an outcome-based approach to education that incorporates modes of instructional delivery and assessment efforts designed to evaluate mastery of learning by students through their demonstration of the knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, and behaviours required for the degree sought. (p.99)*

Such a definition not only illustrates the complexity involved in teaching and assessing *competency*, but also the key role *skills* play in the dynamic makeup of the concept.

This paper discusses the results of an exploratory study on how the knowledge/skills dynamic is featured in the description of the learning outcomes of the forty subjects of a 3-year Bachelor in Hospitality Management degree in Portugal. The Literature Review presents a short overview of the literature on competencies and transversal skills as found in the official documents by Education regulators, which it articulates with key hospitality skills and the developmental approach offered in Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (1956) as means to interpret staff's descriptions of skills and knowledge in syllabi. Section 3 presents the methodology, and the results are discussed in section 4, together with implications for further research.

2. Literature review

2.1 On competencies and skills

Official EU documentation posits *competence* as an overarching concept, comprised of knowledge, skills, and attitudes as can be found in OECD's DeSeCo Project (2005)

> *A competency is more than just knowledge and skills. It involves the ability to meet complex demands, by drawing on and mobilising psychosocial resources (including skills and attitudes) in a particular context. (p.4)*

and Future of Education and Skills 2030 project (2020)

> *Skills are the ability and capacity to carry out processes and be able to use one's knowledge in a responsible way to achieve a goal. Skills are part of a holistic concept of competency, involving the mobilisation of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values to meet complex demands. (p.86)*

From Becker's seminal distinction between generic skills (2008, p.11), and specific skills (*idem*, p.18), a large variety of terms have been coined to describe and categorise skills. A classic distinction can be found in discussions of the role of hard and soft skills (Andrews & Higson, 2008; Balcar, 2016; Hendarman & Cantner, 2018), but the official skills discourse has clearly shifted from the classic dichotomic generic/specific and soft/hard skills to focus on transferable skills, i.e., that "can be applied either or both: (i) across different cognitive domains or subject areas; (ii) across a variety of social, and in particular employment, situations. (Bridges, 1993), and thus are "not specifically related to a particular job, task, academic discipline or area of knowledge and that can be used in a wide variety of situations and work settings (for example, organizational skills)" (IBE - UNESCO, 2016).

More recently the term "transversal skill" has largely replaced "transferable skills" in OECD and EU official documents. The OECD Skills Outlook 2021, for example, defines the term using IBE-UNESCO's definition of transferable skills. A change that points to a greater emphasis on the fact that the need for such skills can be found (and not so much transferred) across a wide variety of situations and work settings, and to the fact that being able to transfer skills learned in particular contexts to others is, in itself, a skill (Yorke, 2006).

Despite the attention given to transversal skills, there is still no consensus on which skills are (key) transversal and should be added to the curriculum. A cursory overview of competence frameworks offers an extensive and widely varied list of transversal skills clustered around a variable number of competencies (OECD, 2005; Care *et al*., 2012; UNESCO'S ERI-Net, 2013; UNESCO, 2016a, 2016b; VISKA project VISKA, 2017; OECD, 2019; P21 Partnership's Framework for 21st Century Learning, 2019).

For this exploratory study, we used the Reference Framework by the Council of the European Union (2018) which organises a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes around eight key competencies. Our outline includes only references to skills proper.

- 1. Literacy competence (the skills to communicate both orally and in writing […] and to monitor and adapt their own communication […] to distinguish and use different types of sources, to search for, collect and process information […] critical thinking […])
- 2. Multilingual competence (the ability to understand spoken messages, to initiate, sustain and conclude conversations and to read, understand and draft texts […] to use tools appropriately and learn languages […])
- 3. Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering (the understanding of science as a process for the investigation through specific methodologies […] the ability to use logical and rational thought […] the ability to use and handle technological tools and machines […] to recognise the essential features of scientific inquiry […])
- 4. Digital competence (the ability to use, access, filter, evaluate, create, program and share digital content. […] to manage and protect information, content, data, and digital identities, as well as recognise and effectively engage with software, devices, artificial intelligence or robots.)
- 5. Personal, social and learning to learn competence (the ability to identify one's capacities, focus, deal with complexity, critically reflect and make decisions. […] to learn and work both collaboratively and autonomously […], seek support when appropriate and effectively manage one's career and social interactions. […] resilient and able to cope with uncertainty and stress. […] to communicate […], collaborate in teams and negotiate. [show] tolerance, expressing and understanding different viewpoints […] to create confidence and feel empathy.)
- 6. Citizenship competence (the ability to engage effectively with others in common or public interest, […] critical thinking and integrated problem-solving skills, […] to develop arguments and constructive participation in community activities, […] decision-making at all levels […] to access and interact with both traditional and new forms of media and understand the role and functions of media in democratic societies.)
- 7. Entrepreneurship competence (creativity which includes imagination, strategic thinking and problem-solving, and critical and constructive reflection within evolving creative processes and innovation. […] to mobilize resources and to sustain activity. […] to make financial decisions relating to cost and value. […] to effectively communicate and negotiate with others […]);
- 8. Cultural awareness and expression competence (the ability to express and interpret figurative and abstract ideas, experiences and emotions […] to identify and realise opportunities for personal, social or commercial value through the arts and other cultural forms and […] to engage in creative processes.

It may be the case that transversal skills are the new hard skills. In OECD Skills Outlook 2021: Learning for Life (2021), communication, teamwork and organisational skills are referred to as being

> *among the transversal skills most frequently demanded by employers in a wide variety of occupations. Cognitive skills, such as analytical, problem-solving, digital, leadership and presentation skills are also highly transversal across jobs and work contexts.*

Transversal skills provide a flexible structure that allows an individual to adapt to small and major shifts in job-roles, make a lateral career move or a complete career change, and to navigate changes in the labour market (OECD, 2021).

Job listings put more emphasis on the transversal skills they require of applicants because hard skills are a given and need not be explicit. [Inter]Disciplinary, epistemic, and procedural knowledge, be it more or less domain-specific, are more than merely relevant in the "knowledge economy". They are, however, more marketable when bundled with transversal skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking and creativity and, often, attitudes or personal qualities such as responsibility, honesty, loyalty or sociability.

2.2 Skills in hospitality

According to Chung (2000) the number of hospitality management programmes has increased significantly since the 1920s, when E.M. Statler and the American Hotel Association helped the Cornell University to create the first hospitality program. The hospitality education expanded with the industry, and the programmes need to give the students the skills and knowledge to develop their activities correctly. To Wang and Tsai (2014) since the 1990s, one of the goals of higher education has been to enhance the development of employability skills, helping graduates enrich their employment opportunities. The hospitality management programmes should train employees and potential managers to develop their careers and job competencies positively.

According to Jiang and Alexakis (2017) some industry practitioners expect certain competencies, but students provide another set of features in the hospitality management area. This reinforces the urgency of meeting the needs of the rapidly changing hospitality industry, furthering research into which competencies are essential for graduates to possess and curriculum design to meet these needs and ensure that graduates have the abilities and knowledge that the industry needs (Sisson and Adams, 2013). And, in an effort to respond to these demands, hospitality programmes currently teach the traditional areas such as lodging and food and beverage, but also events, meetings, revenue management, cruise market, as it is necessary to adapt permanently to market changes.

Still, according to Gursoy and Swanger (2004) those main areas are not sufficient from a professional point of view. Gursoy and Swanger (2004) study put forward the 20 subject areas that matter the most to reach success in the hospitality field: (1) ethics, (2) leadership, (3) preparation for industry employment, (4) internships / industry experience, (5) hospitality management and organization, (6) operations analysis, (7) overview of the hospitality industry, (8) foodservice operations, (9) computer/information technology, (10) service management, (11) strategic management, (12) principles of marketing, (13) human resources management, (14) hospitality management strategy, (15) sales/sales management, (16) food safety and sanitation, (17) accounting, (18) finance, (19) lodging operations and (20) revenue / asset management. In the second part of their study, in 2005, Gursoy and Swanger present (1) leadership, (2) communication, (3) customer service, (4) work habits, (5) ethics, (6) team building, (7) dispute resolution, and (8) goal-setting skills as the more important aspects to include in a hospitality management curriculum.

Sisson and Adams (2013) confirmed that the most essential competencies for hospitality graduates are in the soft category, and the most important three functional work areas are lodging, food and beverage, and meeting and event management, reinforcing the importance of soft competencies. To Weber, Crawford, Lee and Dennison (2013) hard skills correspond to the skills in the technical and administrative categories and soft skills correspond to the skills in the human, conceptual, leadership, and interpersonal categories. According to these authors, the terms hard and soft skills have developed over the years as a way of identifying characteristics and abilities needed to be successful in a management position (p. 314).

Some authors make the case for less specialization. Sisson and Adams (2013) stated that the hospitality programs should move to less specialization, alleviating the work of higher education teachers. And though, some academics argue that hospitality education should not be described by or reduced to supplying the industry and recognise that higher education should help develop experts who can contribute to a variety of societal and professional domains (Lugosi and Jameson, 2017), hospitality and tourism educators continually seek to design and improve program curricula to ensure that graduates are well prepared to enter the industry (Jiang and Alexakis, 2017).

If one agrees with Wang, Ayres and Huyton (2009, p.63) that one of the goals of higher education is to produce graduates with the skills that are particularly considered by employers, then, the vitality of tourism education relies, without doubt, on a robust relationship with the tourism industry, and hospitality programmes must strike a balance between service industry practitioners' demand and academic education (Jiang and Alexakis, 2017).

2.3 Bloom's Taxonomy and its revised edition by Anderson and Krathwohl

In 1956, a team of researchers led by Benjamin S. Bloom published a taxonomy of educational objectives in the cognitive domain. As the introduction to Handbook states: "It is intended to provide for classification of the goals of our educational system." (Bloom, 2)

This classification of educational objectives makes it possible to show whether there is a distribution along the continuum of cognitive processes and makes it clear when this is not achieved: "Curriculum builders should find the taxonomy helps them specify objectives so that it becomes easier to plan learning experiences and prepare evaluation devices." (1956, 2) The taxonomy classifies the processes of human learning by placing them in a hierarchical order, ranging from the simplest to the most complex process category: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation.

In 2001, David Krathwohl, who was part of the original team working on the Handbook, co-led the team with Lorin Anderson that had the huge task of revising the above taxonomy, which was a staple in teacher education in many countries. The most notable changes in the revised edition were the rewording of cognitive processes, from nouns to verbs, the renaming of some components, and the repositioning of the last two categories. The cognitive process categories are as follows: Remember, Understand, Apply, Analyse, Evaluate and Create.

The change from noun to the verb is not innocent, according to Anderson & Krathwohl: “The verb generally describes the intended cognitive process. The noun generally describes the knowledge students are expected to acquire or construct” (Anderson & Krathwohl, 5).

The most significant change was the introduction of different types of knowledge, namely factual, conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive knowledge, that intersect with cognitive processes, leading to a two-dimensional framework (2001, 5).

Therefore, in the taxonomy table, the cognitive process dimension, which forms the columns, contains the six categories identified above and is placed on a continuum of cognitive complexity. The rows of the table correspond to the knowledge dimension, with its four categories which lie along a continuum from concrete (factual) to abstract (metacognitive) (2001, 27).

So as to place the objective in a cell, it is imperative to analyse the objective by locating the verb and the noun in the statement. The verb is examined in the context of the six categories of the cognitive process dimension – Remember, Understand, Apply, Analyse, Evaluate and Create. Likewise, the noun is examined in the context of the four types of the knowledge dimension.

As the authors acknowledge, classifying objectives is often difficult because the objective may be too vague, the statement may contain more than verbs and nouns, or the verb may be ambiguous in relation to the intended cognitive process, or the noun may be ambiguous in its intended knowledge (2001, 33). Moreover, it is essential that the person making the categorisation makes the correct inferences “because inference is involved and because each person may have access to different information, individuals may disagree about the correct classification of an objective.” (2001, 34)

3. Method

Hotel management is a markedly transdisciplinary field, which has undoubtedly benefited from the scientific and technical know-how of areas such as management, catering, tourism, accounting, human resources, IT and foreign language teaching. The confluence of different knowledge fields is clearly visible in the curricula used in higher education hotel management degrees aiming to prepare students for the real needs of the labour market. The syllabi and teaching materials proposed by the lecturers could be used to check whether the transdisciplinary variety of the curricula transfers to the terms/words used in the programmes created for each of the subjects.

The analysis of the corpus we created from the official information sheets of ESHT’s undergraduate degree in hotel management will provide important information on what skills lecturers deem important for the future professionals in this area.

3.1 Sample

Our sample is comprised of the Learning Objectives taken from the official information sheets (used for the academic year 2020/21) of each one of the subjects that make up the 6-semester undergraduate degree of Hotel Management. Forty subjects are taught throughout the 3 academic years, which corresponds to a total of 120 ECTS. The official information sheet is divided into four parts: i) identification, ii) purposes, overview, description, iii) evaluation procedures and iv) information for A3ES (Portuguese agency supervising quality assurance in HEI). The Learning Objectives are to be found in the second part of the sheets, which also includes the contents, the bibliographic references (the mandatory and supplementary material students should use) and the teaching methodology defined for each of the subjects.

Of the forty subjects students must pass to graduate, nineteen present their objectives without specifying general and specific outcomes, whereas the remaining twenty-one first enounce the general learning aims students must achieve, followed by the specific ones to be attained. The syntactic structure of the sentences making up our corpus is Verb [infinitive] + Object, which results from the fact that each of the learning objectives lecturers determine for their subjects are, semantically, the continuation of the phrase "When students complete this subject successfully, they will be able to…"

3.2 Procedure and data analysis

We gathered our corpus in Notepad++, a free source code editor, because it supports Portuguese, runs in MS Windows and the files created can be downloaded to SketchEngine, an online text analysis tool that allows its users to find out how their language works in real communication contexts, as the corpora may be explored through different frequency-based statistics.

Corpora have proved to be productive language sample materials to extract linguistic data information for creating a terminological product or for undertaking a lexicographic study — dictionaries, vocabularies, glossaries, terminology databases, thesauri, translation memory databases, etc. —, for developing linguistic analysis through data processing in computer applications, language software or terminology management tool kits — frequency wordlists, keywords, term extraction, concordance lists, collocates, taggers, lemmatizers, etc. — or for representing specialized knowledge — ontologies' development, conceptual maps, etc..

Our corpus has 298 sentences, with a total of 4,279 words (and 5,166 tokens), of which 166 were categorised as adjectives in the Wordlist, 28 were adverbs, 5 were conjunctions, 515 were nouns, 48 were numerals, 11 prepositions, 7 pronouns, and 160 were verbs. If one searches for the meaning of the noun skill, it may help us understand why the most frequent grammatical categories occurring in our corpus are nouns and verbs:

Definition of skill (Entry 1 of 2)

- 1a: the ability to use one's knowledge effectively and readily in execution or performance
- b: dexterity or coordination especially in the execution of learned physical tasks
- 2: a learned power of doing something competently: a developed aptitude or ability language skills

Item - Noun	Frequency	Translated to
competência	30	competency
serviço	27	service
gestão	24	management
importância	23	importance
restauração	23	catering
hotelaria	22	hospitality
informação	20	information
atividade	20	activity
organização	19	organisation
unidade	19	unity
conceito	18	concept
setor	17	sector
língua	16	language
cozinha	15	kitchen
turismo	14	tourism
comunicação	14	communication

Item - Verbs	Frequency	Tanslated to
identificar	33	identify
reconhecer	22	recognise
descrever	20	describe
compreender	20	understand
aplicar	19	apply
ser	18	be
demonstrar	17	demonstrate
conhecer	16	know
desenvolver	13	develop
adquirir	11	acquire
escrever	10	write
elaborar	9	create
executar	9	perform
utilizar	9	use/manipulate
organizar	9	organise
perceber	9	understand
interpretar	9	interpret
analisar	8	analyse

Given the scope of this paper, we decided to focus our analysis on the verb "identificar" (identify) for its frequency and its association (as expressed in the concordance results taken from SketchEngine) to the skills that are more relevant to the hospitality industry (as is put forward by the lecturers determining the Learning Objectives deemed important for the subjects they taught).

4. Results

In this exploratory study, we analysed the competencies defined with the verb "identify". We had 33 results with the verb "identify". Therefore, we aimed to understand what were the skills associated with the verb identify. In our results, according to EU Competence framework (REF) the skills identified were Literacy competence, STEM, and Digital competence. In our results, we had one result related to digital competence, three results related to STEM, and 29 are related to literacy competence as illustrated by the examples:

- Digital competence – "Identifying information and technology needs in hotel and tourism enterprises"
- STEM – "Structure in a clear way logical reasoning, identifying consciously all its phases, considering mathematics as a tool for other curricular units"
- Literacy competence - "Identify the basic concepts in Marketing"

We also aimed to understand what were the hospitality subject of the skill. In Table 1 we can observe that the most frequent subjects are foodservice and operations, and food safety and sanitation, with seven and five entries respectively.

Table 1: Frequency and quotations according to Hospitality subject

Hospitality subject (Gursoy & Swanger, 2004)	Frequency	Quotations
Ethics	--	--
Leadership	--	--
Preparation for industry employment	4	Identify errors resulting from mother tongue interference and avoid them.
Internships / industry experience	--	--
Hospitality management and organization	1	Identify and recognise in practice the main concepts of the management of an organisation.
Operations analysis	1	Identify the role played by the catering activity in the hotel context.
Overview of the hospitality industry	3	Identify the fundamental concepts of the practice of leisure, recreation and tourism.
Foodservice operations	7	Identify the main characteristics of the several types of table and bar service.
Computer/information technology	2	Identify the information and technology needs in hotel and tourism enterprises.
Service management	3	Identify gastronomic trends.
Strategic management	--	--
Principles of marketing	1	Identify the basic concepts of Marketing
Human resources management	1	Identify hotel manager and employee skills and propose an improvement plan.
Hospitality management strategy	2	Identify strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities of a hotel/tourism development project.
Sales/sales management	--	--
Food safety and sanitation	5	Identify the main diseases, dangers and food risks most frequently encountered in catering and hospitality.
Accounting	--	--
Finance	3	Identify capitalised values and updated values.
Lodging operations	--	--
Revenue / asset management	--	--

Additionally, according to Bloom's theory, we aimed to understand what were the cognitive process and the knowledge dimension of the competencies using "identify" as a verb. Table 2 shows that the most frequent cognitive process is "remember".

Table 2: Frequency and quotations according to Bloom's cognitive process

Bloom's cognitive process	Frequency	Quotation
Analyse	3	Identify errors resulting from mother tongue interference and avoid them.
Evaluate	1	Identifying information and technology needs in hotel and tourism enterprises.
Understand	3	Identify the different types of events and impacts produced.
Remember	18	Identify the profile and motivations of the gastronomic tourist.

Moreover, we can observe in Table 3 that the most frequent knowledge dimension associated with competencies is the Conceptual dimension. Although, the factual dimension also has a significant representation in our data.

Table 3: Frequency and quotations according to Bloom's Knowledge dimension

Bloom's knowledge dimension	Frequency	Quotation
Factual	8	Identify restaurant service terminology.
Procedural	2	Identify errors resulting from mother tongue interference and avoid them.
Conceptual	9	Identify and understand the importance of brand value and brand management in hospitality.

5. Discussion and conclusions

The development of syllabi is a complex and difficult process since it should reflect the fundamental competencies and skills to be developed in a given area. Therefore, HEI struggles to develop competency-based syllabi, which implies the complexity of teaching and assessing the key competencies and skills: knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, and behaviors (Gervais, 2016).

Our study shows that the results outcomes described in the forty subjects of the 3-year degree have an emphasis on the hard competencies, namely foodservice and operations, and food safety and sanitation, in line with the hard skills identified by the author's Weber, Crawford, Lee and Dennison (2013) and Sisson and Adams (2013). Nevertheless, it also shows a lake on hard skills identified by those authors like lodging and meeting and event management. This result can be justified by the fact of this study only analysed the verb "identify" since the syllabi have subjects related to lodging, events, accounting, revenue management and internship, despite they are not identified with any frequency in Table 1.

Moreover, the literature (Weber, Crawford, Lee & Dennison, 2013, Sisson & Adams, 2013, Mitchell, Skinner & White, 2010) advocates that the balance between soft and hard skills should be equal or even the soft should have superior importance, namely the ones related with human, conceptual, leadership, and interpersonal skills. In this matter, our results show that the syllabi had a lack of soft skills described in their subjects since only were identified the ones related to Human resources management.

Relatively to the EU Reference Framework (2018), our results also show that the syllabi describe three of the eight key competencies, namely, one result related to digital competence, three results related to STEM, and 29 are related to literacy competence, which evidences a lack of having the soft skills with bigger weight described in syllabi outcomes. We believe those two results (lack of soft skills and key competencies of the EU framework) outcomes from some miss alignment between the content, the methodologies, and the results outcomes described by the subjects.

Concerning Bloom's taxonomy, we notice that the outcomes are framed with the cognitive process, with a bigger representation in the remember phase, and with the knowledge dimension, focusing on the conceptual phase, but also with a good representation in the factual phase.

5.1 Limitations and suggestions for future research

This study has some limitations. This study only analyses the verb "identify", the most frequently referenced verb, but it identified 18 different verbs, therefore it should be analysed all the 18 and frame them in the Bloom taxonomy. Besides, there were other results like 16 nouns that weren't analysed, and we believe that it could represent better results in what concerns soft and hard skills described by the learning outcomes of the subjects.

Therefore, the next step will be to analyse all the other verbs and nouns to have more accurate results concerning the soft and hard skills described in the subjects' outcomes.

Moreover, we believe that deeper analyses, like the content description and teaching and assessing methodologies, could highlight some missing soft skills described in the results outcomes but developed by the different subjects that compose the degree.

Besides, the study should be applied and compared to all syllabi of degrees in Hotel Management in Portugal to understand the overall position and alignment of competence-education in this area given by HEI.

From this study, it could be arising the comparation of the Portuguese shape of Hotel Management competencies education with other studies made in the Europe universe, for one hand to understand the application of European Union Reference Competence across countries and in another hand to understand the effective correspondence of skills obtained between degrees in the same area acquired in different European countries.

5.2 Final conclusions

This is a preliminary study on key competencies and skills described in the subject syllabi of a 3-year Bachelor Hotel Management degree that we found very promising since it can give some important insights into the management of HEI and of degrees in this field about their alignment with the EU Reference Framework and with the best practices present in literature for this study field.

In this study, even though it is still preliminary, we can notice that the content, the teaching, and assessment methodologies, may not be totally present in the result outcomes of the subjects. This alignment is fundamental to truly describe the competencies and skills of the degree, especially showing what are the soft skills that students may develop with the assessment methodologies applied.

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Measuring Social Tourism Sustainability in Porto Municipality: The Views of Residents

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Abstract: In the previous decade, tourism planning and destination management efforts have focused on sustainability, particularly in its environmental pillar. In the last years though (and specially in destinations with high growing rates and risks of over tourism) the social dimension has gained importance, also as consequence of increasing awareness about the need and relevance of governance for the sector. The aim of this paper is thus to address the phenomenon of (over)tourism in Porto area, and more recently, the zero tourism: how is tourism affecting residents´ life from their own perspective? ETIS - European toolkit for sustainable destination management was the indicator system used to develop this exercise, once it has already been adapted to the country's reality by the national tourism authority (Turismo de Portugal). Results concerning residents´ and local authority representative's feelings about tourism and implications to local community, both from an economic and cultural environment perspectives, how these affect quality of life in the historical centres, are described. The study exposes different perspectives both with regard to advantages and disadvantages, but overall there is evidence that tourist development is widely accepted, considering it does not penalize the well-being of the resident population. Finally, results are discussed considering existing literature focusing on tourism sustainability in Porto, on a pre-covid and post-covid perspective.

Keywords: sustainable tourism, monitoring indicators, Porto, residents' views

1. Introduction

Sustainability is the upmost underpinning in any tourism planning process, in any territory. Although until recently the concept was mainly associated with environmental aspects (e.g.Loureiro et al., 2012), recent works highlight its multidimensionality, focusing also on economic and social aspects. Within the sustainability approach, integrated planning and monitoring of tourism development can minimize the impact on the environment and local culture, while contributing to generate local income and employment (UNWTO, 2018; Marujo and Carvalho, 2010). Moreover, research highlights the impact sustainability aspects have on visitors, influencing their choices and preferences.

In most European destinations tourism flows have concentrated in cities and historic centres (Garcia-Hernandez et al., 2017). Over the years, the rapid and spectacular growth in visitor numbers gave rise to touristification, a process of change in urban forms and functions, recently considered as phenomenons of "overtourism" (UNWTO, 2018). Concerns with social and cultural carrying capacity have gained attention, particularly the views of residents, particularly in the context of historic city centres (Blasco et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2020). Most of these centres are protected under each country's legislation and many of are included in the UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites (Garcia-Hernandez et al., 2017). But the relevance of Tourism and its implications for local development, and cultural heritage preservation and/or destruction is far from a consensus. Built heritage and cultural traditions preservation are confronted with the need for modernity and economic revitalisation (Chen and Chen, 2011; Zhu et al, 2017). In the midst of covid-19 scenario many tourist destinations are looking back to overtourism, longing for a return to having too many visitors rather than too few or none (Butler, 2020). Pre or post-covid situations, although rather different, illustrate the same concern: efficient tourism management requires well defined monitoring strategies, in order to reveal major problems and anticipate solutions (Butler, 2020; UNWTO, 2018). Aware of this essential starting point, early approaches to monitoring sustainability of tourism are established, being of particular relevance for this paper the launch of the European System of Tourism Indicators (ETIS) by the European Commission (European Commission, 2006). ETIS is a management, information, and supervision tool, specifically aimed at sustainability of tourist destinations (Pardo et al., 2021). The basic idea is to be able to collect and analyse data with the general objective of evaluating the performance

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and progress of tourism sustainability in a destination over time (Tudorache et al. 2017). It is composed of 42 main indicators, being the measuring of tourism impact from residents view one of them.

The aim of this study is thus to understand the social impacts that tourism can have in the context of the historic centre of Porto, from the perspective of residents, with data collected during may 2020, in a early stage of covid scenario. The paper is structured as follows: after the introduction, the literature review section discusses the sustainability approach, in particular the social dimension, the relevant indicators and monitoring aspects. The characteristics of tourism in Porto, the methodology employed to collect and analyse the data are debated in the third section. Results will be presented in the fourth section and practical implications discussed in the final part of the paper.

2. Literature review

Although there is a generalized agreement about what is meant by 'sustainable tourism', there is an array of studies covering its multidimensional and holistic realm, bringing together social, environmental and economic perspectives (Fernández & Rivero, 2009). The major challenge identified in the literature, though, is how to meet and maintain the desired balance, counteracting the impacts of too much or too little (Butler, 2020; Liu, 2003), a goal which requires measurement and monitoring activities (Butler, 2007). Monitoring corresponds to the implementation of actions aiming at a continuous assessment, to evaluate the results achieved in relation to the established goals, and identify deviations in a timely manner, thus making it possible to control the actions that follow (Miller and Ward, 2005). It is important to cover a wide range of views, namely the built environment dings (Lerario and Di TUri, 2018), and residents alike (Kalvet et al., 2017), and not to assume that economic development automatically promotes sustainability (Moscardo and Murphy, 2014).

3. Monitoring residents' perceptions of tourism

Currently, the satisfaction of the resident population towards tourism is an important aspect for any destination. As these are the primary stakeholders being affected by, and affecting the development of tourism activity, as well as its sustainability (Eusebio and Carneiro, 2012; Elorrieta et al., 2022), to ensure residents' satisfaction is a prerequisite of responsible tourism development (Jamal, et al., 2013, and condition for creating environments that meet their specific needs (Bornioli, et al. 2022). Furthermore, assessing the potential lifestyles of urban residents is also necessary to target and attract those who share the expectations of existing residents and to enhance the value of city assets (Eusébio and Carneiro, 2012). Monitoring the sustainability of a destination is seen as a fundamental feature, often referred to as the community wellbeing approach to tourism planning at destination level (Marujo and Carvalho, 2010).

4. Importance of residents in tourism development

Communities/residents are important and essential for tourism and its development but tourism is also very important for communities development (Martín et al., 2018). The quality of a destination depends largely on the opinion of its visitors (Huaman-Ramirez, et al., 2021), as it depends on the relationship between the tourism product and the local population. It is therefore essential that the relationship between tourists and residents is positive (Elorrieta et al., 2022). Thus, a goal of tourism should be to satisfy residents, ensuring a positive integration of tourism into resident populations, as these are the primary stakeholders for the growth of tourism activity, as well as its sustainability, enabling the success or failure of a destination (Freeman et al., 2007; Eusebio and Carneiro, 2012). Stimulating activities should be created not only for visitors but also for residents, encouraging the participation of residents in tourism by providing them with jobs, so that they do not feel uncomfortable with tourism and feel that they have plenty of benefits (Tourism Strategy, 2027).

5. Sustainability in tourism and monitoring system in Portugal

Over time, the tourism sector has gained a prominent role in Portugal, although reference to sustainability approaches in order to enhance development and competitiveness is rather recent (Carvalho and Borges, 2017). Strategic tourism related documents define concrete goals in each of the three pillars of sustainability, through a broad and stable framework of metrics and indicators namely within post-COVID-19 sector recovery strategy (Araujo, 2017; Turismo de Portugal, 2020). The collection, treatment and dissemination of official information about tourism is under the responsibility of Instituto Nacional de Estatística, i.p (INE), alongside with Turismo de Portugal, i.p., made available through Travel BI platform (Turismo de Portugal, 2020). Data made available is mostly quantitative, and reporting entities that prevail are the accommodation units and data associated. The released indicators, essentially seek to meet the demand for each type of accommodation, with volume indicators for overnight stays, guests, settlers or campers prevailing, and the average length of stay in establishments (Diniz et al., 2017). Indicators focusing on the social perspective refer mainly to tourist **density** (number of overnight stays/km2 of a given area); and tourist **intensity** (overnight stays/100 inhabitants). Both indicators aim at reflecting about the tourist pressure on a given region and the local community. Other qualitative aspects like residents' satisfaction are researched on a rather ad hoc basis, and studies scarce, mostly conducted for academics purposes (e.g. Azevedo, 2010; Martins, 2019; Silva, 2017;)

This study aim is thus to address the phenomenon of (over)tourism in Porto area, and more recently, the zero tourism: how is tourism affecting residents´ life from their own perspective?

6. Methodology

6.1 Study area

The area under study is the historical city centre of Porto, northern Portugal, the second largest city and one of the oldest tourist destinations in Europe. It's located on the coast of the Northern Region, considered the capital of the North and stretches along the right bank of the Douro river. The city has a diverse and solid transport network, including air, road, rail and cruise, facilitating the arrival of tourists. (AMPorto, s.d.).

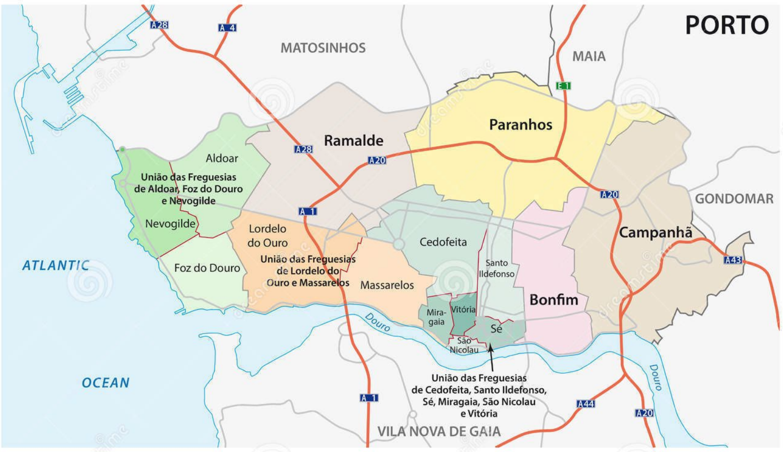

Figure 1: Map of Porto and its historical centre

6.2 Tourism in Porto

Porto offers numerous historical, cultural and recreation opportunities, both for residents and tourists. The city became known worldwide for its Port Wine Cellars (VisitPorto, s.d.) but nowadays its cultural and tourist value is based on being simultaneously a contemporary and traditional city, with its Historical Centre classified as Cultural Word Heritage by UNESCO, since 1996 (Catarina Ramos, 2010). Moreover, the city has developed in terms of diversity of tourist offer, new infrastructures and accessibility capable of hosting world-class events, such as the European Capital of Culture in 2001. Its recognition as a tourism destination has already resulted in several awards. In 2017 was named the "Best European Destination" for the third time and in 2020 it was elected the "Best City Break Destination in Europe" (UCP, s.d).

Over the last years, especially until 2019, tourism in Porto was so intense and had been growing so rapidly, to the point of starting causing pressures and impact on residents' daily lives and living conditions (Verissimo et al.,2020). The development trajectory was towards the emergence of overtourism, associated with short-term accommodation, particularly on the historical city quarters (Costa et al, 2019). In 2019, the city had 110 tourist accommodation units, with 15.693 beds. In addition to that, a total of 7.872 units of *alojamento local* (AL), corresponding to 23 011 beds. About 5.666 of these AL units were in the Historical Centre (72%) (Pinheiro, 2019). A total of 4 587 237 overnights and 2 245 291 guests was registered in Porto, in 2019 (both traditional accommodation units and AL).Tourism Density (overnights / km2 (41,42 km2)) in Porto was of 110.749 in 2019, and Tourism Intensity (overnight stays in tourist accommodation per 100 inhabitants) was of 2.124,3 (numbers are only available for the entire municipality).

In 2020, accommodation in Porto, as in the whole country, was largely affected by Covid pandemic, reveals a considerable decrease, but the number of AL units have increased, totalizing 32 667 beds, of which 22 103 in the Historical centre. Despite being generally small in size and low in capacity, the number of units of AL is rather high, and very concentrated, likely to cause "pressure" in the communities living on central areas of Porto.

6.3 Research design

This research has adopted a mix method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods, namely a survey through means of questionnaire, being applied to residents living in the historical centre of Oporto and an interview to the president of the Union of Parishes of the Historic Centre of Porto (Sé, Vitória, Cedofeita, Santo ldefonso, Miragaia, São Nicolau).

6.4 Population and sampling procedures

The target population was all inhabitants living in the centre, which according to 2011 census is 40.440 inhabitants (INE, 2012). A non-probabilistic, convenience sampling approach was employed, but cases were chosen in order to meet the structure of local population profile (age, gender, students, workers, etc.) (Veal, 2018).

6.5 Data collection

In drawing up the questionnaire, closed questions were mostly used, aiming at identifying the sample profile (including time of residence), the resident's views and attitudes towards tourism, in particular the existence of economic and cultural opportunities and constraints caused by tourism. For questions concerning perceptions of residents, a five-point likert-type scales were used, as occurs in most studies in the area of tourism (Vagias, 2006).

Questionnaire data was collected face to face (Bäckström, 2008; Alreck and Seetle, 1995). In spite of the constrains imposed by COVID pandemic, the online survey was not chosen as it is easier to lose control of whom we are surveying, and the results were likely to be not representative of the population, due to the existence of socio-economic differences between people who use the Internet. Moreover, the response rate tends to be lower given the difficulty of recruiting participants (Morris and William, 1946). A pre-test was carried out, with thirty people living in the Historic Centre of Porto, in the last week of April 2021. Results enabled to conclude the questionnaire was fit to collect the intended information (Veal, 2018). Main data collection was performed by a group of 5 trained researchers during May 2021. Respondents were approached in several outdoor public areas and homes, and only residents were invited to fill the questionnaire. In total 365 questionnaires were considered valid and fit for analysis.

6.6 Data analysis

Quantitative data was analysed through SPSS, both for descriptive and inferential purposes (Pallant, 2020). The inferential analysis was aimed at exploring the existence of differences between groups of respondents based area of residence (independent variables). According to different studies, proximity of residents to locations with higher tourism pressure perceive tourism impacts to a great extent, namely negative ones (e.g. Devine et al., 2009; Muresan et al., 2019; Verissimo et al., 2019). The specific test used was Kruskal-Wallis in order to, compare scores on continuous (dependent) variables referring to perceptions about tourism impacts.

7. Results

The data collection process enabled to have a sample that is well balanced in terms of the identified strata (Table 1). Two of the Parishes, Cedofeita (50%) and Santo Ildefonso (21%) have more responses, as these are also the ones with more inhabitants. The others are more central, prevailing other types of use such as commerce and cultural facilities. All age groups are well balanced and equally represented, as well as gender (nearly half female and half male). Most respondents are active, either self-employed or in paid employment, having at least an intermediate level of education (30% finished the 9^{th} grade, 25% completed secondary school and 25% have an academic degree), and well acquainted with the city centre, as they have generally lived there for a long time (half of respondents lived there for more than 25 years). We can anticipate respondents are well acquainted with the city and tourism development.

Table 1: Respondent's profile (n=365)

Residence parish	N	%		Civil status	N	%
Sé	35	9,6		Single	104	28,5
Vitória	22	6,0		Married/non-marital cohabitation	185	50,7
Santo Ildefonso	76	20,8		Divorced/separated	36	9,9
Miragaia	30	8,2		Widowed	40	11,0
Cedofeita	181	49,6		**Academic qualifications**		
São Nicolau	21	5,8		Cannot read or write	1	0,3
Length of residence in the area				Can read and write without attending school	2	0,5
<10 years	60	16,4		1st cycle (primary education)	75	20,0
11-25 years	117	32,1		Intermediate (9th grade)	112	29,9
26-49 years	101	27,7		Secondary/professional education (12th grade)	93	24,8
>50 years	87	23,8		High education	92	24,5
Age				**Labour status**		
18-23 years	47	12,9		Domestic	7	1,9
24-35 years	81	22,2		Student	38	10,4
36-50 years	93	24,5		Self-employed	54	14,8
51-64 years	61	16,7		Retired	68	18,6
+65 years	83	22,7		Unemployed	21	5,8
Gender				Seeking 1st job	9	2,5
Female	191	52,3		Employee of someone else	174	47,7
Male	174	47,7				

Source: authors' elaboration

As mentioned above, and in accordance with the literature the place of residence and closeness to areas where tourism is more intense, is considered as being likely to have an influence on residents perception about tourism and its impact on their lives and way of living (Cardoso and Silva, 2018; Muresan et al., 2019; Veríssimo et al, 2020). This is the case of more central Parishes, where inhabitants are likely to be more affected by dense tourism flows. Therefore comparisons of perceptions were made between all parishes (Kruskal-Wallis test was performed) and results are presented in accordance, both for positive impacts (Table 2) and negative impacts (Table3). Respondents were asked to express their agreement about a number of opportunities and constraints which could be conveyed by Tourism. For the present analysis 5 items of each were selected. Answers were given on a 5 points Likert-type scale, ranging from 1=totally disagree to 5=totally agree.

Table 2: Perceptions about positive impacts

	N		*M*		*Md*		*MR*
Improved the image of the Historical Centre.							
Sé	35		4		4		181,60
Vitória	22		4		4		188,66
Santo Ildefonso	76		4		4		178,53
Miragaia	30		4		4		183,23
Cedofeita	181		4		4		183,58
São Nicolau	21		4		4		190,29
Total	365						
Kruskal-Wallis test results	H=0,401 df=5 p=0.995						
Infrastructure improvement							
Sé	35		4		4		202,06
Vitória	22		4		4		164,80
Santo Ildefonso	76		4		4		168,00
Miragaia	30		4		4		184,88
Cedofeita	181		4		4		186,19
São Nicolau	21		4		4		194,38
Total	365						
Kruskal-Wallis test results	H =0,311 df=5 p=0,379						
Opportunities for local businesses							
Sé	35		4		4		192,17

	N		*M*		*Md*		*MR*
Vitória	22		3		4		152,18
Santo Ildefonso	76		4		4		170,06
Miragaia	30		4		4		172,08
Cedofeita	181		4		4		196,48
São Nicolau	21		3		3		146,26
Total	365						
Kruskal-Wallis test results	H=10,309 df=5 p=0,067						
Increased jobs for residentes							
Sé	35		4		4		198,54
Vitória	22		4		4		150,16
Santo Ildefonso	76		4		4		182,24
Miragaia	30		4		4		198,35
Cedofeita	181		4		4		188,14
São Nicolau	21		4		4		128,07
Total	365						
Kruskal-Wallis test results	H =12,309 df=5 p=0,033						
Enabled heritage preservation							
Sé	35		4		4		197,40
Vitória	22		4		4		194,80
Santo Ildefonso	76		3		4		174,99
Miragaia	30		4		4		209,25
Cedofeita	181		3		4		177,94
São Nicolau	21		4		4		181,71
Total	365						
Kruskal-Wallis test results	H=4,772 df=5 p=0.444						
N = cases. M=mean. Md=median; MR=mean Rank; X^2= Chi-square; df= degrees of freedom; p= significance level							

According to the results, residents, in general, have a positive perception about Tourism, manifesting agreement (mean=4) with all opportunities and benefits associated, namely contributing to the overall image of the historic centre, improvement of infrastructures, opportunities for local businesses, and heritage preservation. Very few exceptions, namely concerning more job opportunities. Kruskal-Wallis results show apparent statistical differences, although minimal (H =12,309 df=5 p=0,033). This could anticipate, in accordance with literature (Cardoso and Silva, 2018; Muresan et al., 2019; Veríssimo et al, 2020) that in parishes where tourism is more intense, residents perception about tourism and its impact is slightly less positive. Post-hoc test were perfomed, and significance values adjusted with Bonferroni correction reveals differences were not significant.

Residents views about negative aspects were less homogeneous (Table 3). All respondents agree that Tourism has contributed to the increase of prices and services (m=4), which is in line with the literature (Cardoso e Silva, 2018; Verissimo et al., 2020). All respondents from all Parishes have a neutral position (m=3) about Tourism causing environmental degradation of the city center, or disrupting daily life of residents (m=3). No statistically significance differences were found.

Table 3: Perceptions about negative impacts

	N		*M*		*Md*		*MR*
Increased prices of goods and services							
Sé	35		4		4		169,10
Vitória	22		4		4		152,82
Santo Ildefonso	76		4		4		167,56
Miragaia	30		4		4		193,77
Cedofeita	181		4		4		189,32
São Nicolau	21		4		4		223,79
Total	365						169,10
Kruskal-Wallis test results	H=10,355 df=5 p=0.066						
Environmental degradation .							
Sé	35		3		3		188,10
Vitória	22		3		3		193,05
Santo Ildefonso	76		3		3		187,92
Miragaia	30		3		3		182,78
Cedofeita	181		3		3		180,52

	N		*M*		*Md*		*MR*
São Nicolau	21		3		3		167,81
Total	**365**						
Kruskal-Wallis test results	H =1,100 df=5 p=0.954						
Reduced traditional shopping.							
Sé	35		2		2		180,03
Vitória	22		2		2		158,86
Santo Ildefonso	76		2		2		188,89
Miragaia	30		2		2		171,93
Cedofeita	181		2		2		187,28
São Nicolau	21		2		2		170,86
Total	365						
Kruskal-Wallis test results	H =2,836 df=5 p=0,725						
Causes loss of cultural identity							
Sé	35		2		2		177,90
Vitória	22		2		2		172,50
Santo Ildefonso	76		2		2		184,72
Miragaia	30		2		2		195,55
Cedofeita	181		2		2		180,07
São Nicolau	21		2		2		203,64
Total	365						
Kruskal-Wallis test results	H=1,946 df=5 p=0.857						
Disrupts daily life of residents							
Sé	35		3		3		191,24
Vitória	22		3		3		174,68
Santo Ildefonso	76		3		2		168,23
Miragaia	30		3		3		197,48
Cedofeita	181		3		3		186,69
São Nicolau	21		3		3		178,90
Total	365						
Kruskal-Wallis test results	H =2,948 df=5 p=0.708						

N = cases. M=mean. Md=median; MR=mean Rank; X^2= Chi-square; df= degrees of freedom; p= significance level

On the other hand, residents from all Parishes disagree with the possibility of Tourism having impacted negatively the city centre by reducing traditional shopping facilities, or causing the loss of the community's cultural identity (m=2 on both cases).

According to the local authority representative (Presidente da Junta), the more positive perspectives are still largely influenced by tourism results before Covid, particularly between 2010-2017. Tourism happens in a well-distributed way all year round, and is not seasonal, offering employment opportunities for residents, which are themselves good ambassadors of the city, and very hospitable to tourists. The most worrying and negative perception is regarding prices in general, and residences in particular, the fact that locals are not able to pay a rent in Porto Historic centre. Concerns were shared though, based in the pandemic, about the impacts few visitors can have, but also whether tourism is going to recover and if so, will it reach excessive numbers again.

8. Discussion and conclusions

Although the results illustrate that Tourism can both positively and negatively affect local residents (as referred by Butler, 2020), its opportunities and benefits are considered to a greater extent. As stated by Azevedo, (2010) residents in Porto historical center also agree that an increase in visitors implies a growth in the local economy, increasing job opportunities. As literature review had also already advanced a positive effect of tourism in historical centres is urban rehabilitation (UNWTO, 2018; Marujo and Carvalho, 2010). Residents are conscious that the development of tourism has promoted the rehabilitation of buildings that had been degraded for years, in the most well-known areas such as Ribeira and Sé. There is also agreement with the literature about a very positive view and evaluation of the social impacts of tourism as it contributes to the development of the city infrastructures in general particularly in the years pre-covid, as identified by other studies (Gomes, 2020; Silva, 2017; Martins, 2019). Caution is suggested though when interpreting these positive perceptions, as residents were likely to be influenced by low levels of visitors and inherent economic depression, caused by Covid-19.

A good knowledge of the population about the sector can be expected, as most were living in the centre for a decade or more. Throughout the last years, environment and urban landscapes were not seen as affected by tourism as well the town's quality of life was not jeopardise. The resident population in general enjoys tourism and knows how to receive and welcome tourists and, as a very positive point, local residents themselves already promote tourism, not existing relevant complaints. The most worrying and negative perception is regarding prices in general, and prices of houses in particular, what coincide with other past studies (Gomes, 2020; Silva, 2017). As opposed to this, a positive assessment in terms of the overall perception and image of the town, through the creation of cultural activities, as well improving aspects related to safety, cleanliness and the dynamization of the city. Although figures aren't available yet, in 2021, with all the impacts of Covid-19, tourism felt to unprecedent low levels, moving from over to under scenarios. Both extremes are now widely acknowledged as potentially causing negative and undesirable impacts near the local inhabitants (Butler, 2020).

Some concern in what regards the ability of tourism to recover and how long it will take. But past numbers and trends towards overtourism are not envisaged as desirable either.

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Taxation of Accommodation Services Provided in the Framework of the Collaborative Economy in the Slovak Republic

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Abstract: The collaborative economy is currently experiencing a re-comeback in an innovated form given the development of digital platforms. This model of the economy was further supported by the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, when as a result of the introduced lock-downs, traditional forms of the economy have so far been dampened by states, especially in tourism (accommodation and gastronomic services). From the states' point of view, the collaborative economy is an area of interest in terms of legal regulation, including tax policy settings, and in the context of its expansion, its non-taxation may represent a tax revenue gap (especially for local governments in the context of local taxes). In the paper, the authors analyse the existing legal regulation of taxation in the field of tourism, focusing on the provision of accommodation services in the Slovak Republic, in connection with its possible application to the model of the collaborative economy. The authors aim to answer the research question of whether the existing tax legislation in the Slovak Republic is applicable to economic activities in the field of accommodation services carried out under the collaborative economy model. For this purpose, using the method of legal analysis, analysis of secondary data from available databases (Eurostat), partial comparisons with other EU countries and using induction, deduction and scientific synthesis, the authors conclude in terms of a formulated scientific question.

Keywords: taxation, collaborative economy, tourism, accommodation services, Slovak Republic.

1. Introduction

In their research, the authors focused on the taxation of accommodation services with the ultimate objective of evaluating the existing legislation governing the taxation of accommodation services from the perspective of applicability in the collaborative economy model in the Slovak Republic (SR). A partial objective is to highlight the related problems concerning terminology and availability of data sources. The authors formulated the research question in relation to the set objectives, namely whether the existing tax legislation in SR is applicable to economic activities carried out in the field of accommodation services within the collaborative economy model. In the introductory part of the paper, the authors discuss the basic terminology (collaborative economy, sharing economy, accommodation services) and then, using analysis, comparison, deduction and induction, define/characterise the mentioned basic terminology. In the next part, they analyse the existing Slovak legislation in the context of its applicability to the taxation of accommodation services in the collaborative economy model. In the final part of the paper, using standard scientific methods (historical method, descriptive statistics, legal analysis, comparison, deduction, analogy) they present their own findings, answer the research question, and outline perspectives.

2. Theoretical background

Sharing and collaborative economy. In the economic model which is most commonly referred to as the sharing economy, but also as the collaborative economy, gig economy, peer-to-peer (P2P) economy, on-demand economy, circular economy, access economy (Červená and Sabayová, 2021), the provision of accommodation services is carried out directly or indirectly (via digital platforms) where, in the field of accommodation intermediation, the best-known platforms are Airbnb, Booking, Expedia Group, Tripadvisor, Love Home Swap, CouchSurfing, HomeAway, HouseTrip, 9Flats, Wimdu, Onefinestay, Roomerama, Sleepout, and Holiday Lettings Bookabach, and mojechaty.cz. The sharing-exchange continuum was addressed by Habibi et al (2017), who created a sharing score on a five-point Likert scale, based on which they divided the services into three categories: the prevalence of sharing characteristics (e.g. Couchsurfing), the balance between sharing and exchange, the so-called dual-mode (e.g. Airbnb), and the prevalence of exchange characteristics (e.g. Love Home Swap). The starting point for the above classification was the sharing and exchange characteristics according to Belk (2007): (a) reciprocity, which is not expected in sharing but is a necessary element of exchange, (b) social bonds, which can be created by sharing but are not necessary in exchange, (c) shared ownership – when sharing is involved, both parties feel responsible for the object of sharing, but this is not standard in exchange, d) money element (financial transactions) – sharing does not require the transfer of money, whereas exchange does, e) dependency – consumption in sharing depends on other persons, but the exchange is independent, f) calculation, which must be precise in the case of an exchange, but need not be present in the case of sharing.

According to Babčák (2021), the term “sharing economy” does not appear in Slovak legislation, hence, represents a non-legal term. For example, Czech literature characterises the collaborative/sharing economy as the provision and hiring of services and/or the usage of goods via digital platforms that reduce transaction costs and increase the usability of these goods otherwise intended only for personal use (Matocha, Svoboda, 2017). Aldorf (2017) considers the sharing or also collaborative economy as a part of the economy that consists of the shared use of material resources or goods by multiple individuals as P2P. The European Commission characterises sharing economy as business models where activities are facilitated by collaborative platforms that create an open marketplace for the temporary usage of goods/services often provided by private individuals. The sharing economy involves three categories of actors: (a) service providers – these can be private individuals offering services on an occasional basis or service providers acting in their professional capacity; (b) users of these; and (c) intermediaries who connect – via an online platform – providers with users and facilitate their mutual transactions. Sharing transactions generally do not involve a change of ownership and can be carried out both for-profit and not-for-profit. The basic aim of the collaborative economy is to exploit capital that is not used at all or is used only temporarily or incompletely (e.g. unused space in one's property). Novacká et al (2020) state that most authors characterise the sharing economy in terms of providing temporary access to unused assets for other consumers with the application of a P2P model. According to Radvan and Kolářová (2020), the sharing economy now covers any sales transactions that are done via online marketplaces, incl. business to business transactions and indirect transactions through the mediator (e.g. Airbnb). According to Botsman’s (2013) typology, the sharing economy itself is part of the collaborative consumption component that comes from the new collaborative economy (different from the traditional market economy); yet Mačejovský and Rankov (2020) note that these terms are confused, even in the professional/academic literature, which is evident from the above presented definitions.

We perceive the collaborative economy as a modern economic model that provides opportunities for the use (recirculation) of permanently or temporarily free resources, whether it is the provision and exchange of goods, services, personal knowledge, skills in return for payment, while in the case of purely non-financial provision, from our point of view, it is the sharing economy model. Historically, we consider the new ways of implementing communication and financial transactions, which have enabled and are enabling easier or faster access to information, mutual communication and the implementation of mutual relations in the provision of goods, to be the decisive factors for the new form and growth of the collaborative economy. Digital world facilitates cross-border collaboration and sales of services (Tsindeliani et al, 2019).

Accommodation services. Accommodation services are classified according to the statistical classification under Decree of the Statistical Office of SR No. 306/2007 Coll. issuing the Statistical Classification of Economic Activities (SK NACE Rev 2) into groups 55.1 (hotels and similar accommodation), 55.2 (holiday and other short-stay accommodation), 55.3 (camping grounds, recreation vehicle parks and trailer parks) and 55.9 (other accommodation) comprising subclasses 55.90.1 (accommodation in university dormitories) and 55.90.9 (hostels and other temporary accommodation). At the EU level, it is regulated by Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council (EC) No. 451/2008 of 23 April 2008 (Regulation 451/2008), where this specification is more detailed. Tourist accommodation establishments are establishments that provide temporary accommodation to visitors on a regular (or occasional) basis. Until February 2021, accommodation establishments were classified by Decree of the Ministry of Economy of SR No. 277/2008 Coll. laying down the classification criteria for accommodation establishments in their classification into categories and classes. That Decree was repealed as it no longer reflected the actual needs and modern trends for the accommodation segment and tourists and represented an unnecessary administrative burden (Harbuľák, 2021).

The provision of accommodation services is part of the services in the tourism industry. Such services are mainly provided by business entities (natural or legal persons), since the provision of accommodation services in accommodation establishments is a regulated trade under Act No. 455/1991 Coll. on trade licensing (Trade Licensing Act), as amended, so it requires the fulfilment of certain conditions (in particular, specified education and experience). However, natural persons – individuals can also rent real properties to tourists, but to a narrower extent than provided by the legislation for the above-mentioned accommodation services – since, under Section 4(1) of the Trade Licensing Act, the renting of real properties, residential and non-residential premises is already a trade if, in addition to renting, other than basic services associated with renting are provided (the provision of catering, cleaning, linen exchange, etc.). The situation is similar in the Czech Republic (CZ) (Radvan and Kolářová, 2020).

3. Legislation analysis

The available literature is more concerned with questions about the nature or effects of the sharing/collaborative economy (Botsman and Rogers, 2010), such as from a labour law perspective (Dolobáč, 2018; Cook, 2020), while tax aspects are mentioned only in general terms or briefly (e.g. Novacká, 2020). Hučková et al (2018) did discuss taxation, but only as regards income tax. Bonk (2019) focused specifically on Airbnb taxation, Pantazatou (2018) discusses taxation at the EU level. Babčák (2021) discusses the general regime of taxation of the collaborative economy. Pichrt (2019) notes that during 2017–2019, in CZ, in the field of the sharing economy, only marginal issues were addressed, which were not related to the substance of the impact of these phenomena on labour law (protection of dependent work, employment), competition protection, consumer rights protection, or taxation.

The provision of accommodation for profit should be subject to taxation in any economic model, though. In the following chapter, the authors analyse the current state of taxation in this area in Slovakia.

3.1 Taxation of accommodation services in Slovakia in general

Each provider of accommodation services (accommodation in general – given the above-mentioned differences) is subject to tax liability concerning this (gainful) activity under the legislation in force in SR:

- First of all, the income from such activity is subject to income tax; for a natural person, it is either the business income (trade – Section 6(1) of Act No. 595/2003 Coll. on income tax, as amended – Income Tax Act) or rental income – Section 6(3) in cases not falling under trade (such income is exempt from tax up to the amount of EUR 500/year). In the case of one-off activities, Hučková et al (2018) also consider the category of other income – income from casual activities under Section 8(1)(a), but this can be disputed. Foreign persons are also subject to tax liability in SR in relation to income earned – through a permanent establishment (PE), from services, rent, or other use of real property located in the territory of SR.
- As the supply of services for consideration within the territory of SR by a taxable person acting a such is subject to value added tax (VAT), once the turnover of EUR 49,790 has been reached within no more than 12 preceding consecutive calendar months´ period, the provider of accommodation services is also subject to VAT liability – taxable person is any person who independently carries out any economic activity (generating income), irrespective of its purpose or results. The place of provision of accommodation services will be SR, as they relate to real property. The provision of accommodation services is subject to a reduced VAT rate of 10% (compared to the standard rate of 20%). A different regime applies to renting – under Section 38(3)(a) of Act No. 222/2004 Coll. on value-added tax, the renting of real property or part thereof is exempt from tax, except for accommodation services (i.e. services in groups 55.1 to 55.3 of the statistical classification under Regulation 451/2008 and that under 55.9 only if provided for a period of less than three months). However, it is necessary to keep track of the turnover achieved for the purposes of the registration obligation, since the turnover also includes the value of the services of supply and renting of real property, even though they are exempt from tax (Pukalovič, 2020). It can be problematic to subsume a particular service under accommodation services or renting, though, as this follows from the content of the particular supply.
- If the providers of accommodation services use a motor vehicle registered in SR for their business, they will also be liable to pay motor vehicle tax. Non-business entities (including landlords) are not subject to this tax.

The providers of accommodation services are further subject to local taxes, namely:

- Real property tax – if they own or manage a real property in which they provide the accommodation/rentals. Municipalities generally impose higher tax rates on a real property used for business purposes, e.g. compared to real properties used for residential purposes only (Vartašová and Červená, 2019), with the actual purpose of use being the decisive factor.

- Accommodation tax – where the person providing accommodation collects the accommodation tax from the guests and remits it to the tax administrator, i.e. the municipality. The object of the tax is temporary accommodation for consideration under an accommodation contract concluded under the Civil Code in an accommodation establishment, which is a hotel, motel, boatel, hostel, guesthouse, apartment house, spa house, therapeutic house, accommodation establishment of natural health spas and health resorts, tourist hostel, cottage, building for individual recreation, log cabin, bungalow, camping site, mini-camp, camping ground, family house, flat in a block of flats, in a family house or a multifunctional building. The tax rate and other details are set by municipalities.

3.2 Accommodation provided through collaborative economy mechanisms and its taxation in Slovakia

Today´s collaborative economy is characterised by the use of an intermediary – a platform in matching supply and demand for accommodation/rental services providing the intermediation for consideration. Even as regards tax obligations, we should distinguish between the accommodation provider and the intermediary. Countries´ approaches towards their taxation differ; Slovakia is trying to apply *mutatis mutandis* its existing legislation, except for partial amendment of the Income Tax Act (Pantazatou, 2018).

For income tax purposes, the form of remuneration for accommodation provided – monetary or in kind, should be taken into account. If the price of accommodation is set in money, the taxation regime remains essentially the same. What is at issue is the regime for the provision of remuneration in kind – e.g. the provision of accommodation in exchange for other accommodation with another accommodation provider/landlord. However, the Income Tax Act provides in Section 2(c) that "income is monetary remuneration and remuneration in kind, including remuneration received in exchange, which is valued at prices generally used at the place and time of supply or consumption". Such income should also be valued and taxed in accordance with the applicable regulations. Nevertheless, Hučková et al (2018) point out the difficulty of quantifying such remuneration. There may also be a question as to whether the services such provided should be classified as accommodation services (requiring a trade licence) or renting. For example, in the case of Airbnb, the expert community is inclined to conclude the provision of accommodation services, which was exactly confirmed in CZ by the Municipal Court in Prague on 19 September 2021 in Case 6 Af 20/2020-28.

As regards the intermediary (platform operators), until 2018 the Income Tax Act did not reflect the performance of such activities. However, its amendment by Act No. 344/2017 Coll. added the definition of a digital platform ("hardware platform or software platform necessary for the creation of applications and the administration of applications") in Section 2 in the context of the extended definition of a PE, where "the performance of an activity with a PE in the territory of SR shall be deemed to include the repeated intermediation of transport and accommodation services, including via a digital platform". Thus, since 1 January 2018, the income of platform operators intermediating accommodation has also been taxed, although the shortcomings of the legislation and possible application risks are pointed out by Cibuľa et al (2019). A PE is subject to registration by the end of the calendar month following its creation – Section 49a(4). If this obligation is not complied with, the PE is registered *ex officio* by the tax administrator and the income payer (i.e. the provider of accommodation) is obliged under Section 43(2) to withhold tax at the rate of 19% or 35% (in the case of a so-called non-contracting state for tax purposes) on the payment for the services of using the intermediary platform.

Regarding VAT, Bonk (2019) states that the provision of (accommodation) services to users via online platforms for remuneration generally constitutes a taxable transaction under the VAT regime and meets the definition of economic activity within the meaning of Article 9(1) of Council Directive 2006/112/EC of 28 November 2006 on the common system of value-added tax; the same is valid concerning the provision of intermediation services by collaborative economy platforms (Pantazatou, 2018). Similarly to income tax, the tax obligations of the accommodation provider will be the same in the case of monetary remuneration for the provision of accommodation, since the mere making available of real property for renting/accommodation on an online platform will make the accommodation provider a taxable person (Pantazatou, 2018). However, the provision of accommodation or rental for other than monetary remuneration is questionable. The assessment of such remuneration is problematic, particularly the existence of a direct link between the supplies and the remuneration in kind (for instance in case of 'bank' type arrangements where participants contribute goods or services to a common pool in exchange for the right to benefit from that pool) (European Commission, 2016) in which case the conditions for applying VAT may not be met, depending on the particular circumstances of the case. As regards the online platform operators, if the they provide accommodation intermediation services for remuneration, the supply will be subject to VAT.

As to the accommodation tax, the accommodation provider is not affected by the form of booking of accommodation as it is always him who is responsible for collecting and remitting the local tax. The condition is that the provision of accommodation is remunerated. The intermediary is not subject to such (or any other) local tax but may have informative or other roles. For example, Booking.com informs about the (assumed) amounts of local tax, but these are paid to the tax administrator by the accommodation providers themselves, regardless of whether the payment for the accommodation was made to the accommodation provider or in advance at the time of booking. Airbnb has taken a slightly different approach, signing an agreement with the City of Bratislava on 24 June 2021 to collect the accommodation tax in relation to a part of the accommodation providers it covers. This tax will be collected at the time of booking and remitted quarterly to the city (bratislava.sme.sk, 2021).

4. Results and discussion

Based on available secondary statistical data, using the historical method, comparison, deduction and analogy, the authors illustrated the perspective of development of collaborative economy (accentuating the situation in SR); the findings are presented as a justification of addressing the issue of taxing the provision of accommodation within the collaborative economy in Slovakia.

4.1 Collaborative economy boom

Across different sectors of the EU economy, the most frequent use of collaborative platforms is for accommodation (57%) (Flash Eurobarometer 467, April 2018). In June 2021, Eurostat published experimental data on short-stay accommodation (in NACE Rev. 2 group 55.2 – see above) booked via collaborative economy platforms, which included Airbnb, Booking, Expedia Group, and Tripadvisor. The data show that between 2018 and 2019, in SR, there was an increase in the number of stays made via these four platforms from 208,000 to 300,000, nights booked from 562,000 to 783,000, and the guest nights from 1,827,000 to 2,359,000. For comparison, in SR, Eurostat reports a total of 15,188,140 nights spent in tourist accommodation establishments in 2018 and 17,225,333 in 2019. This figure has been rising significantly since 2015 (the average for 2009 to 2014 is 10,634,292 nights). Eurostat notes that the experimental data may be subject to future revisions, in particular, due to possible double-counting, however, they indicate an increasing trend in the use of online platforms also within SR. This is confirmed by the rising share of individuals who have used a website or app to get accommodation from a private individual (from 16% in 2017 to 21% in 2019, which is comparable to the EU27 average). According to the Statistical Office of SR (2017-2020), there is also an increasing trend of using specialised websites/apps (e.g. Airbnb) over others (such as Facebook, Google) – from 9.3% to 12.2% in 2017 up to 18.4% to 11.5% in 2019), and in 2020, 4.1% of Slovaks who used the internet in the last three months used accommodation via a private person (Bazoš, Facebook, Airbnb, etc.), compared to 10% who used professional services (e.g. hotels).

In SR, Novacká et al (2020) report that in 2020 there were 2,000 Airbnb hosts and 300+ Vrbo hosts. In terms of the number of properties offered in SR, Gregorová (2020) reports 7,756 beds in 987 accommodation establishments on Airbnb as of 30 October 2019; as of 3 December 2021, we identified 2,710 rentals offered on Airbnb and Vrbo with a potential occupancy of 12,926 guests (own calculation based on data published on AirDNA.com, 2021).

However, comprehensive data are not available despite the authors' efforts to obtain them – of the institutions queried (the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Transport, the Institute of Tourism of SR, the Association of Tourism of SR, the Association of Hotels and Restaurants of Slovakia), the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Transport and the Association of Hotels and Restaurants of Slovakia replied that they did not record statistical data in this area, while the other institutions did not reply at all.

4.2 Collaborative economy revenues and tax challenges

In SR (2016), the revenues of collaborative economy operators in accommodation services amounted to EUR 17 million (14% of the total revenues of the collaborative economy – EUR 122 million) (European Commission, 2018; Novacká, 2020). More complex data on possible tax gap are missing. The revenues of these accommodation intermediaries accrue from service fees charged to hosts and guests – for instance Airbnb charges either only the host (usually between 14 and 16%) or a combination (up to 3% charged to the host and up to 14.2% to the guest) (Airbnb, 2021). Booking.com (2021) charges a commission for each booking as a set percentage of the product price (e.g. room price), the amount of which is not generally available (e.g. a minimum 12% commission is stated in the contract with '*IVeS, an organisation for public administration informatics*' published in the Central Register of Contracts).

In the context of the above, taxation needs to be addressed. The European Commission (2016) recommends that the Member States should aim at proportionate obligations and a level playing field and should apply functionally similar tax obligations to businesses providing comparable services. This trend is already visible in SR, especially in the context of the above-mentioned amendment to the Income Tax Act. However, the well-intentioned change also had its unforeseen negative effects in the early days due to the situation when, following the change in legislation, foreign platforms did not actively register their PEs and the obligation to apply withholding tax when making payments fell on accommodation providers. In 2018, only the TPF group from CZ registered itself, Expedia Lodging Partner Services Sárl from Switzerland was registered *ex officio*, and registration of Booking.com, HRS – Hotel Reservation Service Robert Ragge GmbH, Previo and SZALLAS.HU was in progress (Sme.sk, 2018). Miroslav Marcinčin from the Slovak Chamber of Tax Advisors saw a problem in the fact that in practice these entrepreneurs have no real possibility to withhold the tax - they would have to pay the tax from their funds and then claim it from the platform operator (Sme.sk, 2018). As of 7 December 2021, Financial administration confirmed that 10 online platforms providing accommodation had a registered PE in SR, but we were not provided with a list of them.

Challenges for tax legislation also arise from the use of platforms not only by professionals but especially by non-professionals – so-called peers (Hučková et al, 2018), who tend not to declare the income received. However, such tax avoidance can occur even without an intermediary, so the question is whether intermediation through the platform itself might help to improve control and fulfilment of tax obligations. The European Commission (2016) directly states that the collaborative economy has actually created opportunities for tax authorities, as mere intermediation through online platforms allows for increased traceability of transactions. It also notes that it is already good practise in several countries where such platforms participate in tax collection by mutual agreement. For example, the above-mentioned contract of Airbnb and the City of Bratislava is the first of its kind within the V4 countries, but globally, similar local tax collection is already implemented in approximately 30,000 cases (bratislava.sme.sk, 2021). The contract was initiated by the city itself, though, due to evasion of local tax, since in the period in question, from around 300 listings, only 2 out of 93 properties inspected were registered and paid local taxes (Trend, 2017 in European Commission, 2018). Although the accommodation tax represents a negligible revenue source from a national perspective, it is of significance to individual municipalities from a local perspective. From 2010 to 2019, the total revenue from the accommodation tax in SR increased from EUR 7.74 million to EUR 16.23 million, although in total over the last ten years this tax represents only 0.66% of the tax revenue of municipalities in SR (0.47% of the tax revenue of the entire local self-government). For comparison, in Hungary the revenue from a similar tourist tax represents up to 1.32% of the local self-government´s tax revenue, but in CZ the applied stay fee (formerly spa and recreation fee and accommodation capacity fee) (Radvan and Kolářová, 2020) represents only 0.17% (own elaboration based on Vartašová, 2021). Its benefit for larger cities is evident, though – e.g. in Bratislava, the revenue amounted to EUR 4.74 million in 2019 (nearly 2% of the city's tax revenue), but in 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures introduced, it halved (EUR 2.17 million, i.e. 0.87% of the city's tax revenue) (Bratislava, 2021: 7). Before Covid – from 2017 to 2019, the number of overnight stays doubled – from 219,900 to 435,000 (Novacká, 2020). According to the Bratislava City Council, the cooperation with Airbnb should bring the city an annual accommodation tax revenue of EUR 0.6 million (bratislava.sme.sk, 2021). Thus, efforts to improve tax collection make sense for local self-government. Also in CZ, legislation is responding to the rapid development of the sharing economy at the level of local fees by introducing a stay fee in 2019 instead of the above-mentioned two former fees, which is imposed on a paid stay of no more than 60 consecutive days with an individual provider; the fee rate can be set by the municipality up to CZK 50 (approx. EUR 2) per day (Petráš, 2020; a more complex analysis is provided by Plzáková and Studnička, 2021).

5. Conclusion

The authors conclude that the terms "sharing economy" and "collaborative economy" should not be used synonymously and they see the difference in their substantive content primarily in the nature of the implementation of the processes and their outcomes. Justification: In the sharing economy, goods are provided preferably free of charge or for consideration in the form of a *quid pro quo*, but not to make a profit; therefore, we consider that the sharing economy has been gradually modified, expanded to include entities that carry out sharing, exchanging, cooperation and renting, also to make a profit; the functioning of the sharing economy through internet platforms has created differentiated opportunities (directly or indirectly) to offer and use private goods, which can be used by both non-entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs, i.e. we are talking about the collaborative economy.

Within our research, we identified both positive but also negative aspects of the collaborative economy, such as vulnerability to unexpected fluctuations - like effects of Covid-19 lockdown restrictions (Batool, 2021), reduction in the number of long-term rental accommodations available to people who live and work in cities due to their increasing use for short-term holiday rentals (Eurocities.eu, 2020), distortion of the original intention of sharing economy of free use of unused goods by providers who rent numerous accommodation units and use collaborative economy platforms as a source of income, though, under less strict legislative and administrative demands (Novacká et al., 2020; Trend, 2016) or that the functioning of the collaborative economy is, in general, based more on trust than on specific legal regulation, e.g. that built on customer ratings, even though, we already encounter partial regulation (such as in the Income Tax Act). In this regard Štrkolec (2021) states that, given the rapid development of online digital platforms and the provision of shared services, the issue of international as well as national regulation of the sharing economy comes to the fore.

Despite our view, that provision of accommodation may be taxed under current regulation, we identified also an important tax-related problem. "Specific feature of the collaborative economy is that service providers are often private individuals offering assets or services on an occasional P2P basis. At the same time, increasingly micro entrepreneurs and small businesses are using collaborative platforms." (European Commission, 2018). These derive relatively little income from their activities per transaction which makes it difficult to control the fulfilment of their tax obligations (Novacká, 2020). The example of the accommodation tax in Bratislava points out the trend of frequent evasion of tax obligations by these entities. Online platforms represent a simplification of access to the market and making profits, however without forcing the entities to comply with tax obligations. The performance of tax administration and especially audit activities entails high costs and may not be sufficiently efficient, therefore we are inclined to the view of Hučková et al (2018) on the need to devolve more responsibilities to platforms, which would participate in tax collection. Another alternative is to streamline synergies in terms of the provision of information to the financial authorities by the operators of online platforms. Novacká et al (2020) note that legislation is generally slow to respond to the intensity of the growth of the collaborative economy. In this respect, the performance of activities through an online platform (capturing all transactions) can be seen at the same time as a positive, which, in case of higher participation, could contribute to detection of tax evasion and motivate voluntary compliance with tax obligations.

After summarising the results and findings of the research, the authors conclude that the current tax legislation regulating the provision of accommodation is generally applicable to the collaborative economy at the substantive-law level. We see possible shortcomings in the procedural level (tax administration) and the application practice. Pantazatou (2018) sees the biggest challenges in the area of tax compliance and enforcement, as well. The problematic aspects of the application side are also pointed out by e.g. Bonk (2019), Babčák (2021), and Cibuľa (2019). These will be the subject of further research.

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Learning by Doing: Fostering Tourism Students' Soft Skills Through Interdisciplinarity and Collaboration

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Abstract: Having a strong affinity and interdependence with a wide range of sectors and industries, tourism is, by nature, an interdisciplinary field. However, despite this realization, there are still different barriers to the development of interdisciplinary research and active collaborative projects within Tourism Higher Education. In addition to these barriers, there is also a disarticulation between tourism curricula and what practitioners perceive as being key skills within the industry. Hence, as the context in which the tourist activity takes place becomes more competitive, resulting in a pressing need for skilled and multifaceted professionals, educational institutions and tourism educators are increasingly being challenged to overcome these barriers and come up with creative projects that can help bridge the gap between academia and the labour market. Aiming to describe an interdisciplinary project focusing on soft skills within different tourism subsectors, this paper will draw on a literature review, project outputs and two questionnaires, as to describe its implementation and overall results. Mostly based on students' perceptions and determining whether they are aligned with the industry's current demands and expectations, in addition to a general description, it will crosscut different perspectives, analysing the importance attributed to soft skills by students and prospective employers. Deriving from this analysis and the project's scope, the authors will also put forward a reflection regarding the impact of the project on not only student's perceptions regarding soft skills, but also on the affordances of the project to develop transversal competences, making a case for other innovative initiatives. As a result, the final section of the paper will include references to lessons learnt and future research directions.

Keywords: collaboration, higher education, hospitality, interdisciplinarity, soft skills, tourism

1. Introduction

Often described as a key economic driver, the tourism industry is currently facing a wide range of challenges when it comes to workers' qualifications and overall skills. Having been made more apparent by the COVID-19 pandemic, these challenges are, however far more structural, ranging from the continuous integration of technological solutions to issues regarding staff training and retention. Considered to be particularly vulnerable to crisis situations (Huang & Baker, 2021), tourism and hospitality workers are often "associated with low levels of education and limited entrepreneurial and managerial skills" (Daniel *et al.*, 2017, p. 65), with recent events having led many to consider career transitions (Huang and Baker, 2021).

Described as "a labour-intensive industry" (Kong, 2015, p. 1), tourism's "multi-faceted character" and its "diverse functional areas" (Daniel *et al.*, 2017, p. 65) increasingly call for changes in how tourism professionals are trained, prompting Higher Education Institutions to take on new approaches as to rethink their programs, enhance the curricula, and foster innovative and collaborative projects and activities that address both technical and transversal skills. These approaches, which are aligned with current trends supporting the idea that "knowledge, skills, and attitudes and values are not competing competencies but rather are developed interdependently" (OECD, 2019, p. 25), also address the lingering issue of preparedness and obsolescence (Cetron, 2007), taking into account the "changing prevalence of types of tasks required for work over time" (OECD, 2019, p. 8), i.e., the increasingly significant shift from routine manual tasks, to non-routine analytic and interpersonal tasks.

As a result, and as the market is becoming ever more flexible and reliant on organizational networking and technology, which are the core of the so-called "knowledge-based economy", there is currently a growing need for technically skilled workers who are also able to adapt to "the changing requirements of the job" (van Laar *et al.*, 2017, p. 577), i.e., people who are equipped with cognitive and meta-cognitive skills (that can be associated with learning and literacy), social and emotional skills (often paired with the concept of life skills), as well as physical and practical skills (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2015; OECD, 2019).

Most commonly referred to as 21st century skills (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2015), this wide range of competences includes creativity and innovation, critical thinking, problem solving, communication and collaboration, flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity and accountability and leadership and responsibility, with some authors underpinning them with the concept of digital competence, with technology and digital platforms being increasingly perceived as a common denominator and innovative cluster (van Laar *et al.*, 2017). Rather than a comprehensive list of competences, these frameworks address current demands by adding "additional layers for communication skills, technological savvy, a global view, collaborative practices, digital skills, and more innovative applications" (Geisinger, 2016, p. 245), embodying more inclusive and in-depth perspectives that are in synch with current challenges and demands of the labour market and education.

Aligned with the concept of soft skills, which can be described as "a set of skills which includes how people relate to each other by communicating, listening, engaging in dialogue, giving feedback, cooperating as a team member, solving problems, contributing in meetings and resolving conflict" (Padhi, 2014, p. 1), this new paradigm is not only cross-sectorial, but also embraces the idea of interdisciplinarity and lifelong learning (Gibb, 2014; Poszytek, 2021), thus enhancing previous models focussing on hard skills, which are considered to be "more technical, highly specific in nature and particular to an occupation and that can be (generally) taught more easily than soft skills" (UNESCO-IBE, 2013, pp. 53–54).

Despite their perceived importance in the tourism industry, with people being "the most important element in efficient operation and [its] further development"(Tfaily, 2018, p. 31), research on the importance of soft skills within this scope seems to indicate a discrepancy between how they are perceived by faculty, students and industry leaders (Wesley, Jackson and Lee, 2017; Sharma, Singh and others, 2020). Even though recent studies highlight how much these skills are valued by employers (Silva, Correia and Oliveira, 2020), they also point to the existence of a skills gap between current tourism and hospitality programs and stakeholders' expectations (Fournier and Ineson, 2010; Wesley, Jackson and Lee, 2017; Jaykumar, 2018). As a result, even though it is possible to establish the importance of communication (Wushe, Shenje and Ndlovu, 2014; Ortiz, Region-Sebest and MacDermott, 2016; Sharma, Singh and others, 2020), creativity (Ortiz, Region-Sebest and MacDermott, 2016; Wesley, Jackson and Lee, 2017; Mareque, de Prada Creo and Gonzalez-Sanchez, 2019), flexibility (Sisson and Adams, 2013) and teamwork (Luka, 2015; Mareque, de Prada Creo and Gonzalez-Sanchez, 2019; Sharma, Singh and others, 2020), with some authors also pushing for the development of digital and entrepreneurial competences (Daniel *et al.*, 2017), there is a pressing need for innovative, competence-based approaches that can help bridge this gap and overcome these inconsistencies.

Based on these premises and on the need to augment staff qualification and retention within the industry and raising awareness towards the importance of transferable skills, this paper will focus on the current perceptions of future tourist activities management undergraduates on the concept and importance of soft skills, crosscutting them with the market's perspective. Based on an Interdisciplinary Project (IP) involving 5 different courses (namely, Tourist Destination Management, Travel Agencies and Tour Operators Management, Hotel Management, Quality Management in Tourism and English Applied to Tourism VI) and stakeholders from different tourism subsectors, it draws from two questionnaires and interviews carried out by the students as to determine the importance of these skills, at the same time it provided them with an opportunity to develop a collaborative assignment: a short paper outlining their analysis and key findings.

As a result, this IP served a double purpose: on the one hand, it brought students in contact with stakeholders, as each group was required to meet and interview representatives of different tourism spheres (e.g., DMO, Travel Agents/Tour Operators, Events and Hospitality), as to identify the most valued soft skills by companies from each subsector and challenge students own preconceptions; and, on the other hand, by relying on a Project-Based approach which required students to "apply, synthesize, prioritize, summarize theoretical knowledge] (…) to arrive at an in-depth understanding of the important key concepts" (Ab Wahid, Lee &

Baharudin, 2020, p. 84), it enabled them to develop the ability to work in team, as well as their resilience and their communication, collaboration and project management skills.

Having aimed to promote an articulated outlook on tourism education, based on active learning methods, and bridge the gap between academia and the labour market, the impact of this two-fold approach will be described in the following sections.

2. Methodology

The research followed an exploratory, mixed methods approach, which integrates elements of qualitative and quantitative research seeking to capitalize on the complementary nature of both methods (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010) with the aim of extending the range and depth of understanding (Johnson et al., 2007). Despite its wide application in other scientific areas, the use of mixed methods research is still emerging in the tourism field, although its relevance is recognised where context analysis and the integration of different perspectives is required (Truong et al., 2020), as in the case of this paper.

A literature review was conducted on the concept of soft skills and their importance within the tourism industry, which sought to identify the most relevant skills for tourism professionals. In addition to framing the research carried out, this review was also instrumental in developing questionnaires (Q1 and Q2) which were applied to students both at the beginning and at the end of the project, making it possible to compare their initial and final perceptions, as well as collect overall impressions on the IP's impact and main affordances.

Following a similar structure (except for questions pertaining to the specific stage of the project, i.e., students' initial expectations – Q1 – vs. their final perceptions – Q2), the questionnaires comprised 5 sections (described in Table 1). In addition to the questionnaires, the literature review was also important for designing a series of workshops to support students' assignments, hence playing a pivotal role in informing the short papers presented.

Table 1: Questionnaire structure and related research goals

Sections	Research Goals	Type of Questions
Respondents' Profile	To characterize the respondents (gender, age, student status and enrolment).	Closed-ended Open-ended
Perceptions on Soft Skills	To get a general understanding of respondents' previous knowledge on the topic of soft skills (familiarity, meaning and perceived professional/personal relevance).	Multiple Choice Likert Scale Open-ended
Perceptions on Education for Soft Skills	To identify and assess previous educational experiences related to soft skills (contexts of application and perceived curricular value)	Likert Scale Open-ended
Interdisciplinarity	To get a general understanding of respondents' previous perceptions on the concept and identify previous interdisciplinary experiences (constraints, affordances and potential).	Open-ended Closed-ended Rating Multiple Choice
Comments and Suggestions	To collect additional insights on expectations regarding the project (Q1) and its final outcomes and overall educational affordances (Q2).	Open-ended Questions

The results of the questionnaires (Q1 and Q2) were analysed, with the aim of getting to know the students' perceptions and to determine whether they were somehow changed throughout the process. Moreover, the IP's outputs, consisting of a corpus of 12 short papers, were also analysed. Overall, students carried out a total of 42 interviews with representatives of different tourism subsectors (i.e., prospective employers), making it possible to rank the soft skills most frequently mentioned by the interviewees.

The ensuing analysis aimed to triangulate students' perceptions on the soft skills they believed to be the most valued by employers (drawing from the questionnaires), those emphasized in the literature, and those highlighted by the interviewees (based on the short papers presented by the students). The triangulation method makes it possible to use different sources of information through multiple methods, contributing to the reduction of bias in the analysis and to the higher level of validity and credibility of the research (Ingram et al., 2017; Bogdan and Biklen, 2006 cit. in Mondal & Samaddar, 2020).

Based on the literature review, the soft skills mentioned by all participants were grouped according to the 21st century skills framework (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2015), having been associated with one of the following predefined categories: creativity and innovation, critical thinking, problem solving, communication and collaboration, flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity and accountability and leadership and responsibility. In addition to these, and given its relevance in previous studies (van Laar *et al.*, 2017), researchers also looked for references pertaining to digital competence.

3. Findings

As previously mentioned, two questionnaires were applied to the students taking part in the IP: Questionnaire 1 (Q1) – at an early phase of the project (following its formal presentation); and Questionnaire 2 (Q2) – at the end of the project, following the presentation of the short papers. Both questionnaires aimed to collect information on students' perceptions regarding soft skills. The figure below illustrates the respondents' profile, highlighting the lower response rate recorded in the final survey (Q1=42; Q2=35), and the prevalence of female respondents. The percentage of working students did not change significantly, nor did the average age.

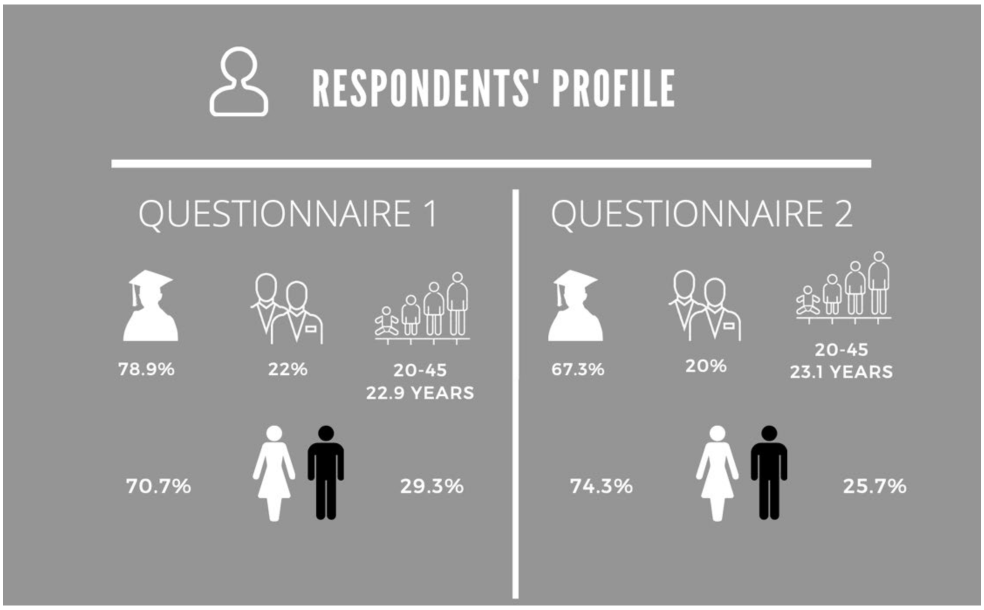

Figure 1: Questionnaire 1 (Q1) and Questionnaire 2 (Q2): respondents' profile

As mentioned in the previous section, throughout the project students were expected to carry out interviews with representatives from different tourism subsectors, with the aim of collecting information on the most valued soft skills. To complete the assignment, a total of 42 interviews were conducted and analysed, with the distribution (by subsector) summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Number of interviews by subsector

Subsectors	Number of Short Papers	Number of Interviews
Hospitality	3	13
Travel Agents/Tour Operators	4	8
Events	2	8
DMOs	3	13

Based on the retrieved data, students' perceptions on the most important soft skills for tourism professionals tend to be linear, despite variations when it comes to three of the analysed categories (namely, self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills and productivity and accountability), whose role is more clearly recognized in Q2. Contrarily, skills associated with the problem-solving category were initially perceived as being more important, with fewer students mentioning them in the final questionnaire. Moreover, it should also be highlighted those references to soft skills pertaining to the categories of creativity and innovation, critical thinking and digital competence were not statistically relevant in neither questionnaire

In both questionnaires, the most relevant categories and those more consistently perceived as important for professionals in the tourism sector are those associated with communication and collaboration (Q1=24; Q2=25), and flexibility and adaptability (Q1=17; Q2=17), whereas soft skills within the productivity and accountability and social and cross-cultural categories became more evident the by the end of the IP (Q1=12; Q2=28; Q1=10; Q2=18). Even though less pronounced, there was also an increase in the skills categorized under the initiative and self-direction and leadership and responsibility categories (Q1=1; Q2=6; Q1=5; Q2=8), whereas in the problem-solving category there was a decrease in the number of references made by students (Q1=12 and Q2=2).

Drawing from the previously defined categories, of all the soft skills mentioned in the questionnaires, communication, adaptability, flexibility, empathy, teamwork and resilience stand out as those students considered to be the most important for tourism professionals. When asked to identify the skills they believed would be more valued by prospective employers (in their capacity of final-year students about to enter the labour market) the initial responses followed suit, with slight changes in ranking. In addition to soft skills within the communication and collaboration category (which continued to be the most relevant), in Q2 students highlighted the importance of

flexibility and adaptability, which was a clear departure from the initial questionnaire in which leadership and responsibility (Q1=18), and productivity and accountability (Q1=12) were perceived as being more valuable.

As the second questionnaire was applied following the conclusion of the short papers (hence, after students carried out and critically analysed the interviews with representatives of the different tourism subsectors), students' answers reflect a change in stance regarding the soft skills they perceive as more relevant. As a result, there is a parallelism between the opinions expressed by students and their individual perceptions, and the findings reported in the short papers. Ergo, skills within the communication and collaboration category (with communication standing out as the most mentioned soft skill) are the most important, followed by those related to productivity and accountability, and, in third place, flexibility and adaptability (with teamwork and adaptability standing out as the most evident). When comparing students' perceptions over time, there was a significant decrease in the number of references in the leadership and responsibility category, which was initially perceived as being the most important (Q1=18), having registered only 7 references in Q2. The number of references within the flexibility and adaptability category, on the other hand, rose from 9 (Q1) to 13 (Q2).

A cross-analysis of these responses with the soft skills presented in the short papers makes it possible to determine that the highest-ranking category is productivity and accountability (n=28), with teamwork (n=9), resilience (n=5) and organization and commitment (n=4) being the skills most valued by the representatives of the various subsectors. In second place, the short papers highlight the importance of social and cross-cultural skills (n=18), with empathy (n=10) being highlighted as the most important skill within this category. In third place, ex aequo, are flexibility and adaptability (n=15) and leadership and responsibility (n=15). Within these categories flexibility (n=8) and ethics (n=5) stand out as the most mentioned skills, respectively.

In sum, and considering the underlying considerations made throughout the short papers, despite the differences between the analysed subsectors, globally, the categories perceived as the most valuable are productivity and accountability, leadership and responsibility and flexibility and adaptability.

When looking at each subsector independently, Travel Agencies and Tour Operators concomitantly attach more value to skills pertaining to productivity and accountability (n=16), with social and cross-cultural skills (n=8) and flexibility and adaptability (n=7) taking the second and third places, respectively. In this sector, teamwork, emotional intelligence, and flexibility stand out as key skills in each category, with communication also being highlighted under the category of communication and collaboration.

In the hospitality sub-sector, productivity and accountability and social-cultural skills are the two leading categories with n=5 references each, followed by leadership and responsibility and initiative and self-direction, both with n=4. As with the Travel Agencies and Tour Operators subsector, teamwork, emotional intelligence, flexibility and communication are the most valued soft skills within each category.

The other subsectors analysed – DMO and Events – present distinctive features in their valuation. While the first gives prominence to leadership and responsibility, social and cross-cultural skills and flexibility and adaptability (all with n=4 references), relegating productivity and accountability to a second level (n=3), the latter considers this to be the most important category (n=4), along with communication and collaboration (n=4). In this subsector all other categories are assigned minimal values. The most valued soft skills in these subsectors are aligned with the other subsectors, with teamwork, emotional intelligence, flexibility, and communication ranking as the most mentioned skills. In short, it seems clear that these four soft skills, namely teamwork, emotional intelligence, flexibility, and communication, are the most relevant both to interviewees and students, with the latter having revisited their initial perceptions based on their experience working in the IP.

Considering one of the IP’s premises, i.e., to help students develop soft skills by fostering teamwork, collaboration and project management skills, the data stemming from the questionnaires signals changes from students' initial perceptions and their final outlook on the competencies actually developed throughout this applied research activity.

Considering the responses to the initial questionnaire, productivity, and accountability (Q1=34) ranks as the highest category. However, in Q2, there are only 20 references to skills within this category. Nevertheless, despite this decrease, this remains the most prominent category. Overall, all categories registered higher rates in Q1 than in Q2, with categories such as communication and collaboration (Q1=16; Q2=8), problem solving (Q1=6; Q2=2) and leadership and responsibility (Q1=5; Q2=2) being significantly less referenced. Moreover, other categories, such as creativity and innovation (Q1=2; Q2=0), critical thinking (Q1=3; Q2=0) or initiative and self-direction (Q1=2; Q2=0) cease to be mentioned in Q2. The category flexibility and adaptability is the most linear (Q1=8; Q2=6) in both questionnaires, whereas digital competence was not mentioned by the students at either moment. Based on students' perceptions on their competence development process, the social and cross-cultural skills category differs from the previous results, as, even though it is not being mentioned by students in Q1, it is referenced in Q2 (Q2=4). These perceptions are aligned with the opinions expressed by the interviewees from each of the subsectors, who have highlighted the importance of teamwork, communication, flexibility, adaptability and empathy. In addition to these, students also considered that the IP helped them develop time management skills.

4. Conclusions

The research aimed to identify the most valued soft skills in the tourism industry, through the implementation of an interdisciplinary project developed by undergraduate tourist activities students. To this end, students' perceptions were analysed through the application of two questionnaires at the initial and final phases of the project. In parallel, students conducted a total of 42 interviews with representatives of the various subsectors to directly assess which soft skills were most valued by companies. Stemming from these interviews, they prepared a set of 12 short papers, highlighting the main conclusions of their research. The triangulation of the results obtained made it possible to profile the most relevant soft skills in the tourism sector and crosscut different perspectives, raising awareness to the role tourism education can play within this scope.

Regarding students' opinion on the most important soft skills for tourism professionals, communication, flexibility, and teamwork stand out, which is in line with previous studies by authors such as Ortiz et al. (2016), Sisson & Adams (2013), Sharma et al. (2020). Students also mentioned empathy and resilience as relevant skills. Creativity, however, was not highly valued by students, although authors such as Wesley et al. (2017) point to this competence as one of the most important, and one can be enhanced through teamwork. These skills were also perceived as the most valued in the labour market, with the IP having contributed to changing students’ overall perceptions, particularly regarding the importance of communication, teamwork, and adaptability, in detriment of skills associated with leadership and responsibility.

As for the most valued soft skills in each subsector, in addition to the previously mentioned skills, those associated with the social and cross-cultural category are also perceived as relevant, particularly in the Travel Agents/Tour Operators, Hospitality and DMO subsectors.

Even though these findings are overall in agreement with previous studies (Sisson and Adams, 2013; Luka, 2015; Mareque, de Prada Creo and Gonzalez-Sanchez, 2019), with regards to digital competences, which are also perceived as key by authors such as van Laar et al. (2017) and Daniel et al. (2017), there were no direct references to specific skills, which can be explained by the fundamental nature of this competence, i.e., the fact it is deeply embedded in all the considered categories.

Additionally, the impact of the COVID'19 pandemic on Tourism Higher Education should also be mentioned, due to the challenges inherent to different teaching scenarios and contexts that have emerged. The literature suggests that online contexts have reinforced teaching and learning processes, having stimulated deeper online interactions and discussions, with the purpose of increasing critical and creative thinking (Goh & Sigala, 2020; Ye & Law, 2021), and bridged the gap between academia and external stakeholders (Sipe & Testa, 2020; Ye & Law, 2021). Moreover, this context has also made it necessary to further develop multitasking and the ability to manage simultaneous online participations, opening perspectives for virtual internships, which also require the development of specific soft skills (Park & Jones, 2021).

As for the potential role of tourism education and this specific project, the data seem to suggest the relevance and importance of this type of interdisciplinary activity within this scope. This project is considered to have enabled students to develop applied research focusing on specific subsectors and broaden their horizons, at the same time it raised their awareness to the skills most valued by their employers. In the case of this project, this realization comes at a crucial time, as students prepare to join the labour market, paving the way to training experiences that can augment their portfolios and professional profile

5. Limitations and future research

As previously mentioned, the findings described are based on a partial analysis of the questionnaires and short papers developed by the students and focuses mostly on the intersection between their personal perceptions (before and after the IP) and the opinions of the industry representatives they have interviewed. Even though the samples, analysis and final paper have been subject to a thorough review and validation, there are different levels of proficiency in the students' work and, most significantly, differences in data representativeness from the different subsectors. On the other hand, the fact that fewer students answered the final questionnaire (vs. the initial questionnaire) also limits some of the findings. Nevertheless, the conclusions are still valid and are considered to contribute towards the discussion regarding the current skills gap and the development of soft skills in tourism education

In the future, considering the IP's replicability potential, researchers expect to collect further data which will enable a more diversified, in-depth analysis which will augment the study's range and contribution within this scope.

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User's Profile of a Portuguese Thermal Establishment: Empirical Study

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Abstract: The thermal tradition plays an important role for society by naturally promoting and improving individuals' well-being. Thermal treatments help cure diseases and prevent pathologies, including mental and social ones, providing users with a better quality of life. At the same time, such a wellness activity introduces leisure components resulting from a more holistic perspective on health and well-being. Given the importance of this topic, which just recently started to be the object of empirical studies in Portugal, the present study aims to identify the profile of those who attend a thermal spa. For this purpose, a self-administrated questionnaire was applied to the Termas de Chaves' users during the 2021 thermal season, i.e., between August and November. A convenience method of non-probability sampling allowed to obtain a sample of 220 thermal users. This establishment, located in the sub-region of Alto Tâmega, North of Portugal, has 300 years of history and vast experience in providing thermal services for different audiences. To better understand and identify the features of the thermal spa user, sociodemographic data were analysed and identified the characteristics, motivations, behaviours, preferences, and perceptions of the thermal spa users under study. The data collected was submitted to treatment through an exploratory quantitative analysis. The distribution data analysis was elaborated using frequencies, centrality and variability descriptive measures complemented by TwoStep cluster analysis. The results showed that most of the participants in Chaves thermal spa are women, with an average age of 69 years (SD=12.556), married, retired, and living in the northern region of Portugal. They seek these services in the season between summer and autumn, for medical advice, mainly for therapeutic reasons, and stay in the thermal spa, on average, for 14 days (SD=2.667). Moreover, the cluster analysis identifies three different groups of users to which thermal stakeholders should consider different policy approaches. By defining the users' profile, this empirical research presents a practical contribution since it provides a strategic orientation for the thermal establishments' stakeholders aiming, essentially, at the (re)qualification of supply and the increase of demand, thus contributing to the sectoral and regional competitiveness.

Keywords: thermal spa, thermal spa users' profile, North Portugal, TwoStep cluster

1. Introduction

Tourism has shown a clear evolution over time, accompanied by the demand for new forms of tourism, as is the case of health and wellness tourism (Arias-Aragones, Caraballo-Payares and Matos-Navas, 2012). Proof of this is the increase, since 2017, in demand for thermal spas' treatments related to health and relaxation. In 2019, the spa establishments had registered 135,259 users (DGEG, 2020). In this sense, thermalism has increasingly been an option for tourists seeking to improve health in its broad dimension. The emphasis lays on physical and mental well-being to increase the quality of life, where relaxation, relieving daily stress, anxieties, and energy renewal are included (Pereira, 2021).

Due to the remarkable evolution of demand, thermalism has gained some visibility in the literature. However, the low volume of scientific production still raises some doubts and uncertainties, namely about users' profiles. Thermal tourism is often associated with health and well-being tourism segments. Several studies address these segments, such as thermal tourism (Brandão et al., 2021; Maseda et al., 2018), wellness tourism (Smith and Kelly, 2006; Wang, Xu and Huang, 2020), health tourism (Jagyasi, 2008), and even medical tourism (Hoz-Correa, Muñoz-Leiva and Bakucz,2018; Connel, 2006). It is noteworthy the contribution of these typologies to the tourism development of many worldwide destinations, such as Portugal. According to Dimitrovski and Todorović (2015), those who seek these tourism typologies are interested in the medicinal properties of the destination natural resources (thermal mineral waters, clean air, a healthy natural environment, favourable climatic conditions, etc.). This is the possibility of enjoying adequate medical and health services within the tourism supply of a given territory. Thermalism and tourism have a strong connection. However, by itself, thermalism provides quality of life (Lopes et al., 2018). The literature refers to the leisure dimension, implicit in several activities, such as tourism, that enhance health and well-being. Indeed, the relationship between leisure and health is known. For instance, Young, Maxwell and Peel (2021) refer to a need to move beyond simple descriptions of the general benefits of leisure to more robust understandings that encompass more complete definitions of health. Therefore, the demand for spa establishments is also due to leisure and recreation issues (Valeriani, Margarucci and Spica, 2018). In addition, individuals seek to benefit from spa services for health issues, in general, and, in particular, for treatment of specific diseases/pathologies. Indeed, the health dimension has, in fact, long been the main reason for attending thermal spas. Silvério (2020) indicates that thermalism has been used for health promotion and treatment of inflammatory and chronic processes. Also, Hanzel et al. (2018) report clinical improvements in patients suffering from rheumatic diseases treated with thermal mineral water.

Users tend to seek this type of establishment with the core goal of restoring themselves physically and mentally. For that reason, thermal spas supply a vast set of services that focus on users' well-being and quality of life. Indeed, thermal tourism is a sector attentive to the population's way of life and therefore concerned with helping to minimise individuals' illnesses and stress. Regarding the abovementioned, this research's main objective is to outline the profile of the user who attends the Chaves thermal spa, hereafter called *Termas de Chaves*, one of the most representative thermal establishments in the North of Portugal and analyse their experience when visiting this space. The study's relevance lies in its contribution to developing a diversified supply based on the customer's characteristics, which allows the creation of future strategic measures to be implemented by thermal stakeholders concerned with the well-being and quality of life of individuals. The study is structured in three more sections following this brief theoretical framework. The first focuses on the research methods and methodology. The second presents and analyses the results of the collected data. Final remarks close the study.

2. Methodology

For achieving the study's purpose, exploratory research of quantitative nature was carried out, with the application of a questionnaire to the users of *Termas de Chaves*. This questionnaire was applied on-site through sampling by convenience to the thermal spa users during the 2021 thermal season, i.e. between August and November. As health and wellness tourism is a seasonal activity, these months were chosen to cover an extensive period of the thermal season. No indicative data was obtained concerning the total population frequenting *Termas de Chaves* during the data collection period. Still, a final sample consisting of 220 participants who agreed to participate voluntarily in the study has been reached. All participants received an explanation of the study's objectives, its duration, and its voluntary and confidential nature. Accordingly, all participants gave their informed consent.

After the questionnaires' application and data collection, data was processed through an exploratory, quantitative and descriptive analysis. Univariate and multivariate statistical techniques were applied to process the data collected. First, to assist in analysing and characterising the study sample, an exploratory, descriptive statistical analysis was performed on the sociodemographic data and the data describing the participants' experience. After, a cluster analysis was performed. Cluster techniques, commonly used in the social and human sciences, identify subgroups of users with similar characteristics within the sample collected. Such analysis allowed the achievement of a better segmentation of the users who attend *Termas de Chaves*. Given its usefulness, cluster analysis has emerged as one of the preferred methods in multivariate analysis, and its evolution has been documented in diverse and vast literature (Aldenderfer and Blashfield, 1984; Kettenring, 2006; Murtagh, 2015; Dimitrovski and Todorović, 2015; Wierzchoń and Kłopotek, 2018). The relevance of this multivariate technique has been determined by the availability of large databases, software development for data processing and theoretical research on clustering algorithms.

The TwoStep cluster analysis technique has been adopted. This technique, initially presented by Aldenderfer and Blashfield (1984) and Zhang, Ramakrishnan and Livny (1986), and included in the SPSS software following the procedures explained by Norusis (2004; 2011), is considered appropriate when multiple indicators (measured either categorically or continuously) are involved in a large database. Literature mentions its advantages: (i) the possibility of applying it to a large database, where a high number of explanatory continuous and categorical variables are simultaneously present; (ii) the selection by the algorithm itself of the optimal number of clusters; and (iii) the straightforward interpretation of the results. Cluster formation becomes sharper and structural analysis more rational (Estevão and Ferreira, 2012; Rundle-Thiele, 2015; Tkaczynski, 2017; Benassi et al., 2020). As the name infers, the TwoStep technique implies that two steps are implemented. In the first step, a set of pre-clusters is created to reduce the size of the distance matrix between observations. In a second step, a hierarchical grouping of the pre-defined clusters is performed according to the number of clusters considered optimal. This technique presents a hybrid approach that first uses a distance measure to separate clusters and then a probabilistic approach (similar to latent class analysis) to choose the optimal subgroup model.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Spa users' profile: Descriptive analysis

The sample under study allowed to obtain a broad range set of sociodemographic information, fundamental to define the profile of the thermal spa user. The sample considered for analysis includes 220 individuals, but not all of them answered all the questions. Table 1 presents the absolute and relative distribution of the sociodemographic data and provides information on the number of individuals that responded to each question. With the sample under study, it was also possible to assemble specific information characterising the users' experience (Table 2).

To understand the relevance of the thermal spa experience, in the perspective of both those who seek it and those who already know it, users were asked if it was the first time they visited this establishment. More than half of the sample (63.7%) said it was not the first time they attended *Termas de Chaves* while the remaining 36.3% were doing it for the first time. These data may indicate that the users are satisfied with the experience and therefore revisit it. In this sense, it was central to understand if the participants keep loyalty or if they are looking for other thermal spas. The majority of the respondents declare not to frequent other thermal spas (75.6%). However, near 24.4% admit to looking for other thermal establishments.

Additionally, the questionnaire allows understanding they do not attend the thermal spa alone. Other people accompanied most users (64.5%) to perform the thermal treatments. At least one person, in most cases, escorts the users during the period of stay. Just 82 (37.4%) thermal bathers prefer to enjoy these services alone. It is possible to conclude that most of the users choose to use the thermal spa services of Chaves for an average period of 14 ($\pm$ 2,67) days. This long period of stay together with an average age more pronounced and the fact that most users are married or in a consensual union may explain the previous observation about the importance of attending the thermal spa accompanied by one person. An extended period of stay may indicate the need to find accommodation near the establishment. However, just a bit more than half of the users (56.2% of the sample) looked for accommodation during their stay. The observation that most users live in the same district where the *Termas de Chaves* is located (Vila Real) may explain that almost half of the users did not look for accommodation during their stay. About the thermal spa users' forecasted expenditure during the experience, only 48 of the 220 respondents answered. Sixty-eight per cent of the respondents indicated that they expected to spend between 501 and 1,000 euros, followed by 27.1% who intended to spend between 1,001 and 1,500 euros. Less than 4.2% indicated the option up to 500 euros. Knowing the thermal activity is a seasonal one, the questionnaire look to understand which time of the year respondents choose to attend the thermal spa of Chaves. The summer season (July-September) and the autumn option (October-November) are preferred – 44,4% and 42,5% of the users selected it, respectively. The winter (December-March) and spring (April-June) were indicated by just 7.7% and 5.4% of the sample, respectively.

Regarding the type of service that they most look for in the establishment, it is significant to note that therapeutic thermalism is the one that predominates - 64.5% of users seek *Termas de Chaves* for this purpose. Wellness purpose is indicated by just a little more than one third (35,2%) of the respondents. One person referred to seek the thermal spa for sports. The previous results are in line with the type of services provided. Most of the respondents (57.7%) seek the thermal spa for health reasons followed by prevention associated with health (38.1%). Just a small number of respondents (4.2%) see the thermal spa as a place of leisure where they can relax. In addition to this data, it is important to understand the driving source which leads someone to attend the thermal spa. More than half the users (55.9%) got to know the thermal programme of Chaves through medical advice.

Table 1*:* Summary of the distribution of users' characteristics

Variable	Category	Absolute distribution n	Relative distribution %
Gender (n=220)	Male	74	33.6
	Female	146	66.4
Age group (n=218)	<=35	4	1.8
	36 - 45	6	2.8
	46 – 55	20	9.2
	56 – 65	40	18.3
	66 – 75	77	35.3
	78 – 85	58	26.6
	86+	13	6.0
Marital status (n=213)	Single	16	7.5
	Married/Consensual union	155	72.7
	Divorced	16	7.5
	Widow	26	12.3
Education level (n=220)	No academic qualification	6	2.9
	Primary school	125	58.6
	High school	33	15.5
	Higher education	49	23.0
Nationality (n=214)	Angola	1	0.5
	Brazil	1	0.5
	Spain	2	0.9
	Paraguay	1	0.5
	Portugal	208	97.1
	Romania	1	0.5
Country of origin (n= 220)	Spain	1	0.5
	France	1	0.5
	Portugal	218	99.0
Residence (n=217)	Aveiro	17	7.8
	Braga	15	7.0
	Bragança	8	3.6
	Coimbra	4	1.8
	Évora	2	0.9
	Faro	2	0.9
	Guarda	1	0.5
	Leiria	3	1.4
	Lisboa	16	7.4
	Porto	51	23.5
	Santarém	4	1.8
	Setúbal	1	0.5
	Viana do Castelo	3	1.4
	Vila Real	87	40.1
	Viseu	3	1.4
Household dimension (n=213)	1	41	19.3
	2	133	62.4
	3	29	13.6
	4	6	2.8
	5 or more	4	1.9
Professional status (n=220)	Employee	38	17.3
	Self-employed	7	3.2
	Student	0	0
	Retired	164	74.5
	Housekeeper	6	2.7
	Unemployed	5	2.3
Net household income (n=209)	Until 665€	46	22.0
	666 – 1300€	93	44.5
	1300 – 2000€	46	22.0
	2001 – 3000€	20	9.6
	3001€ or more	4	1.9

Source: Authors' elaboration

The results corroborate literature that identifies thermal spa users. Strack and Raffay-Danyi (2020) found that the most frequent users in Hungary are elderly and attend establishments in couples without dependent children or more enlarged families. Young people comprise the least common segment. Moreover, the most significant group includes users who enjoy healing services funded by social security due to a doctor's recommendation. Dryglas and Różycki's (2017) work focuses on Polish medical (therapeutic) spas also report the users are older and predominately women with chronic diseases benefiting from health insurance or social security plans. Similarly, Esiyok, Kurtulmuşoğlu and Özdemir (2018) mention that the elderly are more likely to participate in spa tourism. However, Aleksijevit (2019), besides the so-called Baby Boomers (the generation of

55-74 years), found that Generation X (users aged 35-54 years) are also a market to consider. This market comprises people with a high level of education, higher average income and a preference for travelling with friends or family.

Table 2*:* Thermal experience related data

Variable	Category	Absolute distribution	Relative distribution
		n	%
First time in thermal spa (n=218)	No	139	63.7
	Yes	79	36.3
Frequency of other thermal spas (n=217)	No	164	75.6
	Yes	53	24.4
Type of service required (n=299)	Therapeutic thermalism	193	64.5
	Wellness	105	35.2
	Other Services	1	0.3
Reasons for using the thermal spa (n=352)	Health - Prevention	134	38.1
	Health - Healing	203	57.7
	Leisure/Relaxation	15	4.2
Resons to choose the thermal spa (n=218)	Medical advice	122	55.9
	Recommendation from family and friends	78	36.0
	Promotion made by thermal spa	13	5.9
	Other source	5	2.2
Season (n=261)	Summer (July-September)	116	44.4
	Fall (October-November)	111	42.5
	Spring (April-June)	14	5.4
	Winter (December-March)	20	7.7
The user is accompanied by others (n=219)	No	82	37.4
	Yes	137	62.6
How many persons join the user (n= 134)	1	116	86.6
	2	15	11.2
	3	3	2.2
Accomodation booking (n = 201)	No	88	43.8
	Yes	113	56.2
Expenditure forecast (n=48)	Until 500€	2	4.2
	501 – 1000€	30	68.7
	1001 – 1500€	13	27.1

Source: Authors' elaboration

The presented research results seem to go in the same direction by identifying users in a middle-age and with a higher education diploma. In Spain, a set of research works reached very similar conclusions. Pinos Navarrete, Shaw and Martos (2020) analysed the customer profile of the Alhama de Granada spa in Andalusia. They found that spa-goers are supported by social programmes for older adults that enjoy an extended stay, between 10 and 12 days. Also, Anaya-Aguilar, Gemar and Anaya-Aguilar (2021) analysed the profile of clients attending spas in Andalusia and found that women are the clear majority of users. They are over 56 years old, are retired, and have an average income of fewer than one thousand euros. Liberato et al. (2021) recently conducted research in the North and Centre of Portugal in a pandemic context (COVID'19). They found that most spa users are female, the percentage of respondents aged 45-54 years or older is increasing. As seen for *Termas de Chaves*, older users have a basic education, but secondary education and university degrees dominate. Moreover, around 50% of users are retired. As in Spain, half of the users present a net monthly income of up to a thousand euros. Almost all users of thermal spas in the North and Centre of Portugal are Portuguese. Foreign users are just residual. Finally, Silvério, Fernandes, and Alves (2021a; 2021b) focused the research on the North of Portugal and *Termas de Chaves,* when the pandemic started. The results obtained indicate that most users were women, Portuguese, married, with an average age of 58 years. They are residents in the North of Portugal, have completed a higher education level, and are inactive or retired. Participants are familiar with Chaves thermal spa and seek therapeutic treatments for a period of 12 days during the summer season.

The findings of the present research analysis confirm most of the findings of the published literature contributing to consolidating the knowledge on the thermal spa users' profile. Finally, to better understand the reasons behind the preference for this thermal spa, a 5-points Likert scale of importance was applied for the users to rate each of the eleven attributes defined. On the scale, 1 indicates "not at all important" and 5 indicates "extremely important".

The results presented in Table 3 reveal that the medicinal quality of the thermal water and the quality of the facilities are the attributes that most influence the users' choice. The first one obtained an average of 4.50 (± 0.53) and the second 4.50 (± 0.52). Around half of the users (51.4%) consider this attribute extremely important, and almost half (47.3% for the first attribute and 47.7% for the second) believe it is very important. The results for the remaining attributes are not very different. On average, the importance given to each attribute goes around 4.4 and 4.5 points. The most significant differences among them are in the division of answers between the extremely importance of the attribute and its very importance. Just one attribute presents results indicating it is not important at all or it is not important – the one that refers to the presence of family and/or friends. Their presence is not determinant to attend the thermal spa for some users. Still, most users consider the company of family and friends during the period of stay as extremely important. Also, rest and tranquillity is an attribute recognised as extremely important in these thermal spas. Recognised for the majority of users as very important are: (i) the equipment's quality; (ii) the quality of services supplied; (iii) the service's diversity but also (iv) the customisation of the supplied services (this is the supply of a tailor-made service); (v) the service specialisation and techniques used; (vi) the knowledge and competencies of human resources and also (vii) the availability of the human resources.

Table 3: Motivational factors of the visit to the thermal spa of Chaves.

Attributes	1 Not at all important	2 Not important	3 Indifferent	4 Very important	5 Extremely important	Mean	Standard Deviation
Medicinal quality of thermal water (n=220)	-	-	3 1.3%	104 47.3%	113 51.4%	4.50	0.528
Installations' quality (n=220)	-	-	2 0.9%	105 47.7%	113 51.4%	4.50	0.519
Equipment' quality (n=220)	-	-	4 1.8%	112 50.9%	104 47.3%	4.45	0.534
Quality of services provided (n=220)	-	-	3 1.4%	111 50.5%	106 48.1%	4.47	0.527
Diversity of services provided (n=220)	-	-	4 1.8%	119 54.1%	97 44.1%	4.42	0.531
Expertise and techniques used (n=219)	-	-	5 2.3%	111 50.7%	103 47.0%	4.45	0.542
Knowledge and skills of human resources (n=219)	-	-	4 1.8%	117 53.5%	98 44.7%	4.43	0.532
Availability and assistance provided by human resources (n=220)	-	-	4 1.8%	114 51.8%	102 46.4%	4.45	0.534
Service customisation (n=220)	-	-	4 1.8%	116 52.7%	100 45.5%	4.44	0.533
Rest and tranquility (n=220)	-	-	3 1.4%	107 48.6%	110 50%	4.49	0.528
Presence of friends and/or family (n=220)	2 0.9%	1 0.5%	11 5.0%	94 42.7%	112 50.9%	4.42	0.695

Source: Authors' elaboration

3.2 Policy target groups: TwoStep cluster analysis

The research study is concerned not only to find the *persona* that best describes the user of the thermal spa establishment but also with the possible users' target groups according to sociodemographic characteristics and motifs to seek the service of the thermal spa. As Dimitrovski and Todorović (2015) mentioned, the idea is to reveal the target groups which tailor-made policies and measures should aim at. The target groups to which the different stakeholders should look carefully.

The starting point for the cluster analysis implied selecting the variables that showed to be fundamental to describe the users. Therefore, variables as gender, marital and professional status, education level, Portuguese residence, household dimension and net income, frequency of the analysed thermal spa and other thermal spas, type of service demanded and reasons for choosing *Termas de Chaves*. Moreover, the season of attendance, the persons accompanying the user, and the accommodation booking were also included. A continuous variable, measuring the age of the users, has been added to the 15 previous categorical variables included. The Log-likelihood distance measure has been adopted and the number of clusters to be retained was not fixed. Akaike's Information Criteria (AIC) and Schwarz's Bayesian Information Criteria (BIC) tests allowed choosing the optimal number of clusters. Both tests indicated the best solution is to divide the sample into three clusters. The silhouette measure of cohesion and separation, a measure of the clustering quality based on the average distances between objects, indicates it is a reasonable solution since its value stays between 0.20 and 0.50. Information on the number of clusters, their final frequencies and descriptive cluster statistics were obtained at the end of the process.

Table 4 presents the results for each cluster, showing the absolute and relative number of observations by cluster for each input variable. It should be noted that only 172 observations were considered for the analysis since the cluster technique considers the observations for which there are no missing values. In the total of all variables included in the analysis, 48 observations were lost. Cluster 2 and cluster 3 are the most significant clusters, including 74 observations each (43% of the valid sample). The cluster with fewer observations is cluster 1 (nearly 14% of the valid sample).

Table 4: TwoStep clusters distribution.

Variable	Category	Cluster 1 (n=24)		Cluster 2 (n=74)		Cluster 3 (n=74)		Combined (n=172)	
Age (continuous)	Average	52,7		67,8		73,9		68,3	
Variable	Category	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Gender	Male	4	6.9	21	36.2	33	56.9	58	100
	Female	20	17.5	53	46.5	41	36.0	114	100
Marital status	Single	2	15.4	8	61.5	3	23.1	13	100
	Married/Consensual union	17	13.7	49	39.5	58	46.8	124	100
	Divorced	4	28.6	10	71.4	0	0.0	14	100
	Widow	1	4.8	7	33.3	13	61.9	21	100
Education level	No academic qualification	0	0.0	2	33.3	4	66.7	6	100
	Primary school	7	7.3	46	47.9	43	44.8	96	100
	High school	9	29.0	13	41.9	9	29.0	31	100
	Higher education	8	20.5	13	33.3	18	46.2	39	100
Residence	Aveiro	1	7.1	1	7.0	12	85.7	14	100
	Braga	0	0.0	9	60.0	6	40.0	15	100
	Bragança	0	0.0	1	33.3	2	66.7	3	100
	Coimbra	0	0.0	1	33.3	2	66.7	3	100
	Évora	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	100.0	1	100
	Faro	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	100.0	2	100
	Leiria	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	100.0	2	100
	Lisboa	0	0.0	7	46.7	8	53.3	15	100
	Porto	0	0.0	11	30.6	25	69.4	36	100
	Santarém	0	0.0	3	100	0	0.0	3	100
	Setúbal	0	0.0	1	100	0	0.0	1	100
	Viana do Castelo	0	0.0	1	50	1	50.0	2	100
	Vila Real	23	32.9	35	50	12	17.1	70	100
	Viseu	0	0.0	3	100	0	0.0	3	100
Household dimension	1	1	3.3	16	53.3	13	43.3	30	100
	2	11	9.9	48	43.2	52	46.8	111	100
	3	10	43.5	8	34.8	5	21.7	23	100
	4	2	50.0	0	0.0	2	50.0	4	100
	5 or more	0	0.0	2	50.0	2	50.0	4	100
Professional status	Employee	16	48.5	10	30.3	7	21.2	33	100
	Self-employed	4	66.7	0	0.0	2	33.3	6	100
	Retired	2	1.6	56	45.5	65	52.8	123	100
	Housekeeper	0	0.0	6	100.0	0	0.0	6	100
	Unemployed	2	50.0	2	50.0	0	0.0	4	100
Net household income	Until 665€	4	11.8	18	52.9	12	35.3	34	100
	666 – 1300€	3	3.9	36	47.4	37	48.7	76	100
	1300 – 2000€	8	20.5	17	43.6	14	35.9	39	100
	2001 – 3000€	7	36.8	2	10.5	10	52.6	19	100
	3001€ or more	2	50.0	1	25.0	1	25.0	4	100
First time in thermal spa	No	10	9.3	49	45.4	49	45.4	108	100
	Yes	14	21.9	25	39.1	25	39.1	64	100
Frequency of other thermal spas	No	19	14.7	66	51.2	44	34.1	129	100
	Yes	5	11.6	8	18.6	30	69.8	43	100
Type of service required	Therapeutic thermalism	16	10.0	70	43.8	74	46.3	160	100
	Wellness	15	15.3	63	64.3	20	20.4	98	100
Reasons for using the thermal spa	Health - Prevention	9	8.0	64	57.1	39	34.8	112	100
	Health - Healing	20	12.5	69	43.1	71	44.4	160	100
	Leisure/Relaxation	5	35.7	4	28.6	5	35.7	14	100
Resons to choose the thermal spa	Medical advice	22	22.2	42	42.4	35	35.4	99	100
	Recommendation of family and	2	3.6	20	35.7	34	60.7	56	100
	Promotion made by thermal spa	0	0.0	10	76.9	3	23.1	13	100
	Other source	0	0.0	2	50.0	2	50.0	4	100
Season	Summer (July-September)	18	20.7	1	1.1	68	78.2	87	100
	Fall (October-November)	14	14.6	73	76.0	9	9.4	96	100
	Spring (April-June)	10	83.3	1	8.3	1	8.3	12	100
	Winter (December-March)	14	93.3	1	6.7	0	0.0	15	100
The user is accompanied by others	No	17	25.8	30	45.5	19	28.8	66	100
	Yes	7	6.6	44	41.5	55	51.9	106	100
Accomodation booking	No	24	29.3	39	47.6	19	23.2	82	100
	Yes	0	0.0	35	38.9	55	61.1	90	100

Source: Authors' elaboration

Cluster 1 is the younger age cluster. The observation of the results indicates that age may define the remaining characteristics of the group of users in this cluster. Users with a middle-age are predominantly women, married and do not have a specific level of education. However, they have some formal level of qualification. Most of them live near the *Termas de Chaves* in families with 2 or 3 members. The place of residence near the establishment may explain they attend it without any company and do not need to book accommodation. They are new clients, and most of them never used a thermal spa. Due to medical advice, they look most for therapeutic thermalism seeking to heal some health problems. Since this is the main reason for looking for thermal spas, they attend it throughout the year without any preferable season.

Cluster 2 includes the users near the retirement age (average age of 68 years old). The users in this cluster are also predominantly women, but the distinction by sex is not so obvious. They live alone because they are mostly single or divorced, and therefore when attending the spa, they are also alone. Even if their residence place is mainly Vila Real or Porto, it is in this cluster that it is possible to find people living in other Portuguese districts like Braga or Lisbon. The ones from more far away book accommodation. They essentially have a primary or basic education qualification level. In this group are found retired, employed or working at home (housekeepers). Since they live alone, their net average monthly income is relatively low – most of the cluster's members earn until 1,300 euros. It is not the first time they have attended *Termas de Chaves* and are loyal. They use during the Fall season. It is the group of users seeking wellness services to prevent health problems. Even if the medical advice is important to choose the establishment, the ones in this cluster are sensible to the marketing promotion made by the spa.

Cluster 3 is the one that includes elderly users. Due to their average age (74 years old), they are retired and even some are married is here that we found the most significant number of widows. It is the group where more men are found. Therefore, they live alone or with their wives. Most of them are retired, but it is possible to find a large number of self-employed persons. They have no formal education but can be here found a large number of members with a higher education diploma. The level of education and the professional status may explain this is the group where it is possible to find higher levels of net monthly incomes – higher than 2,000 euros. These users already know *Termas de Chaves* and have tried other spas, mainly during summer. They look for therapeutic thermalism to prevent and heal health problems but also for leisure. They attend the thermal spa accompanied and book accommodation. This is the cluster where leisure reasons are more common. For them, the family and friends' advice is important, but it is also the group that looks for other sources of information.

4. Final considerations

This research work found that the *persona* that uses one of the most vital and recognised thermal spas in the North of Portugal is a Portuguese woman with an average age of 69 years old. She is married, just attended a basic level of education and lives close to the thermal establishment – or in the same district or neighbourhood districts. Such *a persona* lives with her husband and is retired, receiving a net monthly income between 666 – 1300€. The *Termas de Chaves*' user is familiar with its services and does not frequent other thermal spas, which indicates that users are satisfied with the experience and therefore revisit the establishment. Therapeutic thermalism, related to health, and a clinical recommendation, is the primary motivation to attend the thermal spa. This reason justifies the duration of the stay – users stay for an average period of 14 days, mainly in the summer and autumn seasons, spending between 501 and 1000 euros. The users recognise the medicinal quality of the thermal water and the quality of the facilities. These attributes have extreme importance to them. The sociodemographic characteristics of thermal users in this study confirm the literature's findings. The traditional thermal demand is found in this research work – users are predominantly female, retired individuals and an older population. Most users are between 50 and 75 years old and have health problems, so they seek the thermal spa due to medical advice.

If the potential user of the establishment is defined as the persona described above, it is essential to understand if different segments of users can be identified. Only a clear identification of the segments of users may help stakeholders act with policies and measures that enhance and develop the thermal spa establishment itself, the well-being of tourism activity and, therefore, the region. The TwoStep cluster technique allowed dividing the original sample into three main groups, presenting a different characterisation. The first cluster includes a middle-aged set of users seeking the thermal spa by medical advice and do not book other services (as accommodation) in the region. A second cluster includes users near the retirement age and who live mostly alone. They also seek the thermal spa services due to medical advice but come from further afield needing the book accommodation and, therefore, generating economic externalities. They are loyal to *Termas de Chaves*. The more diverse cluster is cluster 3, including older adults and the one in which more men are found. This cluster also gathers people from all over the country, with a higher income and more diverse reasons to attend thermal spas. They are regular users of thermal spas in the summer.

The analysis reveals vital aspects of the *persona* using the thermal spa and the groups of users with common characteristics. Therefore, this research study provides detailed information about the target users, such as their features, perceptions, and motivations, allowing the thermal spa to redefine priorities and redirect their activity to the needs of those who already frequent the space and forthcoming target users.

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Traditional Wine Landscape as a Rural Heritage: Portuguese Verde Wine Vineyards

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Abstract: Verde wine has a traditional and unique range of patterns and processes of cultivation that result from the interactions between communities and environments. The result of this interaction characterizes the local wine culture and rural landscape and creates diversity of characteristics developed through times. In this context, vineyard historical landscape assures the range of differentiation of rural places and contributes to the image of wine as a cultural asset based on the cultural heritage accumulation and the slow transformation of the landscapes. Safeguard this historical resilient landscape could reinforce the local character in his own unicity, authenticity, significance, diversity as a testimony of identity. Safeguard the historical wine landscape promotes the preservation of old techniques and fragile tangible and intangible heritage condemned to disappearance with the new standardized exploitations. In this context, this study identifies the values of Verde wine landscape as a unique heritage in the world, aiming to safeguard this traditional landscape in the perspective of local communities with a tourism approach. The methodological approach is to analyse, reflect and open the debate about Verde wine landscape elements and characteristics, to evaluate its importance and residents´ satisfaction, and to compare aesthetic perceptions with other elements of Verde wine landscape. Quantitative approach with survey questionnaires was applied to residents of the Verde wine region. The results identify local wine culture and rural landscape and find the diversity of characteristics developed through times in different places. The residents find Verde wine landscape beautiful and attractive, and they are attached to the traditional Verde wine vineyards, quality of wine and quality of gastronomy. The study reinforces the safeguard of this historical resilient landscape and the local character in his own unicity, authenticity, significance, diversity as a testimony of identity. It promotes the preservation of traditional and ancient techniques and fragile tangible and intangible heritage of Verde wine.

Keywords: wine, landscape, traditional, values, perceptions, rural heritage

1. Introduction

Several studies focus on the importance of the rural landscape protection and the conservation of rural cultural heritage. Cultural heritage is a key element in the management and development of local and regional value dynamics (Freitas et al., 2017). It is a crucial element in tourism development (Ismagilova et al., 2015) and in the creation of local strategies for economic and social development (Vargas, 2018). From another point of view, the valorisation of local cultural assets increases the relationship between residents and visitors, and develop feelings of ownership and satisfaction in residents, promoting tourism development (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2019) in urban and rural places (Karagiannis & Metaxas, 2020).

In the historical relation between societies and nature (Council of Europe, 2000), the cultural layers accumulated over a place, build elements of identity that characterise places and brings diversity in a larger context. Each place has its own experience, its life living and many stories to tell, through the linkage of nature and human relations and practices (Wijetunga & Sung, 2015). This is the case of Verde wine region, where the territorial values create an interesting area to visit and to appreciate. Rural landscape is a representation of cultures around the world and local cultural traditions (ICOMOS, 2017). Individual and group identity are closely linked with history and events associated with the tangible and intangible environment surrounding (Dredge & Jenkins, 2003). Mitchell & Barrett (2015) focus their attention on conservation of the rural landscape as an emerging subject and as an opportunity to merge heritage values and environmental strategies. Safeguarding the cultural heritage and preserving the cultural memory of a community is essential for the development of a local identity, attractiveness and sustainability of economic activities, where tourism is included.

The first initial question that opened the possibility of this study, results from the observation of the traditional Verde wine landscapes that are disappearing. New intensive and industrialised vineyards are increasing in the rural world and are changing cultural and traditional landscapes. This phenomenon drives to a cultural loss with the disappearance of the traditional way of life (Ye *et al.,* 2020).

The traditional Verde wine vineyards, a resilient testimony of local cultural, material, and immaterial heritage, produced by the generations of residents in a certain place, began to be fragile towards the rural mechanization and the wine production. The economic growth of the wine industry associated to the demographic decrease in the rural lands, cause abandon of the family rural exploration system and, therefore, farms and traditional vineyards abandonment. As a result, the tangible and intangible heritage linked to the old-style rural exploitation is in risk of disappearance as well as the rural landscape associated.

With this first diagnosis, a question arises: Is this traditional and cultural landscape valorised by local communities and by tourists, visitors, and local territorial stakeholders? With this initial doubt, the study reflects around cultural heritage and rural identity through a traditional wine landscape, considering the values, memories, identity, aiming to disseminate historical uses and testify the passage of times. It is in the cross analysis between all regional stakeholder that allows to understand the significance and the values of a landscape (Freitas; Sousa & Ramazanova, 2020). The present study will focus only on the residents' point of view, the future studies will present the visitors and other territorial stakeholders' perspectives.

2. The significance of rural landscapes

The historical construction made by local communities marked the passage of time and maintain resilient activities that created tangible and intangible cultural assets of great significance that remain vital for the *spiritu loci* (ICOMOS, 2008). For those communities is a daily life use and local engagement. For the external perspective is an historical heritage, material or immaterial, that it is still in use (Katapidi, 2021). Those communities as actors and heritage builders, made possible to reach landscape unicity and diversity structures that are elementary bases in the increasing of rural tourism numbers (Stoffelen & Vanneste, 2015). The continuity of agricultural and forestry exploitation and the permanency of the territorial management system continues to create and maintain the history for future generations. As Mitchell & Barrett (2015:703) refer "the continuity and vitality of cultural systems and traditional production have influenced characteristic patterns of land use, the biodiversity of plants and animals, community development and a distinctive sense of place". Considering all this value, meaning and importance for the past, present and future, the memory of communities should be kept alive and heritage must be preserved to promote places character and quality (Andrade-Suarez & Caamaño Franco, 2020). The rural and forest places and its heritage elements are, as Prats (2012) points out, the result of a symbolic social construction that occurred at a given historical moment. With this noteworthy reference, the present generation should maintain the integrity, respect and act concerning the cultural and natural protection (Moldoveanu & Neacşu, 2018) to preserve values of identity for new generations. As referred by ICOMOS (2017), rural landscapes are vital heritage elements (ICOMOS, 2017). Chen, Ren and Zhang (2021) underline that heritage is a vital resource of rural development. Trying to understand the concept of "justified heritage value", the Burra Charter (1999), applied to all significant places including land or landscape in its action sphere, recognise cultural significance as "aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations" (Figure 1).

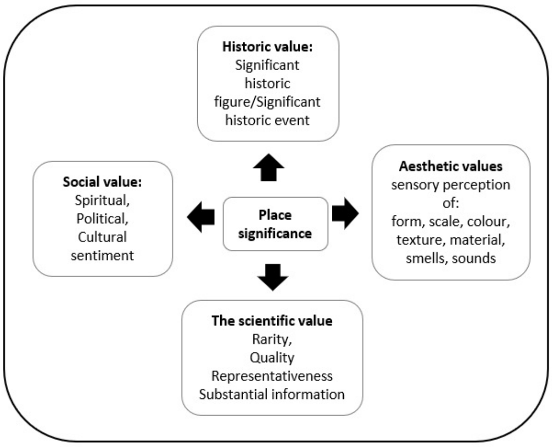

Figure 1: Indicators of value according to Burra Charter (1999)

Source: author's compilation based on Burra Charter

Claimed the *spirit of place* (ICOMOS, 2008) through the diverse and unique characteristics of the tangible or intangible heritage that give place identity, significance and authenticity, the internal values constructed by traditions, practices, local and traditional knowledge, or multiple form of tangible and intangible expressions, are the real meaning and significance of places.

UNESCO and ICOMOS recognised rural landscapes as cultural landscapes, places of ways of living representation that expresses the relation between places and people, and they are inscribed in the World Heritage List. ICOMOS (2017) identify the productive land as heritage as well as the cultural knowledge associated, traditions, practices as elements that confers to landscapes the capacity to be considered as heritage – "rural landscapes as heritage are expressions of social structures and functional organizations" (ICOMOS, 2017). To recognise the rural past as heritage (ICOMOS, 2017), the efforts should be focused on the comprehension of what is heritage to be conserved in those places, which still didn't have the sufficient attention from the scientific community and decision makers.

The new literature about landscape heritage focuses on the material or immaterial aspects, but it is still possible to find a gap. Those new and important studies that are changing the perspective of the rural landscape and changing the focus of the landscape study to heritage, still do not have enough debate about traditional agriculture technics as an important component of the landscapes and also, do not focus on the perspective of landscape valorisation made in traditional ways.

The successive communities' layers of generations that transformed the landscape with the daily work, developed the landscape and its aesthetics. With these successive layers, the landscape can be a lived and interpreted place heritage in the present (Lekakis & Dragouni, 2020). Accordingly, the concepts of landscape, heritage and identity must be integrated into the spatial and physical planning of regions aiming to create value (Tengberg et al., 2012). To create this value, tourism is one of the important activities for rural areas for its distinctiveness and character (Zakariya *et al.,* 2019). By other side, tourism could be a strategy to safeguard historical and cultural landscape uniqueness as an important way to increase the visit of small cities and rural areas (Ashworth, 2013).

Wine tourism is an essential regional and local development element, since it creates possibilities of joining culture, traditions, history, heritage and environment as natural basis of the rural economy (Andrade-Suarez & Caamaño Franco, 2020). The historical and traditional structures and processes of landscape transformation that maintain a traditional design are more sustainable, multifunctional, biodiverse, and resilient (Calabrò & Vieri, 2018). As Gibson (2020) refers, culture and heritage make a link with the past that could create value, reinforcing economic, cultural, social and sustainable growth.

2.1 Perceptions of wine landscape value(s)

Nowadays the wine landscapes present some risks of standardisation resulting in upgrading of agriculture processes in relation to the diversity of places and work techniques. The rural areas are places where our collective heritage is still alive, but in degradation and in risk of disappearance (Miranda et al., 2016). Big changes occurred in the traditional landscape, because wine consumption is the most significant concern in wine demand (Sottini *et al.,* 2019).

The new and industrialised wine landscape, intensive and less sustainable, has recently some reactions from the traditional agriculture, more related with local identity and more sustainable, as an alternative (Steinhäuser, 2020). This traditional landscape is attached to material and immaterial heritage and is more emotional, as it is a strong link with the local community's history. As Šťastná and Vaishar (2020) argue, the rural landscape has always some values for local communities as support of identity, locality, ownership, and the sense of belonging. In the same way, Agnoletti *et al.* (2019) understand the rural landscapes as an expression of history and cultural identity of the societies in History.

The significant historical value of traditional rural landscape has an enormous impact in sustainable strategies and play an important role in the territorial development (Fazio & Modica, 2018). In this perspective, it is important to characterise the traditional wine landscape, and identify some natural and cultural elements that could mark the difference (Bruwer & Gross, 2017).

It is important to notice that the historical process and techniques of wine production could be a great element to justify not only the identity of places, but also the cultural diversity that could be a stimulation to the economic development. As Winkler and Nicholas (2016) argue, the landscape is "*more than wine*", it is a complex cultural ecosystem where we have different perceptions from the traditional vineyards landscape.

Williams (2001) refers that wine tourism regions are investing on themselves to attract tourism and visitors. As Bruwer and Joy (2017) reinforce, natural scenery and landscape are very high rated. In this way, rural and natural areas and small cities could increase the tourist approach on the territory (Guedes and Rebelo, 2020). The economic value of the wine landscape aesthetic is a territorial reality (Freitas, et al., 2017).

In the field of wine tourism, tourist and visitors look for a high-quality product linked to a specific wine region with particular characteristics, usually a well-defined territory that integrates the dual concept region/landscape (Croce & Perri, 2010).

Thus, wine is history and identity (Foronda-Robles, 2018) and old vineyards contribute to the place aesthetic, reinforcing the heritage and cultural values of wine landscape with its ancient and traditional vineyards (Abraham et al., 2014).

3. Research area and methodology

3.1 Verde wine region

Verde wine region is located in the northwest of Portugal, occupying almost 8400 km^2 (Figure 2).

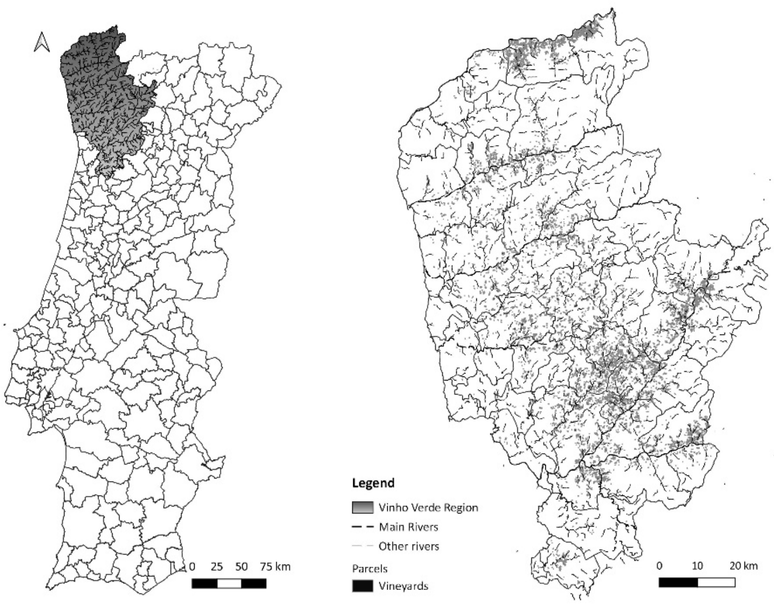

Figure 2: Geographical localisation of Verde wine region

Source: author's compilation based on CAOP (2019) and COS (2018)

This area is strongly marked by rurality, presenting in its territory a total of 36 cities, contrasting with the 113 villages (INE, 2019). Regarding the agricultural sector, it has very fertile soils, being characterised by small farms, due to the high population scattering across the territory (Cancela d' Abreu, Correia and Oliveira, 2004).

It is possible to find a varied set of harvests, where the cultivation of the vine prevails, with unique characteristics, such as "*ramada*", "*bordadura*", "*uveiras*" and autochthones trees supporting the vine trees, which present themselves as a fundamental and unique aspect of the landscape of this region.

The region is represented by the Viticulture Commission of the Verde wine region (CVRVV), which includes the Denomination of Origin (DO) Vinho Verde and the Geographical Indication (IG) Minho. In the production of wines with DO Vinho Verde 45 grape varieties can be used and in the production of wines with IG Minho 67 grape varieties can be used, according to the ordinances that regulate their production (Ministry of Agriculture and the Sea, 2015).

This study proposes Verde wine region as a single, exclusive, and unique landscape. In this region, tradition is still a mark of the region wine landscape that made it a single example in the world. The main traditional characteristics of uniqueness of the Verde wine landscape are (Figure 3):

1. the high canopy management (Figure 3a) - the usual of canopy support for those vineyards are autochthonous trees (such as oaks, elm trees, cherry trees, poplars and olive trees, or hollyhocks that give a special flavour to the wines) pruned and driven exclusively to be the wine tree support (Figure 3b). Another special and unique way of canopy management is in horizontal way above local pedestrian paths and small roads called "*ramada*" (Figure 3c).
2. the vineyard cultivation around the fields, called *"vinha de bordadura*" (border vineyard); the land use and share for other agricultural crops, usually cereals, horticulture products and pastures (Figure 3d and 3e).

Ribeiro (1987) mentions that the "*vinha de bordadura*" practice only exists in Italy and Portugal, with the vines taking advantage of the trees to roll up. This system is called *uveiras*, giving rise to a barely ripened grape and producing an abundant, light and slightly acidic wine, the Verde Wine.

Figure 3: a) High canopy of Vinho Verde; b) The autochthonous trees as support of wine trees; c) Horizontal canopy; d) Vineyard cultivation around the fields; e) Vineyard prune

Source: author's pictures

The characterisation of the Verde wine region allows us to conclude that we are facing a region with increasing economic importance for Portugal, and for the north of the country. We are also facing a region with a strong cultural and historical elements and values that need to be protected and safeguarded for the future generations. To protect those patrimonial and cultural landscape elements is important to know if this traditional landscape is valorised.

3.2 Data collection and sample profile

Following the gap in literature that do not explore enough the ancient and traditional agriculture technics as immaterial heritage that construct landscapes, this study, in a first step, attempts to know residents' perceptions about the aesthetics traditional methods of producing grapes. The study was conducted with the residents of the Verde wine region in Portugal. The data were collected using face to face survey questionnaires to the residents of the Verde wine region during local wine events in Guimarães and Celorico de Basto between September 2019 and February 2020.

According to the results, most of the respondents have their residence in Celorico de Basto (39), Guimarães (37), Braga (29), and Viana do Castelo (28). There are also 10 respondents that live in Amarante, 10 in Melgaço and 8 in Felgueiras. The other respondents have their residence in Monção, Matosinhos and Fafe (4 residents in each council), Resende (3), Vizela, Vila Nova de Famalicão, Mondim de Basto, Maia e Lousada (2 in each council), and Penafiel, Marco de Canaveses and Esposende (1 in each council).

With regard to the survey questionnaire structure, it consisted of 4 questions in regard to personal information such as age, gender, education level and local of residence, one question related to the satisfaction level with the viewed landscape/places of Verde wine by the respondents with a 5-point scale and 1 multiple-choice question related to the best characteristics and attributes of Verde wine region according to the perceptions of the residents. The attributes have been selected and included into the questionnaire on the base of the previous studies on wine and rural landscape and review of literature.

A total of 230 valid answers were collected. The data was then analysed using statistical software SPSS.

To select the individuals to participate in the survey questionnaire with more than 16 years old, a convenience sampling approach was applied during the local wine events.

The population is represented by the residents of the small cities and rural places of Verde wine region, where we can still find old vineyards.

4. Results and discussion

Using SPSS software, the frequency analysis has been conducted in relation to the satisfaction level of the residents related to Verde wine landscape. To analyse the level of satisfaction, a Likert scale of 1 (not satisfied at all) to 5 (very satisfied) was applied. The application of this analysis allows us to understand the residents satisfaction in a general context, and subsequently to cross those results with the presence of the old and new vineyards characteristics. The results demonstrate that 62% of interviewees were very satisfied, 30% satisfied and the remaining 8% answered “neutral” (6%), “not satisfied” and “not satisfied at all” (Table 1). Generally speaking, most of the respondents are “very satisfied” and “satisfied”, while very unsignificant percentage is “not satisfied”. Therefore, it can be concluded that the residents are aware and valorise an aesthetic of Vinho Verde landscape.

Table 1: Respondents’ satisfaction level with the viewed landscape of Verde wine

Satisfaction level	***Frequency***	***%***
Not satisfied at all	2	1%
Not satisfied	2	1%
Neutral	15	6%
Satisfied	69	30%
Very satisfied	142	62%
Total	**230**	**100%**

In order to understand what best characterises the Verde wine landscape, an analysis has been conducted on the degree of satisfaction related to the attributes of Verde wine landscape. The general results indicate the most selected variables : the beautiful and attractive landscape (84%), the wine quality (82%) and the wine and gastronomy quality (80%). The least importance was given to the activities related to Verde wine (23%) and the integration of wine tourism infrastructure (28%). It is also interesting to refer some other characteristics that were identified, namely the accessibility to the region (48%), the traditional vineyards conduction as interesting elements of landscape (46%), and the change of the landscape for better with the new vineyards (46%). The wine tourism infrastructures, as wineries, considering the number, accessibility or integration in the landscape, are not significant to the residents.

Residents perceived Verde wine region not only as a landscape, but also as a good quality product (wine and gastronomy), enjoyable in peaceful rural environment. Therefore, the local gastronomy (food and wine) should be considered as primary factors in promoting the region and representing its character (Alonso, 2013; Montanari, 2009). However, it is also true that the local community makes an integral part of the experience and may contribute to the success and positive image of the region.

When isolated the answers of those who understand in a first place that the Verde wine region is a beautiful landscape and compare with other landscape dimensions, we conclude that those who understand the Verde wine region is a beautiful landscape also choose several characteristics (quality of wine, gastronomy, environment, friendly people, routes of the region, climate, accessibility, vineyards in traditional conduction , new vineyards, tourism infrastructure and activities) (Figure 4). The quality of those products joins the aesthetic perception of the Verde Wine landscape that denote the resident's satisfaction and other important territorial components as accessibility, climate, friendly people, and old vineyards as well.

According to the survey results, most of the respondents linked beautiful landscape with the quality of wine (73%), quality of gastronomy (71%) and peaceful environment (70%). Bruwer and Gross (2017) have the equivalent results for McLaren valley, Australia. It is possible to say that the beautiful scenery and the quality of wines are important elements on a wine landscape perception.

The study results confirm that respondents believe beautiful lansdscape is also charascterised by the friendly and friendly people (63%). Regarding other characteristics such as Verde wine routes and pleasant climate, they are perceived as a part of the beautiful and attractive landscape by 60% of the residents. Accordding to the residents the least important characteristics are Verde wine activities (22%), accessibility of wineries (32%), tourism infrastructure (37%).

Thus, it is essential to ensure a positive experience by diversification of Verde wine activities in the region, taken into consideration that tourists associate wine tourism with wines, vineyards, wineries and the entire wine culture and heritage. Territory, landscape and heritage are inseparable concepts allowing all the physical, biological and cultural elements that make up the landscape to be used simultaneously.

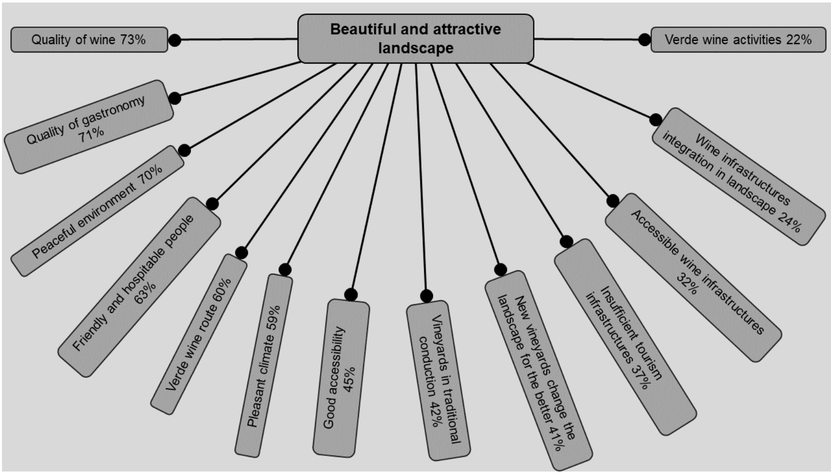

Figure 4: Relation between the beatiful landscape and characteristics of Verde wine region

Source: author's compilation

Next step of the analysis was to compare an association between the perceptions on beautiful landscape, old and new vineyards and satisfaction level of the respondents by the viewed landscape (table 2).

According to the results, 67% respondents who consider Verde wiene region´s landscape beautiful and attractive, are very satisfied with the place and 27,5% residents are satisfied.

Regarding the association analysis between old vineyards in traditional conduction and satisfaction level, more than 90% of the respondents who consider the vineyards (old) in traditional conduction one of the most interesting elements of the landscape, are very satisfied and satisfied with the place. Similar results were obtained when crossing the new vineyards with the satisfaction level.

To determine whether the association is statistically significant between categorical variables such as satisfaction level with the place and perception on the landscape attributes, we have used the Fisher´s exact test. According to the results we do reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is enough evidence to suggest an association between beautiful and attractive landscape and satisfaction degree of the respodents (value of the test statistic is 21.4343, p = 0.000), as well as between perceptions on old vineyards and respondents satisfaction levels (test value = 13.009, p = 0.004). Nevertheless, the Fisher´s exact test indicates that there is no association (p value = 0.403) between perceptions on new vineyards and satisfaction level of the respondents. It is possible to conclude that the perceptions on traditional vineyards influence on satisfaction of the residents with the viewed landscape/places of Verde wine, while the mentioned association is not confirmed in the case of new vineyards.

Table 2: Cross tabulation between perceptions on beautiful landscape, old and new vineyards and satisfaction level of the respondents by the viewed landscape

Landscape attributes / Satisfaction level	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Not satisfied	Not satisfied at all
Beautiful and attractive landscape	67%	27,5%	5%	0%	0,5%
Fisher´s exact test Value = 21.4343; p = 0.000					
Old vineyards in traditional conduction	72%	21%	5%	0%	2%
Fisher´s exact test Value = 13.009; p = 0.004					
New vineyards change the landscape for better	64%	26%	7%	2%	1%
Fisher´s exact test Value = 3.957; p=0.403					

As a synthesis, it is possible to understand that there are several characteristics associated to the wine landscape that contribute to the level of satisfaction of the residents, namely the wine landscape, the wine and gastronomy quality and the peaceful rural environment. It was also possible to conclude that there is evidence that suggests an association between beautiful and attractive landscape and the level of satisfaction of the respondents. Finally, the landscape associated to the vineyards in traditional conduction (old vineyards) contributes strongly to high level of satisfaction of the residents. This is an important result, specifically when comparing to the landscape associated to the new vineyards, which was not possible to associate to residents' level of satisfaction.

5. Conclusions

Exploring the resident's perceptions towards unique wine landscape characteristics and satisfaction levels, is important to notice that residents find the wine landscape beautiful and attractive and attached to heritage. It is possible to infer that the landscape of Verde wine is much more than the Verde wine vineyards. Also, the quality of the gastronomic elements, the peaceful environment, the community hospitality, the wine route, or the climate are significant elements in the Verde wine landscape. All these elements are important to the residents and, as daily actors, are part of their lives. Thus, living traditions and live culture should be preserved.

The conservation of the rural landscape as an element of territorial sustainability that develops local and regional dynamics, focus on the local heritage (cultural and natural) as a factor creating new opportunities for the present and future generations (Mitchell & Barrett, 2015). Associated with the local heritage valorisation, it is necessary to safeguard the memory. In the same way the safeguard of memories kept by the communities is necessary to materialize the strategies of local development. The registration and conservation of this data (inventory, digitalization, and archive organization) will only have success with a collaborative and participatory attitude and with means of national and international dissemination to academics and citizens. The preservation of the cultural heritage and the community memory is essential for the development of a local identity and for the characterization of a regional profile. These attributes promote diversity, territorial attractiveness and the growth of sustainable economic activities that generate touristic demand to local and international level (Samsudin & Maliki, 2015).

Considering that territorial identity, heritage and culture are components of local development (Calabrò & Vieri**,** 2018) it is important to reflect about some strategies to link sustainable local development, tourism and cultural safeguard. It is important to create an image that promote the old vineyards as a sustainable and cultural issue that could develop and appeal to cultural and sustainable tourism and improve rural tourism. It is also essential that local decision makers could identify old vineyards areas that should be preserved and, consequently, give support to the resilient traditional vineyards with all the historical components (high canopy management with autochthonous trees, the horizontal way above local pedestrian paths, the vineyard cultivation around the fields). To develop and support the "old vineyards" the development of a brand could be an interesting way to improve rural economy and improve the Verde wine identity.

As Bourdin, Wan and Delbos (2019) argue to observe and take decisions about the heritage management process, the satisfaction of the residents is important but not enough. The perspective of tourists and visitors is the best way to validate the heritage management decisions. However, it is not possible to make decisions on the traditional landscape valorising the process without collecting, in the first step, the perspective of local communities who live in the landscape.

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Co-Creation and Design - “Living Heritage Routes” Project: Memory Itineraries for the City of Lamego

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Abstract: The “Living heritage routes” project aims to interpret a given geographical area for tourism - the city of Lamego - based on the visual/oral perceptions and memories of the residents, so that it is possible to create tourist proposals, based on co-creation, that involve the local community, students and cultural agents through the contemporary interpretation of the space. The project has three distinct phases: 1st survey of the material and immaterial cultural heritage; 2nd elaboration of tourist itineraries and 3rd realization of an event that promotes and divulges the project - through a historical recreation of the space. The main objectives of this study were to involve the local population in projects that aim to recover and promote the local tangible and intangible cultural heritage. We believe that it is possible to create new cultural and artistic products, such as thematic itineraries, based on the image, perceptions and memories of the resident population, which can attract more visitors, improving the development of sustainable tourism aimed at local culture promoting. The methodology of this project, as far as its 1st phase is concerned, went through a qualitative approach, using mental maps, accompanied by interview, as a method of enquiry, in order to understand the local community's perception of their urban space. The analysis and interpretation of the mental maps will follow the methodology presented by Kozel (2007). The results obtained through a first analysis of the interviews and the mental maps, applied to 40 residents of the city of Lamego from four different age groups allowed, in a first preliminary analysis, the identification of new natural and cultural tangible and intangible heritage resources, as well as the identification of several points connected to the singularity and identity of the city and its districts. It was also clear that the connection of residents to their districts influences the way they perceive the city, as well as its symbolic and representational icons. The results reinforce the importance of involving residents, in the co-creation of heritage tourism products, allowing the construction and renewal of the tourism offer in small historical towns.

Keywords: historical centre, small town, mental maps, co-creation, itineraries

1. Introduction

The image of a city results from its inhabitants, their experience and their external emotions. It is a process. The city compiles the relationships between community members and residents, perceiving different stimuli. They may be conditioned by demographic, social, cultural and other aspects, but despite each individual perception, images are generally consistent within homogeneous groups (Lynch, 1964). Currently, in this field of studies, there are those who practice the use of a methodology under construction that appeals for the construction of mental images of places - mental maps.

Moreover, if we consider that the cultural, ethnographic and memory component is vital in the sustainability and authenticity of a small historical town, it was possible to make some assumptions based on the analysis of the symbolic field of the city of Lamego.

These questions led to the co-creation and design of a project - " Living heritage routes " - Creation of memory itineraries for the city of Lamego, in the scope of the Master in Cultural Heritage Management and Local Development, based on mental maps, aimed at improving the quality of the tourism offer.

This study assumes that the image of this city, supported by mental maps, allows us to determine material and immaterial reference points, perceived by the inhabitants, some being evident, and others being ignored in the construction of the tourist offer and and in the sense of space.

This paper presents the "Living heritage routes" project and its constructive phases, the methodology used in the research, the results of some interviews and some of the most charismatic mental maps sketched, and is divided into five sections. After the introduction, the second section reviews the literature related to this project. The description of the project, as well as its contextualisation, is given in the third section. The fourth presents the methodology used for empirical purposes and the final section provides some preliminary results of the study discussion and finally the conclusions.

2. Literature review

From the 1980s onwards, heritage reached a prominent place as a tourist product. Tourist demand increased significantly and, as expected, historic cities became the privileged stage for requalification actions for tourism purposes, on the one hand, due to the concentration of heritage assets and, on the other hand, due to the fact that many cities found themselves without development solutions (Alçada, Lisitzin and Manz, 2013). Throughout this process, we have witnessed negative impacts (cultural, economic and social), which result from an unplanned growth that has led to the degradation of resources and and brings their viability into question (Chang & Huang, 2017). It is within this framework (considering the guidelines of the Earth Summit) that we are witnessing a new management philosophy based on sustainable tourism development.

Local residents' support for tourism development is seen as a prerequisite for sustainability (Sharpley,2014). Thus, the success of any sustainable development effort depends on committed support from local communities (Nunkoo and Ramkisoon, 2010) and commitment from local authorities (Setokoe, Ramukumba, & Ferreira, 2019), especially in rural environments, as is the case of the city of Lamego. In this context sustainable tourism development and the understanding of its background by residents is of crucial importance for local government, policy makers and tourism (Ko and Stewart, 2002).

Destinations that aim to arrive or remain in the current market need to offer superior value propositions as a way to differentiate themselves in this strongly competitive environment intensely marked by informed, demanding and active consumers (Nora, 2017). The answer to this new challenge can be through co-creation, a term used to define a specific type of process that makes use of collaboration in the creation of value, through the sharing of inventiveness, design and other discretionary behaviors (Ostrom et al, 2010), as is the case of the project we present, based on mental maps.

Mental maps are a mix of objective knowledge and subjective perceptions: precise knowledge about the location of geographic features as well as impressions of places, rough estimates of size and location, and a general sense of the connections between places (Geography Education National Implementation Project).

For researchers from various scientific fields, mental maps try to connect the content of the map with the elements and organisation of space (Osóch and Czaplińska (2019); Holmén and Götz, 2022). In a broader perspective Jenkins (1993) considers that a mental map is a result of conceptualising space, places, buildings and other features and their interrelationships through specific categories of memory and imagination, achieved through sensory and emotional experiences. This will be the concept that will guide our work. Mental maps can therefore be effectively learned and explored on the one hand by collecting drawings that show spatial relationships, beyond the geographical ones, and on the other hand by collecting associations and metaphors that contain specific contents and meanings.

Contemporary critiques of cartographic theory are creating diverse relationships between physical, conceived, represented and socially lived space (Lefebvre, 1991) generating new concepts and understandings of place (e.g. Santos, 2007). These visions alter the way researchers approach communities and communities and the experience of space and place.

Cultural cartography heralds' new ways of describing and engaging with the cultural resources of communities and places. Stewart (2007) defines cartography as a process of collecting, recording, analysing and synthesising information to describe the cultural resources, networks, connections and patterns of use of a given community or group. From this perspective, cultural mapping can be considered as a systematic mapping and recording tool to engage communities in identifying and recording local cultural assets, implying that this knowledge can be used to generate collective strategies, planning and other sustainable initiatives, particularly in the field of heritage tourism (Roberts, 2012; Pillai, 2013; Duxbury et al, 2015).

And if the city is a human representation, then it is a social product. In addition, in this line, Lefebvre (1974), in *La production de l'espace*, helps us to understand that each society has the capacity to produce a space, its space, modelling and appropriating it to its image and similarity. Thus, it will be essential to know the mental images of residents, collecting mental maps, through a direct survey. The results make it possible to know and deconstruct the city in the eyes of the inhabitants through a reading of the mental organization they make of it and the elements they identify as guiding the space and its culture.

This concept refers to the individual or emotional feelings established between an individual and a specific community. In the view of Casakin et al (2015) the concept of community attachment is defined as a state of solidarity between people and their geographical place of residence. It is "a complex, integrated and multifaceted concept that incorporates the relationship between people and their community", encompassing several components, whose core elements are linked to: emotion, affection, meaning, feeling of togetherness and value in the relationship with the community (Nicholas et al., 2009). The affection by residents to their community can lead communities to organise themselves properly for their differentiation and sustainability, namely through a proactive and corporate community attitude (Almeida, 2018), specifically in the creation of new products and new routes for reading the cities.

The connection of residents to the community can lead them to act towards supporting sustainable development (Eslami et al.2019).

3. "Living heritage routes" project

This project was approved in a funding program - Support Program for the Creation of Artistic Intervention Projects of the Polytechnic of Viseu. The project "Living heritage routes" intends to interpret a certain geographical space - the city of Lamego - based on the perceptions and memories of the residents, so that it is possible to create tourist proposals that involve the local community, the cultural agents and the students, through the interpretation and recreation of contemporary history.

This study was conducted at a small historic town in northern Portugal, Lamego, located within the Douro Valley World Heritage site. This town has about 12,073 inhabitants in an area of 20.20 square kilometres divided into two sub-municipalities (INE, 2021). The local economy is mainly dependent on services, small businesses and agriculture.

The development of the tourism industry in Lamego is a recent phenomenon. The nomination by UNESCO of the Douro Valley region as World Heritage site, in December 2001, boosted tourism in this historic town. Now, Lamego is attracting an increasing number of visitors and is the municipality that retains more domestic and foreign tourists in the Douro region. Several public and private organisations have undertaken a process of revitalisation of the town's heritage, particularly after the Douro Valley region's classification as World Heritage site, and the structural funds for the conservation and rehabilitation of heritage were made available by the European Union. Since 2012, Lamego´s local authorities have worked on the conservation and restoration of monuments and in the dissemination of the town as a tourist destination. To this end, they have implemented a program ('Living Lamego – valuing and integrating the Historic Centre of Lamego'), financed by the European Union, with the purpose of reaffirming Lamego as cultural heritage and architectonic site (Municipality of Lamego, 2013). The program was based on two intervention plans that targeted the sustainability of this tourist destination. Firstly, the program aimed at increasing the local population's quality of life and its qualification in various aspects (cultural, social, economic and environmental). Secondly, the plan aimed at reinforcing the town's attractiveness and external visibility, taking advantage of its heritage and of the territory's specific characteristics, thus contributing to the creation of different economic activities, particularly tourism related activities, consequently retaining the population in the territory (Municipality of Lamego, 2013). However, there is still much to be done regarding the involvement of residents and the role of local government management of tourism in fostering residents' support to sustainable tourism development (Vieira, 2016; Rodrigues, 2020).

Based on this intervention and the need to create innovative and singular readings of the city, the project presented here, the Living heritage Project, aims to:

- Involve local cultural agents in the creation of events for the dissemination and promotion of cultural heritage;
- Involve the local population in projects to stimulate the Local Cultural Heritage;
- To create learning dynamics that bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application;

- Create new cultural and artistic products, through historical recreations, based on the perceptions and memories of the resident population;
- Attract more visitors, potentiating local development through culture.

The project comprises 3 distinct phases, and this paper focuses on the 1st phase - Application of mental maps to residents of the city of Lamego.

The 2nd and 3rd phases are still under study and implementation and presuppose:

2nd - Creation of new itineraries - designing an itinerary that considers not only the historical heritage survey, but also the perceptions and memories of its inhabitants. This new interpretation of the space meets the most current methodologies of heritage interpretation (WHIPIC, 2021; Ham 2014) that draw attention to the importance of involving the local community when building new tourism products.

Thus, it is our intention to build an itinerary that shows how the city has evolved since 1974 to the present day, showing the transformations that have taken place in the historic space of the city in all sectors of city life.

3rd - Phase historical recreation of the life of the historical centre and its monuments, considering the contemporary history of the city, through the perceptions and memories of its inhabitants, highlighting the change of uses and customs and (re)use of the space (Reis, 2012), from its decline to its reconversion as a tourist product. Besides the historical recreation performed by the actors, students, teachers and local inhabitants will be included in this recreation as extras.

4. Methods and the study area

The basis of the study is based on the implementation of a qualitative methodology, using mental maps as an inquiry method, to understand the perception that the local community has of its urban space, despite the controversial definition of perceived urban space and its use as tourist space (Włodarczyk, 2014). The method focuses on the application of Mental maps to the inhabitants of the historic center or later to other interviewees.

Lamego is one of the most ancient towns in Portugal, with a variety of historic heritage that chronicles several historic stages. Accordingly, the Chapel of S. Pedro Balsemão (7th century), the Castle (10th century), the Cistern (10th century), the Cathedral (12th century), the Church of Santa Maria Maior de Almacave (12th–13th century), constitute important national heritage monuments. One of the most visited monuments is the Sanctuary of Nossa Senhora dos Remédios (18th century).

But the liberalist policies which marked the 19th century were decisive in the transformation of places, now adapted to the new demands of the contemporary world. The loss of this logical, identity-based relationship, a hallmark of contemporary civilisation, has led to a desire to do and not to remake, to the need to build and not to rebuild, to the desire to forget and not to remember, contrary to the vision of current society, which aims to safeguard the memory of a distant past that insists on getting lost.

In this study, to focus on the most genuinely areas and for methodological reasons, we decided to divide the historical space of the city of Lamego into 4 geographical areas/ districts: Almacave, Bairro do Castelo, Sé and Bairro da Ponte, and apply it to 4 age groups (youth; young adults; adults and seniors).

The research always assumed the involvement of students from the Lamego Higher Education Institute (ESTGL) in the collection of mental maps from the local community. It is increasingly believed that the methodological and theoretical tourism field should be worked in an interdisciplinary manner (Decosta and Grunewald, 2011), despite the great difficulty which has been experienced in its applicability as is (Tribe, 1997), in which the student is active and interact in the environment in which he lives, thus contributing to the improvement of the teaching-learning process.

The students' groups involvement, previously established in a **Guidance for applying mental maps,** involves:

- Construction of 8 maps per districts;
- Application of 2 maps for each age group: [18-33] [34-49] [50-65] over 65;

- Request for authorization to record the interview and apply the story script.

The analysis and interpretation of mental maps will follow the methodology presented by Kozel (2007), applied in three moments:

- 1. classify the maps, drawn by the interviewees, based on categories or parameters;
- 2. associate the information given by the maps with the interviews of individuals;
- 3. finally, the elements identified in the mental maps are analysed through different theories linked to Peirce's linguistics and semiotics (2000).

However, this still represents a time-consuming and difficult process, usually requiring lengthy face-to-face interviews and producing results that are difficult to quantify. To combat these difficulties, we have constructed an "**visual application guide**", which encompasses both the map creation process and the associated questionnaire.

Guidance for applying mental maps

Table 1: Visual application guide - districts

LAMEGO DISTRICT MAP	
Order	Requested activities
1	**Draw ____________'s neighbourhood in as much detail as possible**
2	Indicate favourite place represented on the drawing, with a "+" sign
3	Indicate your least favourite place on the drawing with a "-" sign.
4	Indicate the most important place in the district, represented on the drawing, with the letter "I".
5	Indicate on the map the place that is most relevant/ important/ indicated to take tourists in the municipality, with the letter "T".

Table 2: Visual application guide - city

LAMEGO CITY CENTRE MAP	
Order	Requested activities
1	**Draw ____________'s city in as much detail as possible**
2	Indicate favourite place represented on the drawing, with a "+" sign
3	Indicate your least favourite place on the drawing with a "-" sign.
4	Indicate the most important place in the city, represented on the drawing, with the letter "I".
5	Indicate on the map the place that is most relevant/ important/ indicated to take tourists in the municipality, with the letter "T".

Este "questionário mental complementar" visa estimular a visão e compreensão do indivíduo sobre os lugares/distritos descritos, identificados a partir da memória dos lugares, características, padrões e relações, tal como expressos pelo seu mapa mental.

Table 3: Complementary mental questionnaire

Thinking about "Lamego" ...	
i.	What are the first ideas that come to your mental?
ii.	How would you describe Lamego?
iii.	Do you like Lamego? Answer explaining why.
iv.	If you were lost in Lamego how would you find your way around?
v.	Identify the elements that you think best represent Lamego?
vi.	Can you attribute a symbol to Lamego? If yes, which. If no, explain why.

We obtained 40 mental maps by applying this method to the inhabitants of the historic centre, divided into 4 age groups (youth; young adults; adults and seniors).

When a tourist visits a historical city, he or she wants to be surprised, but usually faces with very standardized and unappealing information.

The Living heritage routes project aims, therefore, to interpret the geographical space of the city of Lamego through tourism, offering innovative proposals. For this, it is crucial to involve and commit several stakeholders, directing the communication plan to different target audiences:

- Dissemination of the project and involvement of the local community and identified partner entities - through press releases in the regional media and participation in data collection;
- Dissemination of the results to the local and political communities;
- Promotion of the new itineraries to potential customers (local community, visitors; tour operators, river operators, accommodation managers, among others), through the channels of tourism dissemination (partner organisations, blogs, etc.)

4.1 Lamego em mapas mentais como método de inquérito

For the analysis, as already mentioned, the adapted Kozel methodology (2007) was used as a basis, which aims to interpret the message conveyed in the sketches prepared by the residents. The initial group was made up of a universe of 20 people.

Many questions were applied in the residents' living space, randomly, as suggested by Lynch (2008), whose answers added details about feelings, desires, anguish, helping the decoding of the messages.

The data will be analysed, as follows, adapting the guidelines of Kozel (2007):

- 1. The maps were grouped into categories, gender, age initially, then as to how the drawings were presented.
- 2. The content of the maps will be analysed under the following questions:
- a. interpretation as to the form of representation of the elements in the image;
- b. interpretation as to the distribution of the elements in the image;
- c. interpretation as to the specificity of the icons: (elements of the natural landscape; elements of the built landscape; mobile and immobile elements; human elements); and finally, other aspects or particularities were analysed.
- 3. To complement the analysis, the following aspects will be also observed
- a. how do the forms appear in the images? (letters, map-like, lines, geometrical figures);
- b. the distribution of the elements: (horizontally, isolated, dispersed form, in perspective, circular). This identifies the shapes, the expressions in the form of letters or words which complement the drawing with an explanation in formal language.

When analysing the mental maps, it is necessary not to think of them as mere drawings without meaning, as we should focus on the intention of what was intended to represent, as pointed out by the mentioned author.

At this preliminary stage, based on the qualitative data analysis tool NVIVO it was possible to classify and organise unstructured information in the mental maps.

To 'code' the fonts, to extract material, specific variables, themes and topics were defined. To do this, it was necessary to encode all the references through nodes.

Table 4: Categories of analysis - Thinking Lamego (nVIVO) -Nodes

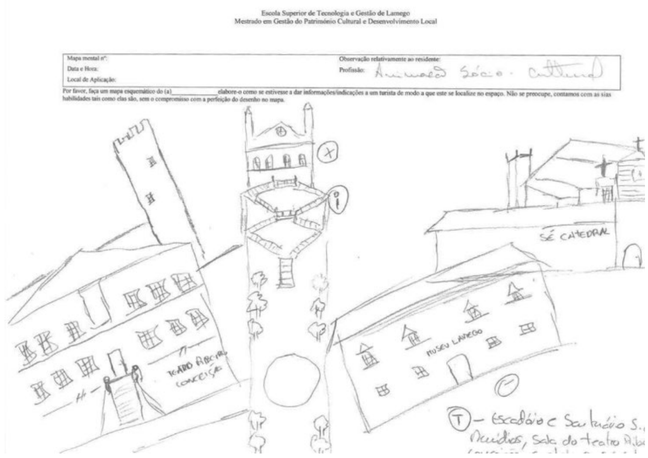
MAIN CATEGORIES OF ANALYSIS LIVING HERITAGE- District / City /
District
City
Thinking Lamego
DIVISION OF THE 3 CATEGORIES INTO SUB-VARIABLES
District
Most important place
Most relevant place for tourists
Least favourite place
Favourite place
Town
Most important place
Most relevant place for tourists
Least favourite place

MAIN CATEGORIES OF ANALYSIS LIVING HERITAGE- District / City /
Favourite place
Thinking about Lamego
How to get around Lamego
Reference Point
Description of Lamego
Representative elements of Lamego
Liking Lamego
Reasons for liking Lamego
General ideas
Symbols of Lamego
Reasons for the choice of symbol

The analysis started in the Castle district because it is the most emblematic. The maps drawn up by the residents are very disparate but show some informative continuity. The complementarity between the Maps of the district, the Maps of the city and the Complementary mental questionnaire - Thinking about Lamego should be highlighted. These sources of information will be vital in the development work of the following two phases: 2nd - Creation of new itineraries and 3rd - Phase historical recreation of the life of the historical centre and its monuments, by the diversity of information and elements to be visited, of endogenous, intangible and immaterial elements that are part of the oral tradition and traditions of the community.

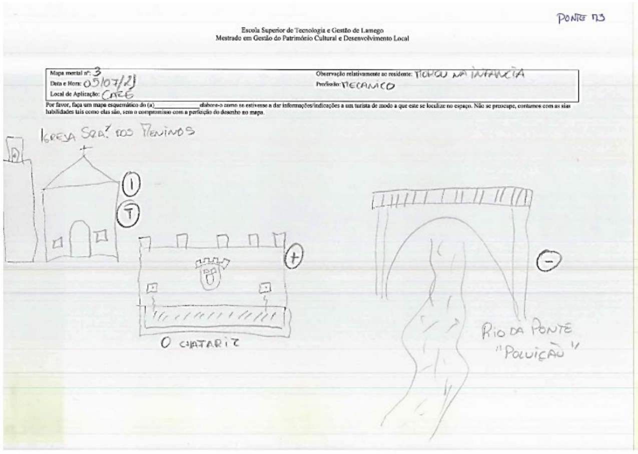
Source: students' work.

Figure 1: Selected example of Lamego district map/Castelo made by participant aged: (a) 42 years



Source: students' work.

Figure 2: Selected example of Lamego city map made by participant aged: (a) 42 years



Source: students' work.

Figure 3: Selected example of Lamego district map/Ponte made by participant aged: (a) 51 years

After this collection phase, it will be necessary to take into consideration the interaction models between urban spaces and the individuality or social group - age, gender, profession, etc. and the experiences of a given space - cultural surroundings, forms of representation, etc.

5. Some results and findings

In a first analysis we can highlight the following observations among the vast information provided:

- a) The Sanctuary of Remédios, regardless of where the survey method was applied, is the most symbolic monument of the city of Lamego for most respondents;
- b) Regarding the Almacave district, only one respondent considered the Almacave church an important monument to visit. This fact may be related to the poor state of conservation of the building inside;
- c) In the opposite direction, the majority of the residents of the Castle district, consider the Castle of Lamego as one of the most important monuments to visit, both in the district category and in the city category;
- d) Several smaller cultural and natural heritage elements are mentioned in several maps, such as: trees, fountains, gardens, manor houses, chapels, niches, commemorative statues, old craft workshops, among others, which may lead, in the future, to the enrichment of the routes;
- e) Gastronomy and wines (sparkling wine) are present in some of the maps analysed through the indication of wineries and commercial shops;
- f) The maps also reflect the concern of the inhabitants regarding the poor preservation of buildings as well as environmental problems, for example the pollution in the Balsemão River in Bairro da Ponte.

The elements collected are both tangible and quantitative (e.g. physical spaces, cultural organisations, public forms of promotion and self-representation, public art, cultural industries, natural and cultural heritage, architecture, people, artefacts, and other material resources) and intangible or qualitative (e.g. values and norms, beliefs and philosophies, language, community narratives, histories and memories, relationships, rituals, traditions, identities, and shared sense of place).

Put together, these elements help define communities (and help communities define themselves) in terms of cultural identity, vitality, sense of place, and quality of life - Living Heritage.

We must now proceed to the interpretation of the drawings, as to the distribution of the elements in the image; as to the specificity of the icons drawn and other particularities associated to the most drawn/referenced resources.

6. Conclusion

In this urban study, the will to live the city involves, for its inhabitants, the act of narrating their stories lived in this space, stories that point to the differences and otherness that make up a community. This perspective enriches the debate around tangible and intangible cultural assets in the body of a greater reflection on a cultural preservation policy in Lamego.

When a tourist visits a historical city, he wants to be surprised, but usually he is faced with very standardized and unattractive information. This reality in the city of Lamego together with the active teaching in the Master in Cultural Heritage Management and Local Development led to the idea of the co-creation of this *Living Heritage Project.*

Despite its exploratory nature, this research seeks to address the mental representation that inhabitants have about the city of Lamego/districts, through the application of a mental and emotional cartographic inventory.

From the analysis of the drawings collected and the residents' answers to the complementary questionnaire, it is important to take as a general conclusion that the mental maps of the city are close in several points. The representation of the city corresponds essentially to the historical and central area. The elements located in the historical area, icons and symbols, are still present in the symbolic and representational images.

The intended future contribution is an attempt to group this set of maps concerning the representation of the city that will allow the design of more focused ethnographic studies, be they sociological or anthropological - memory products and itineraries.

It is important to point out that there is still a long way to go which involves analysing the stimuli of the internal (psychographic and demographic) and external (economic, social and cultural conditions of the environment) conditions of the respondents which, for sure, influenced the reading of the space and which will bring, as far as interpretation is concerned, unique elements that will enrich the proposal of a "new narrative" for this historic centre.

In the continuation of the project, there remains the elaboration of an itinerary which compiles the information transmitted, as well as a historical recreation which will count on the participation of the local community, students and cultural agents. This attraction will be as useful for visitors as for residents who, with the feeling of sharing, will be part of the new co-creation product and its dynamisation.

The Living Heritage Routes project aims to interpret the geographical space of the city of Lamego in a touristic manner, offering innovative proposals. To this end, it is crucial to involve and commit various stakeholders, directing the communication plan to different target audiences, which will ultimately be achieved through historical recreations.

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The Evaluation of Tourist Routes in Portugal: A Case of Social Policy

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Abstract This paper analyses the Tourist Routes in Portugal from a point of view of social policy, specifically focusing in the evaluation procedures and from there deriving conclusions about the management of those routes. The methodology has two parts – first the basic framework of evaluating programs in social policy is defined; secondly the Tourist routes in Portugal are described. After that, the routes are analysed according the evaluation methodology. We find out that the routes are evaluated, when this happens, by very basic results methods, which suggests that the routes are made by political or administrative or even marketing considerations and not by economic reasons. We also found that most of the routes are managed by municipal councils, on a shared basis, and their enjoyment is mostly free. The evaluation of results of the routes is made in an unreliable way. Signaled routes are in the minority, and route promotion is done using information technologies, but leaflets are not dispensed with. These findings question the relevance of the investment in the routes. Further studies should be done to further analyse the importance of the routes in the country. The paper is composed by the following sections: 1. Introduction 2. Literature review on social policy and tourism routes 3. Methodology and Data collection. 4. Results. 5. Discussion 6. Conclusions.

Keywords: evaluation of touristic routes, Portugal, social policy

1. Introduction

Tourism is an important economic activity worldwide. Tourism exports reached US$1.481 billion in 2019, resulting from a movement of 1.46 billion of international tourist arrivals. Europe is the main tourist destination with 744 million (million) of international arrivals, which generated receipts of USD 576 billion (billions), followed by Asia Pacific with 362 million international arrivals, which corresponded to revenue of USD 443 billion, America ranks third with 219 million international arrivals and USD 342 billion in revenue, followed by Africa with 70 million international arrivals and USD 38 billion, and the Middle East comes in last with 65 billion million international arrivals and USD 81 billion. In the same year Portugal ranked 9th in tourism exports with USD 15 billion in receipts. (UNWTO, 2020) If this movement is important for large nations, it has a very particular meaning in developing countries, contributing to the social uplift of their populations, which, otherwise, would see their income highly reduced, reaching high levels of poverty.

One of the products that contribute to these results, and which is part of our study, are tourist routes (Meyer, 2004). They are particularly relevant in inland territories, as they allow tourists to leave the major tourist gateways and travel to these territories, not only to enjoy the tourist resources that exist there, but, hopefully, to contribute economically to their growth, consuming local products, such as accommodation, restaurants, handicrafts, among others, and for the creation of jobs, particularly for young people, helping them to settle in these territories. This is, therefore, an aspect of a social nature that must be encouraged so that the aforementioned objectives can be materialized.

When tourists travel to a particular destination, they may have had several motivations that led them to this choice, such as cultural aspects, natural resources (sea, sun, landscape, etc.), religious (religious practices or visits to certain places), sports (whether as practitioners or spectators), visits to a particular city (city breaks), visits to family and friends, among others (Yoo and Park, 2018). In this investigation, in addition to identifying the existing tourist routes in mainland Portugal (we excluded the Autonomous Regions given the inexistence or scarce local reality of tourist routes), it was intended to know their management method (only routes with their own management were considered) and to know whether or not they evaluate the results not from the point of view of the users (tourists), but in terms of their amount of enjoyment.

The relevance of this study is related to the number of resources, both material and immaterial, existing with great dispersion throughout the national territory, and the importance that tourist routes have in their knowledge. The importance of evaluating the number of tourists who use each route is essential to understand the possible economic contribution that they represent for the territories where they are located.

Given the gap in the literature consulted, this article is important to understand the Portuguese reality, particularly about the importance and the way in which the evaluation of tourist routes is carried out, because only in this way can one know the importance of routes, and their relevance for the development of tourism in the regions where they are located.

The paper is composed by the following sections: 1. Introduction 2. Literature review on social policy and tourism routes 3. Methodology and Data collection. 4. Results. 5. Discussion 6. Conclusions.

2. Literature review on social policy and tourism routes

2.1 Evaluation methods in social policy.

2.1.1 Evaluation by results

There are mainly two types of evaluation methods (Tomé 2005). Evaluation by results answers to the question: what happened? The following topics are analysed: the resources that were used in the operations; the number of supported persons and organizations (physical indicators); the volume of applied funds, originating the so-called "financial indicators"; accessibility, measured by the percentage of the potential target group that was included in the program; the situation of the individuals and organizations that were supported, in relation to the variables that may reflect their situation immediately after the end of the program; for instance, regarding a training program those variables are wages, and employment situation (for individuals) and productivity, quality of labour relations, number of workers, exports (for individuals).

2.1.2 Microeconomic evaluation "before after"

The second method of evaluation consists in the comparison of what happened before the program start, with what happened after the program end, regarding the variables that may describe the situation of the individuals and organizations that were involved in the program. Those variables differ from program to program. In the case of a vocational training program, they are linked with wages, employment conditions, unemployment spells, self-esteem (in relation to individuals) and labour relations, productivity, or exports (in relation to companies).

2.1.3 Micro-econometric evaluation "with-without"

This evaluation is made using two representative samples, one of participants, the other of non-participants; each group is surveyed longitudinally, for the relevant period of time. The program impact is equal to the difference in the situation of the participants, and given that they participated in the program, in relation to the situation that they would have been in, if they hadn't participated. Although this analysis compares two periods of time, it is essentially a "with-without" study. This type of studies answers to the question: what difference did the program make?

2.1.4 Macroeconomic analysis

This type of evaluation tries to assess the impact of the social policy operations in the big macroeconomic variables (consumption, investment, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), external debt, and public deficits). Those variables are different from the ones that are addressed in the microeconomic studies and that have to do with the direct situation of the economic agents that were involved in the programs (wages, employment, exports, productivity, etc). Thus, this analysis completes the other three forms of evaluation that were presented in the paper. This analysis may be made in a "before-after" or in a "with-without" perspective. For the making of these studies, three steps have to be taken: firstly, the structure of the economy has to be previously defined; that definition is usually made using "input-output" methods and models of "supply and demand"; secondly, the definition of the "impulse" given by the program in the economy has to be made; in the easier cases this "impulse" will be the investment made by the program promoters; thirdly, the calculation of the impact of that "impulse" in the economy, using multipliers, as also to be made.

2.2 Concept of tourism routes

A tourist route is some path that may be followed about some distinctive theme. Furthermore, the goal is to guide the visitor on a voyage of discovery, on a common subject, which receives more visibility. Therefore, the main goal is to group the touristic assets by topic or within a large geographic area (UNWTO, 2017, p. 28).

2.2.1 Classification of routes

For the elaboration of this study, we did a literature review. We ended with the following classification:

- Cultural Routes – routes that are based in known cultural events and sites which may be visited every time or only in certain seasons (Meyer, 2004; UNWTO 2017; Lourens, 2007);
- Religious routes – routes that are based on pilgrimages routes (Rinschede 1992; Balestrieri & Congiu 2017);
- Gastronomic routes – routes which are devoted to gastronomy, and which the importance of using local products is put in much relevance (by product, dish and tradition), (Ricolfe, Merino, Marzo, Ferradis, Rodriguez, 2008; Herrera, Herranz & Arilla, 2012; López-Gusmán & Cañizares, 2012; Gheorghe, Tudorache & Nistoreanu, 2014; Jeambey 2016);
- Heritage routes – which are interdependent with cultural routes (Comissão Europeia, 2016; Prats 2011);
- Eno-tourism routes – routes linked with wine, for which wine production is factor that induces visiting (Hall, C.M. & Mitchell, R. 2000; Hall & Macionis, 1998, citado por Bruwer, 2003; Armas, 2008);
- Industrial tourism routes – based on using abandoned or forgotten industrial complexes as a tourist product; they also rely on the organization of tourist routes related to industrial heritage, and on the importance of conservation of industrial heritage, (factory and productive, patrimonial or historical) (Abad 2002; Fernández & Ramos, 2004; Copic, S., Dordevic, J., Lukie, T., Stojanovic, V. Dukicin, S., Besermenji, S. … Tumaric, A. 2014; Cho & Shin, 2014; Bujok, Klempe, Jelinek, Porzer & Gonzalez, 2015);
- Ecotourism routes – based on nature tourism, on the importance of natural resources in the development of a nature tourism destination, and on the importance of environmental conservation particularly in natural areas.

In the set of articles consulted, we did not find any article that addressed our topic – the evaluation of tourist routes from a policy perspective; this is a clear sign of the existence of a research gap, and therefore the present study is a contribution to fill it.

2.2.2 Conceptual model

Based on the literature review we considered that six types of routes existed, namely cultural, religious, gastronomic, heritage, wine or other. These six types of routes could be visited in two ways: freely, or in organized groups. In this context, one of the important topics to be addressed was the form of implementation. Other important topics were the following: management entity (public, private or other); structure of governance (management, technicians, administrative personnel, others); share of work in the governance (full or shared). In terms of promotion, the options were own website, shared website, Facebook, other social media, leaflets, or other. In terms of costs, we addressed total costs, costs with implementation, costs with maintenance and the share of funding by the EU. Finally, regarding the type of evaluation, the following issues matter: type of evaluation (direct control, survey, other), periodicity (annual, bi-annual, tri-annual, other, number of visitors in 2014, 2015 and 2016 (Mota, 2020).

3. Methodology and data collection

The present study had its starting point in the review of the literature to establish the relevant concepts of tourist routes that exist, the characterization of the various types of routes and the determination of the research gap. As a result of the literature review, the study objective was defined as the evaluation of Tourist Routes in Mainland Portugal. Afterwards the second step of the research was to determine the existing routes and their managing entities.

Initially we made a consultation through the Internet to identify the several existing routes. Subsequently, we sent emails to all the municipal councils of mainland Portugal (according to the list on the website of the National Association of Portuguese Municipalities), regional tourism entities and Turismo de Portugal, with the aim of collecting the necessary elements for this study. As a final result, we obtained 202 responses (72.66%) from the 278 municipal councils contacted.

From the analysis of the collected elements, we found it difficult, in the answers obtained, to mention local routes, pedestrian trails, programs of tour operators called routes and others as tourist routes. In view of this situation, we had to clearly define which criteria the routes should meet in order to be included in this study. The selected criteria were: The route C1) has a theme; C2) has a management entity C3) is located in multiple locations; C4) has a website (own or shared); C5) exists for more than 3 years (Since 1 January 2013); C6) has signage.

The reasons that presided over the choice of each criterion were:

- C1) It is understood that a tourist route should have its own theme as its umbrella, as shown in the literature;
- C2) Considering that this study intends to evaluate the route, it is essential that there is a management entity;
- C3) Given the large proliferation of local itineraries with a possible lack of self-management, their consideration in the study would provoke a large amount of analysis, with distortion of the final results due to the discrepancy between local visits, walking routes and the enjoyment of tourist routes;
- C4) We consider it important for the dissemination of routes to have electronic information, so that its existence can be known by tourists - if this function does not exist, the result of the route may be distorted due to lack of information on an equal basis for those who benefit from this condition;
- C5) For the evaluation of tourist routes to be meaningful, we only considered routes which already existed for some time - we opted for three years (existing before January 1, 2013), avoiding the distortion of results by including more recent routes;
- C6) Having its own signage is important for us to consider the route in the study because, otherwise, the enjoyment of the route by tourists is limited.

In a first phase, we considered only criteria C1, C2 and C3 as mandatory, with the rest being weighted according to the responses to the survey. As a result of this analysis, 184 potential routes were identified to be considered in the study. This work spanned from February 2014 to April 2017.

As a next step, a pilot questionnaire was designed and sent to 18 personalities, with 11 responses being obtained. In view of the responses received, the final questionnaire was created and sent by email to the entities identified as managers, together with a comfort letter making it clear that the collected elements would be used exclusively for academic purposes. The universe considered is constituted by the routes that, according to the research initially carried out, fulfilled the criteria C1, C2 and C3 mentioned above.

From the analysis of the responses received, 100 routes were excluded because they "did not leave the paper" (therefore they were never put in practice"), they were "only suggestions for visits", they were "very old and there was neither a management entity nor elements about then", and also because the entities contacted had "declined to the invitation" or have not responded.

The consultation was carried out between mid-May and September 2017.

4. Results

As a result of the survey, we proceeded to an analysis of the responses received (Mota, 2020). 171 responses were received out of a universe of 184 (92.93%), of which 84 were through a questionnaire (49.12%). Responses were obtained by email and not by completing the questionnaire, the reasons for which are shown below. It should also be noted that several questionnaires were not answered in their entirety, which affects the totals for each item. We thus obtained a sample of appreciable size, although not random and, therefore, not statistically representative of the universe of tourist routes.

A summary of the results is the following:

- As for the type of route, it was found that the largest number of responses concerned heritage routes, 56 (66.67%), followed by cultural routes, 47 (55.95%), wine and gastronomic routes, both with 18 (21.43%), others, 13 (15.48%) and, finally, religious, 11 (13.10%). It appears, therefore, that cultural and heritage routes have, together, great relevance in the study, totalizing 103 mentions (47 cultural and 56 heritage). However, the total number of responses obtained regarding the type of routes (163) makes it evident that several routes under analysis are composite, associating several types in the same route.

- As for the way in which the routes are used, most are free to use, 46 (54.76%), and with organized departures/groups, 25 responses (29.76%) were obtained.
- From the answers obtained, it appears that 82 routes have a management entity (97.62%), of which 47 are public (55.95%), 24 are private (28.57%) and with other forms 2 (2, 38%).
- We also asked the date of implementation of the route, obtaining 76 responses (90.48%). The results have a high dispersion.
- As for the governance structure, 26 (30.95%) indicated management, 27 technicians (32.14%), administrative 10 (11.90%) and another type of structure 17 (1=9.94% or 2=20 .24%). Given the content of the answers, we have some doubts about whether there is effective governance or just a mere management of the route. In future work, this issue may be explored further. These doubts are reinforced by the answers to the following question, "Is the governance structure dedicated or shared?", as the number of those who answered that it is dedicated, 27 (32.14%) is clearly lower than the number of those who answered shared, 42 (50.00%).
- To the question about whether or not there was a contribution from the European Commission, we received few answers, yes 38 (45.24%) and no 38 (45.24%). As for the percentage of reimbursement, the answers varied between 60% and 85%.
- Asked about the costs of designing and implementing the route, the respondents indicated very different numbers, between 1,000 and 15 million Euros. Regarding the question about the annual cost of maintaining the route, the answers range from 200 Euros to 300 thousand Euros. With these results, it becomes very difficult to define a standard-type of costs for the implementation and maintenance of tourist routes.
- As for the means of promoting the route, 65 (77.38%) responded that they used leaflets, followed by their own website with 49 (58.33%), shared website with 39 (46.43%), Facebook with 36 (42.86%), others with 21 (25.00%) and other social networks with 17 (20.24%). It appears, therefore, that, as would be expected, a great use of information and communication technologies, with multiple responses to the various types proposed.
- Regarding the question about the signalling of the routes, we obtained a low number of positive answers, 39 (46.43%), and the negative ones totalled 30 (35.71%). Perhaps these results explain the low cost of both the design and implementation of the routes and their maintenance. As mentioned earlier, since 1998 there have been specific signs for tourist routes, making strange, therefore, the existence of such a large number of unmarked routes, which means that tourists are inhibited from enjoying the route to its fullest.
- We were also interested in knowing the number of visitors to the routes in the last three years related to the execution of the study (2014 to 2016), as well as whether there were evaluations of the results, their frequency and the method used. These answers were, from the outset, very important for our study, given the research gap identified regarding the evaluation of the results of tourist routes. The results obtained were the following: As for information on the number of visitors to the route, in 2014 they indicated 29 (34.52%), in 2015, 35 (41.67%), and in 2016, 36 (42.86%). With regard to the periodic assessment of the number of visitors to the route, 43 (51.12%) responded positively and 28 (33.33%) negatively. As for the periodicity of periodic evaluations, 14 (16.67%) responded annually, 3 (3.57%) every three years, 1 (1.19%) and another 8 (9.52%); Finally, as for the evaluation method used, 18 (21.43%) indicated direct control, 3 (3.57%) and another 10 (11.90%) surveyed. With these results, we found that the evaluation of the number of visitors is not carried out in about 40% of the routes, which translates into ignorance of their impact and importance for local tourism, as well as their degree of attractiveness and present. We recognize, however, the difficulty of evaluating visitations in the case of free-use routes for which it is not easy to obtain credible values. Even so, we believe that the evaluation of results is crucial for monitoring the evolution of the route and its eventual restructuring.
- Finally, we commented on the responses received, justifying not sending the questionnaire. Thus, we obtained 34 responses (188%) claiming that 34 responses were not implemented; 44 (25.73%) indicate that they are suggestions for itineraries, tourist programs or walking routes; 5 (2.92%) do not have elements related to the route; and for 4 routes (2.34%), the values were aggregated in a single answer.

- We did not receive a response from 12 entities (7.02%), and 5 (2.92%) routes declined the request for collaboration.

5. Discussion

On the other hand, the type of access to the route strongly influences the evaluation behaviour: more than 80% of the routes with "organized access" carry out an evaluation, but only about half of the routes with "free access" do so. The explanation, already mentioned above, lies in the fact that, in the first case, there are records of the participants, while, in the second, the tabulation is more difficult Thus, we consider urgent the development of tourist routes with: (i) creation of a certifying or accreditation body that determines clear rules for the creation of routes; (ii) redefinition of management models that should, desirably, be ensured by an association with the participation of public bodies, particularly the managing entities of the territory, and the actors involved in the promotion and use of the route; (iii) more up-to-date and mandatory road signs and interpretation; (iv) forms of financing and continuous evaluation of the route's performance, namely in terms of its enjoyment and economic impacts on the territory.

The certification provides tourists with quality information about the products that may be included in the routes, such as handicrafts or gastronomy, representative of the region and produced there, enabling informed choices. Certification is already officially practiced in Portugal since regulations were recently created for the certification of the Camino de Santiago (Dec.-Law 51/2019 of 17 April). Several entities promote "quality seals" or "adherence to the route", which are a principle of certification, but which are given by peers, without official recognition, despite these instruments having their own regulations.

We believe that the standards for this certification and/or accreditation should be issued by the Secretary of State for Tourism, through Turismo de Portugal (TP), after public discussion, and involve the regional tourism entities (ERT) and the managing entities. or route promoters. The application of these standards would be the responsibility of public or private entities, duly authorized by the TP for the respective certification/authentication. The ERTs would be responsible for verifying compliance with these standards, by the entities certified/authenticated in the meantime, monitoring their performance. We understand that the model used for the certification of the Caminhos de Santiago could serve as a generic model for the future regulation applied to tourist routes, although there may be adaptations depending on the type of route to be certified.

We could and should evolve towards the creation of a "National Network of Tourist Routes" (RNRT). This network would make it possible to scale existing routes or those to be established, as well as their joint dissemination, which would allow tourists, whether national or foreign, to know the themes of existing routes in Portugal, as well as their territorial distribution, through its own website. At present, if a tourist wants to find out about the existing routes in Portugal, he will have to go, as we did, through the websites of the more than 300 municipalities in the country.

The dissemination, in a consolidated phase, should be done by a confederation of federations of each of the basic themes of the routes, and the federations would bring together the territorial associations. For example, in the case of wine, each route would have its own association, the set of wine routes constituted a federation, which in turn was associated with a confederation. We would thus have a bottom-up organization.

This organization could start in a simpler form, gradually evolving to the organizational form proposed above. As attributions, the RNRT could strive to only include routes with professional governance and with the participation of stakeholders. In addition to marketing, it could carry out route evaluation studies, thus minimizing the respective weight for each of the routes involved.

6. Conclusions

This paper was a first attempt. We would like to make a more developed study based in the facts we found and using less the evaluation of results and more the evaluation of impact, in micro and if possible, in macro terms.

As possible future research, we refer to the study of the performance of the routes, at the level of NUT II, taking into account the local evolution of tourism, with estimation of the direct, indirect and induced economic impacts that the routes generate.

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Culture Consumption Shift to Mitigate the Climate Emergency

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Abstract: The built form of the South African post-apartheid city continues to perpetuate the paradigm that only one culture is available for consumption. Culture is consumed by South Africans who form part of a nation diverse in culture, and by an international tourist market, seeking the provision of diverse cultural experiences. Yet, most African cultural artifacts are found encased in colonial architecture museums, where the narrative is restricted to the observed, and where the cultures are entombed and thereby unable to reach out and affect the city around it. This places these cultures as either historical records and artifacts, or something foreign to the city, belonging to the fringes of the post-apartheid city, and not as an existing way of living that is held by city dwellers that lacks places that allow them to bear fruit and serve. In this paper, the authors argue that there is an opportunity to provide built form interventions that will accommodate the many cultures alive and active within South Africa. These cultures may be represented in built form, as a facilitator for first-hand experience, and may then further establish a market for cultural consumption and contemporary tourism that is more authentic. To do so, secondary data is presented on the current social and economic melee of how culture is consumed as a value-add good product in the post-apartheid city. Furthermore, two cultural architectural interventions are presented as case studies. A conceptual framework is constructed, showcasing the lessons learned, as well as expanding the conversation around culture, consumption, and climate – as well as how responsible tourism may support positive responses to each. By introducing the climate emergency, architecture's complicity in driving consumption is further exposed. An argument is presented whereby existing architectural interventions in the post-apartheid city are shown to fall short in their attempts to transform the city away from the colonial capitalist linear economy consumption practices that degrade the environment. The paper concludes with a vision for future architectural interventions that better succeed in providing space and place for diverse cultural inclusion, thoughtful consumption patterns and climate change mitigation. There is a market for the consumption of culture as an experience. An indigenous circular economy of locally produced, and locally consumed culture is an alternative to current human consumption patterns that damage the environment.

Keywords: architecture, climate emergency, culture, economy, indigenous

1. Introduction

The climate emergency we are facing requires us to act on all fronts. As one of the highest contributors to climate degradation, construction and buildings have the highest potential in resolution capacity[1]. This requires not only changing how buildings perform in their life cycles, but also changing how we build future interventions. Not only do buildings contribute to the climate emergency in their life cycles and construction, but through the promotion of linear economy thinking and practice which is a legacy of colonisation across the world.

African cultures have philosophies, traditions, and beliefs related to a human's relationship to earth and, by extension, a human's relationship to building, that fall under sustainable methods that can act against the climate emergency (United Nations, 1992). These traditional ecological knowledge systems that follow circular economy thinking and practice, are commonly practised in isolation in rural areas, away from South African urban centres in areas of poverty where most of the population dwell (World Bank, 2020). There is an opportunity to bring these cultures into the city, not as artifacts placed in museums as the common form of cultural consumption as tourism places them, but as forms of knowledge and practice inherent in all forthcoming buildings. This would allow the consumption of culture to both serve as singular events in tourism, and a consistent immersion that lies within the growing urban fabric. This consistent immersion would move African culture and identity and its potential from historical recording and performance, to being part of a fabric that contributes to solving the climate crisis and transforming colonial legacy cities.

Two case studies of prototypes show how this could take form through raw material selection and spatial programming defined by indigenous knowledge systems. The case studies have been critically analysed as examples of cultural consumption - both lying within the city of Tshwane, one at the city centre, the other in the

[1] This is especially evident when one considers that cities consume two-thirds of the world's energy and as a result are to blame for over 75% of global carbon emissions (UN-Habitat, 2020).

CBD's residential periphery - to extrapolate a conceptual framework as a solution that prefigures the end of the cultural assumptions of post-colonial cities in South Africa.

2. A review of literature:

2.1 Culture in built form

According to Eagleton, (2016) culture can be defined as "(1) a body of artistic and intellectual work; (2) a process of spiritual and intellectual development; (3) the values, customs, beliefs and symbolic practices by which men, women and people live; or (4) a whole way of life."

We lean on culture's metaphor when we speak of the evolving force of identity - with cultural identity the strongest of them all, the most embodied and, most readily graspable by our intuitions. This fundamental force propels our understanding of reality and our efforts in maintaining and transforming our identities' bricolage (Roth, 2003). We project grounding models that describe how cultural information is intentionally or inadvertently passed on (Kashima, 2014) - now commonplace and woven into our understanding of the world and consequently, woven into our identities (Roth, 2003).

"As we go about our business of living our daily lives, we construct a social reality that is mutually meaningful and yet only local" (Kashima, 2014). Colonisation and industrialisation, amongst others, have globalised what was meant to be experienced on a local scale, and given how relatable this is, it is rather odd that we rarely consider culture on the collective level of the civilisation.

While science has made progress along the long procession of history where architecture was understood to be a reflection and an expression of culture (Koirala, 2016), this notion that in the cultural sector, architecture has a role in preserving the ancient values of culture (Bemanian, Gholamirostam & Rahmtapnah, 2010) has not yet materialised in Tshwane. Sesana (2020) notes that this is a result of the city's contention over its heritage historically and politically expressed through buildings (architecture), and that this symbolic heritage communicates the city's conflicting cultural and political forms of ownership. In this paper, the built form of Tshwane - a model South African post-apartheid city - continues to perpetuate the paradigm that only one culture is available for consumption. The built form of Tshwane speaks of a type of language, a particular culture, an ideology, and a way of living (van Tonder & Thomas, 2022). Tshwane is a post-apartheid colonial city based on a linear economy, with single-use modernist architecture that relies on car use.

Buildings are not inherently good or evil. Buildings are tools, and their power depends on how the tool is wielded. What you do with the power determines whether the result is something that we applaud or something that we deplore. Rapid climate change can be linked to the culture of globalisation, and consequently, the culture of colonisation. Colonisation's expansion displaced native people, not just geographically but spiritually, economically, and politically too. The buildings tell a story that echoes the tensions in present-day. At inception and erection, the buildings disregarded the culture and religions of the native people.

2.2 Culture consumption

In this paper, the understanding of the consumption of culture is premised on the notion that consumers can momentarily suspend their ideologies and briefly ingest a reality or truth that is foreign to them. This threshold is where we begin to understand but also interface with culture (moral perspective) in not just in a market-related way, but in an oddly empowering, even slightly evocative way, while enabling our realisation of the value of the ecological community.

This engagement is also about how an individual or community owns and understands the reverberations of their actions and realities. This is a way of starting the process of building a more visceral understanding of space and culture connected to one's environment, because the things that sustain and connect us do not belong to us alone - they belong to a much broader whole (a community in which we are active members). This subversion of the meaning of consumption relies on the understanding that culture creates and communicates new meanings and transforms narratives.

It is of the utmost importance to remember that though we speak on the contemporary post-apartheid city, the majority of South Africans, those who are part of and descendants of the Bantu people, live in Townships or

Location areas (products of the apartheid system). Also, many dwell within rural areas far removed from urban life. Urban migration brings South Africans to cities and while doing so causing the dissolution of spirit - that relates to the relationship between self and others, inclusive of people, organisms, and objects- born from the disparity in the places they are from and the places they arrive to (Thomas, 2021). This displacement (primarily an experience of the Southern African Bantu) from a background abundant in culture and spirituality (those spiritual beliefs that inherently preach about the respect of land and custodian role) that lacks resource, towards one lacking culture and spirituality yet is composed of materials and resources they have never come into contact to. This inversion of circumstance intensifies the violent process of identity erosion (Thomas, 2021).

To understand the intent Africans bring to building, one must understand the depth at which roles of custodianship play a role within African societies. It is not only the lack of access that youth of urban South Africans have to indigenous knowledge systems, but the lack of access to the custodians who are the primary vehicles of that knowledge (Thomas, 2021). Through the mediums of performance, whether dance, coming of age ceremonies or storytelling, the custodians introduce the unknowing person to their roles as 'earth keepers' and members of a greater community. It is them that proliferate the African material belief and relationships that define the method of building that contemporary Africans are developing, bringing circular economy and sustainable building strategies into the city.

The case studies presented here serve different purposes - one as a land redistribution hub (Figure 2) and the other as an African social health facility (Figure 4) - yet they share multiple similarities. Both are concerned about cultural inclusivity, the relationship between humans and the world, and the politics of sacredness of space. The case studies are not just explicitly concerned with politics - they offer a cathartic healing experience, that touches the social and psychological lives of the people. They showcase this through multiple ways, the simplest being through ritual: healing is choreographed through ceremonies, once you arrive, you take off your shoes and remove all your gadgetry. Through consumer participation, the ceremonies do the work of repairing the ruptures of history and are expressive of the chasm that requires bridging in modern-day post-colonial cities.

2.3 Tourism

Culture is consumed by South Africans who form part of a nation diverse in culture (Mistry, 2001), and by an international tourist market, seeking the provision of diverse cultural experiences. Despite the harsh South African lockdown and travel restrictions, almost 16 million foreign tourists visited South Africa in 2019 pre COVID-19, and 5 million in 2020, (Stats SA, 2021a). In 2018 the direct contribution of the tourism sector to GDP (Gross Domestic Product) was nearly 3% with just over R130 billion spent. Furthermore, in the same year, the tourism sector contributed approximately 4.5% of total employment in South Africa (Stats SA, 2021a).

With most people in South Africa living in poverty (Worldbank, 2020), the unemployment rate at its highest since credible measurement (Stats SA, 2021b). Thus, it can be inferred that tourism culture consumption is only for the affluent. A shift is needed towards tourist attractions that target local tourism in addition to international tourism. This shift is important for the feasibility of the market and to address the climate emergency, as international tourism contributes significantly to global carbon emissions. All human consumption contributes a carbon cost within a linear economy, and international tourism accounts for 8% of global carbon emissions. This percentage is projected to grow by 4% every year, with half of this carbon emission cost allocated to travel between countries (Lenzen, Sun, Faturay, Ting, Geschke & Malik, 2018).

In South Africa, tourism is a value-add good product that contributes to economic growth, and employment. In turn, this contribution to growth and employment combat poverty. Yet most African cultural artifacts are found encased in these colonial museums where the narrative is restricted to the observed, and where the cultures are entombed and unable to reach out and affect the city around it. This places these cultures as either historical records and/or artifact, something foreign to the city belonging to the fringes of history and the modern city, and not as an existing way of living that is held by in city dwellers lacking places to bear fruit and serve.

Recent attempts at restitution of artifacts includes a Dutch report that speaks out against colonial looting of indigenous culture (van Onderwijs, 2020), and activist Mwazulu Diyabanza who attempts to reclaim what was stolen from Africa and now entombed in France (Nayeri, 2020). It is time to take on the opportunities for possible widespread dissemination of many cultures throughout cities built for only the colonial dominant culture. This paper presents such built form activism in the form of two case studies.

3. Research methodology

This paper argues that there is an opportunity to provide built form interventions that accommodate the many alive and active cultures within South Africa. As a facilitator for first-hand experience, culture in built form establishes a market for cultural consumption as contemporary tourism. This argument is supported by presenting two architectural interventions as case studies, whose language, form, function, and ritual behind the theory and elements constituting their makeup were inspired by indigenous knowledge systems.

The two interventions are juxtaposed with their contexts. The first is placed within the city centre falling into the primary tourist route, surrounded by the colonial legacy architecture of the Victorian, Edwardian, and Georgian styles, and backdropped by Modernist monoliths. The second intervention is placed in a high-density residential area rich in diverse African cultures, shouldered by a community who have repurposed a village of Cape Dutch style homes to provide services catering to the local population. The two case studies have not been built, and currently form part of post graduate work produced previously by the authors.

The history of colonisation in South Africa perpetuates a narrative that privileges colonial culture, it is through buildings and building practice that colonial culture is preserved. Buildings construct stories that contain and express the way we understand ourselves and the world. Too few cultural interventions such as the two case studies have been added to the city since the fall of apartheid in 1994. A vast part of indigenous culture in the city is only ever understood conjecturally. Meaningful indigenous spaces and buildings are few in orientation and practice. For this reason, the paper explored two conceptual case studies that have the character of social integration and whose main goal was to introduce a cultural and architectural renaissance in the city.

Figure 1: Tshwane figure-ground with the two **conceptual** cultural architecture interventions case studies

4. Limitations

In this paper, the authors do not attempt to define or redefine culture, nor do they attempt to generalise what culture is across the various indigenous South African and African communities. The paper is based only on Tshwane and its historical cultural traits, that may have evolved or been abandoned. Furthermore, this paper refers to cultural consumption as a subset of human consumption and circular economies as an alternative to linear economies. Due to the page limit and a consequent need for brevity these concepts are not elaborated.

4.1 Case study 1

The Hub was designed to promote ties between indigenous communities and their landscapes (Fernández-Llamazares & Cabeza, 2018). Through its strategic positioning in the epicentre of the city (the origin point of the city), it connects the city with those who were dispossessed (economically, spiritually, and physically) by the colonial regime within the city. As such The Hub narrates the history of the land whilst reconciling the past with the present, through ritual and the facilitation of indigenous knowledge transfer between generations (Fernández-Llamazares & Cabeza, 2018).

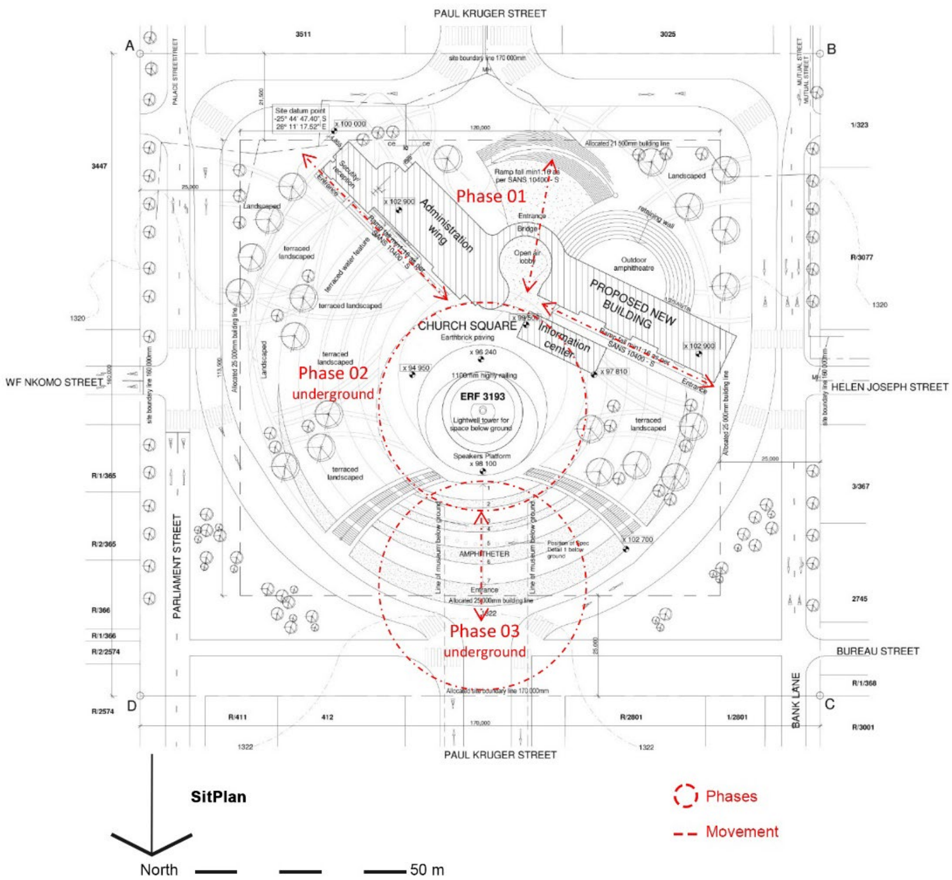

Figure 2: Case study 1 site plan: Land redistribution hub in Tshwane

The author of case study 1 counterweighted her conceptual understanding of land[2], and juxtaposed it with her native understanding of land as being a sacred entity[3] whose agencies brings into being new realities (good and bad). By employing the symbolic act of digging, the hub is revealed, highlighting the fact that the rising-up of the built surrounding context is directly linked to that which was exploited. It serves as a mediator between indivisible histories and territorial access to the divine (Sesana, 2020) - it is an act of storytelling and archaeology - both familiar and reorienting.

Sesana (2020) notes that buildings and historical sites are vocabularies of knowledge that embody narratives of the past, present, and anticipated future, as well as a sense of identity grounded in storytelling. Therefore, it can be said that the revival of cultural life in urban indigenous nations is rooted in storytelling that is deeply connected to the cultures of indigenous nations which are integral to their homelands (Corntassel & Chaw-win-is, & T'lakwadzi, 2009).

Water and land are scarce and valuable resources for indigenous people (Ojomo, 2011). In the context of Tshwane, where it has high groundwater levels, observations such as these informed the second concept which references the womb and the notion of rebirth. In light of the function of the building in relation to the nature of the site, it became necessary to conceptualise and regard both the water and the land as gateways (physical and spiritual) to the existing urban environment (Sesana, 2020).

Through a series of proposed indigenous rituals within The Hub, The Hub reveals open doors of healing to the modern world by weaving the tribal world with the contemporary world and, as such, weaving the indigenous community and nation together (Sesana, 2020). As The Hub tells stories that are connected to Tshwane's history and the cultures of indigenous homelands, it echoes many wounds of South Africa's past and present, such as displacement, marginalization, and provides an opportunity for change.

[2] As ascribed to it by capitalistic logic - a precious resource (Borde, 2012)
[3] Land holds multiple stories captive that are latent within its scars.

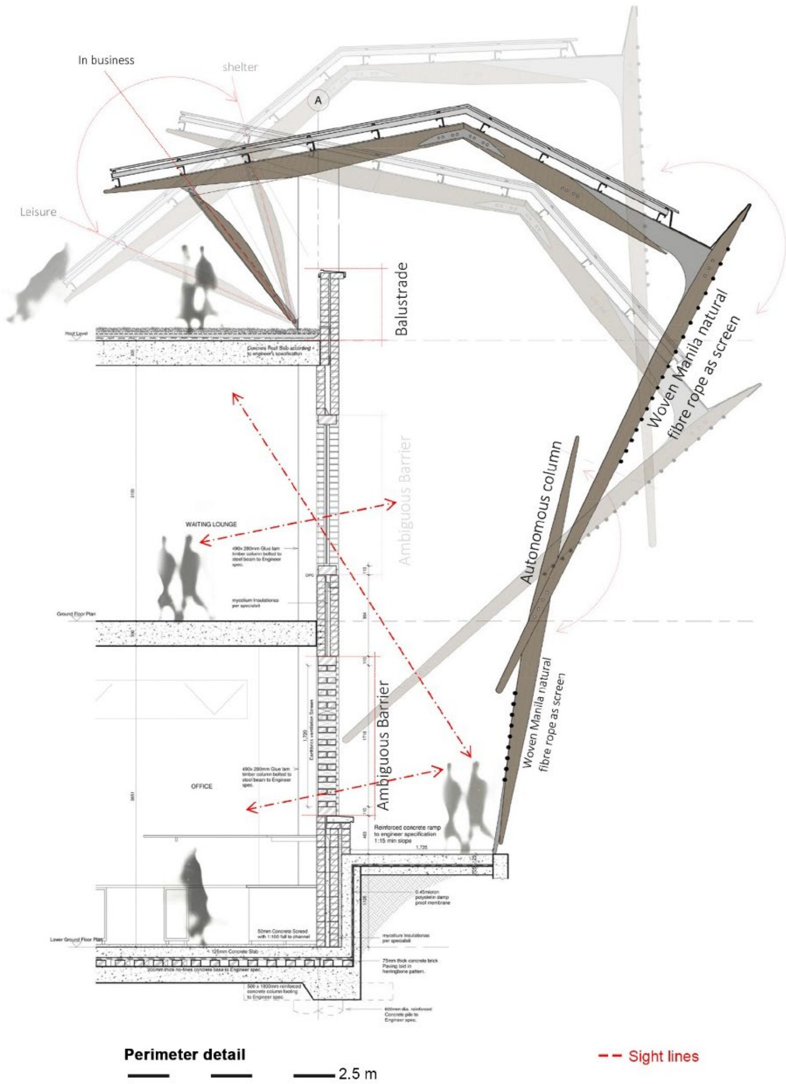

Figure 3: Case study 1 section: Land redistribution hub in Tshwane

The Hub is not a single building but a series of buildings each of which functions as a phase (Figure 2).

- Phase 1, focuses on the administrative development of land redistribution.
- Phase 2, as the core, focuses on connecting the people to the land through the integration of sacred spaces with archive spaces.
- Phase 3, the heritage boulevard i.e. the colonisation museum focuses on highlighting the dispossession of land in relation to the 'achievements' of the coloniser.

The material is an extension of its former life (Figure 3). It is never at odds with what it was. As such, the building is not designed to outlive its purpose. It is designed to gradually decompose and return to the land from which it came. Theoretically, each component comprises natures rawest elements and thereby contains in its makeup the embodiment of the ancestral native spirit (Sesana, 2020) that speaks of inter and intra connectivity.

5. Case study 2

The architectural intervention offered as a case study below, focuses on creating a closed system of living, where an individual lives, eats, grows, and creates within one place, thus reducing the need for the use of logistic technologies for the delivery of goods and materials to the site (Figure 4). It puts into the forefront the relationship that humans have with the earth as custodians.

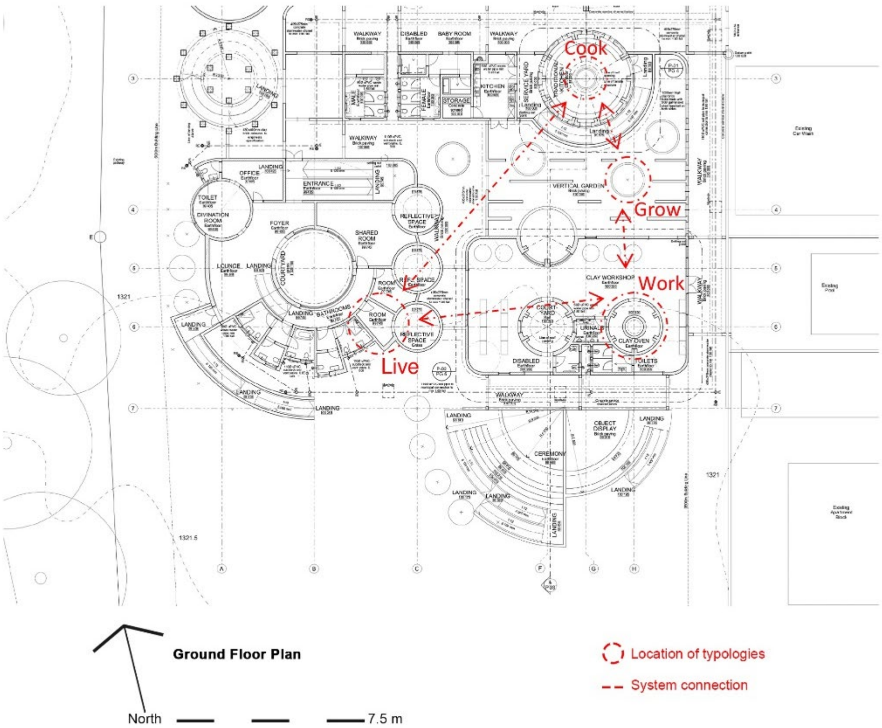

Figure 4: Case study 2 plan: African social health facilities in Tshwane

This relationship is manifested by the formation of building structure through the manipulation of clay (the first [ma]terial, as related to earth, grounding, and mother earth). The clay is moulded into bricks that are used as both walls and roofs, while the floors are made of clay earth floors sourced in situ – while timber used as walls, roofs as bricks, floor as earth floors sourced in situ, and timber ([wo]od, as related to trees, growth and the feminine), as structural elements for overhead planes and platforms, that support elements such as the vertical garden systems (Figure 5).

The principles that African indigenous value and knowledge systems centre are harmony with nature and having environmental awareness (Obiora & Emeka, 2015: pp 89). This means that, like other societies, "African societies construct culture in their encounter with and effort to understand and relate with nature, in order to harness its resources for the nurture of the society" (Obiora & Emeka, 2015: pp 90). The difference inherent in African indigenous and traditional value systems is their being founded on "the ethic of love and respect for the earth" (United Nations, 1992) as said by Maurice Strong in his opening address to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992.

This love and respect for earth comes from belief systems in which there is a greater existence that brought all matter and living organisms into being. As there was the one creator, these metaphysical thoughts centred on how that source placed within all things, whether animals, plants, metals, air, celestial objects, or gods, a universal force or energy that stays within all such forms. This force empowers them, maintains them, and is part of that greater creator (Asanie, 1985).

Consequently, separation occurs less between two entities (Obiora & Emeka, 2015: pp 90).

> *"[There is]…less separation between subject and object, between self and non-self, but fundamentally all things share the same nature and the same interaction one upon another ... ('and' the living?) the living, the dead and the first ancestors, from the stone to the divinities a hierarchy of power but not of being, for all are one, all are here, all are now"*

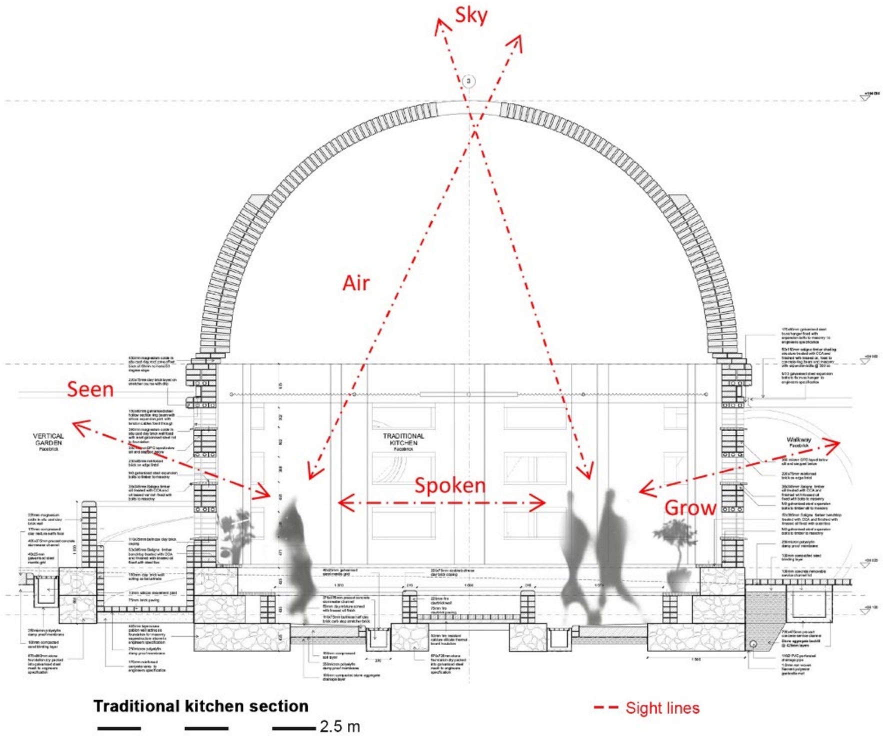

Figure 5: Case study 2 section: African social health facilities in Tshwane

The material first approach and celebration of the natural as a framework for design created limitations that correspond with sustainable solutions. An example would be the aversion to overly processed material such as concrete products such as glass reinforced concrete (GRC). When moving from such materials like timber, we open ourselves to requirements such as maintenance and treatment. However, if used consistently, contemporary buildings beyond those already found in African traditional ecology knowledge solutions may be created with the material. Thus, the materials chosen are used to the highest level they can be, and consequently with a higher level of intention that taps into indigenous knowledge systems. By the nature of the material limitations, artificial systems that support contemporary façade solutions would give way to the passive, and this change will carry through to higher scales of design interventions. There will be a point at which the limit of materials is reached, and one might have to move from large scale vertical interventions towards four to five storey precinct typologies, thus decreasing the need to use materials such as concrete and steel (Thomas, 2021).

The lens offered by traditional ecological knowledge and indigenous knowledge systems, can be applied to the constructions of today's buildings, taking advantage of the sustainable methods of living, and building that exist within them.

6. Research findings, the conceptual framework

The paper infers that for future interventions to be better informed a conceptual framework can be used. A framework that contributes to the discussion on addressing the climate emergency by identifying indigenous knowledge systems as a strategy, or a basic structure underlying a system or concept, that consists of remembered information within frames (Minsky, 1974: p i). The resultant strategy is needed to contribute towards preventing the further perpetuation of the post-apartheid city while simultaneously proposing cultural dissemination through architectural interventions.

6.1 An emerging tectonic

Similarities in the two case studies provide frames for the framework as noted below in Table 1.

Table 1: Themes provided by the similarities between the case studies

Category	Themes
Identity - ecological and indigenous knowledge	The sacred, cultural, and ritualistic.
	Language, form, and function.
	Community and connection.

Category	Themes
Culture - ecological and indigenous knowledge	Heritage concerning identity.
	Placemaking concerning stewardship/ custodianship.
	Design principles, materials, and construction strategy.
	Sacred space concerning scale.
Technology tectonics - ecological and indigenous knowledge	Support a circular economy in utilising replenishable materials.
	Material use and construction detailing strategies, for example, timber and mud, have been chosen over non replenishable materials such as steel and concrete where possible.
Visual tectonics - ecological and indigenous knowledge	Architectural language at odds with the colonial buildings of the post-apartheid city.
Circular economy activities - indigenous knowledge systems	Low carbon cost of culture consumption.
Tourism economy – target local and international markets	Target a local market segment in cultural, social, and economic accessibility.
	Attract international visitors to the region.

7. Conclusion

Architecture in built form is complicit in what drives the culture of consumption. Through the exclusion of indigenous practice - the use of sustainable local resources and building practices - the existing architectural interventions, within the post-apartheid city, fall short in their attempts to transform the city away from colonial capitalist linear economy consumption practices that degrade the environment. Indigenous knowledge systems can be the ultimate calibrator of the current culture of consumption and its reverberations through our actions as we construct or deconstruct a world we bequeath to the future. Incorporating indigenous practice can improve future architectural interventions to ensure space and place for diverse cultural inclusion. The paper presents an argument that there is a market for the consumption of culture as an experience, and that such locally produced, and locally consumed culture is vested in indigenous circular economy practices that mitigate the climate emergency resulting from climate change caused by human consumption.

Thus, when the architecture experienced by the international tourist market in their desire for the consumption of culture will come to represent not only the European legacy of colonisation within the context, but the indigenous African people of which it so often serves who live within the contemporary post-apartheid city. Then, we can begin to assimilate indigenous knowledge systems and beliefs to solve the urgent issues of resources, accessibility, and inclusivity within not only the context of tourism but the greater tangible built forms that define our cities.

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PhD Research Papers

Customer Engagement With VR-Enabled Tourism Activities at Cultural Heritage Sites

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Abstract: Despite the tremendous amount of academic interest in virtual reality (VR), the existing conceptual models that presented VR attributes as antecedents of users' acceptance and attitudes, failed to examine the power of VR technologies in promoting the alternative attractiveness of virtual tourism compared to traditional onsite visitation. This is of great significance to the solution of over-tourism issues frequently seen in the today's tourism destinations, especially world-famous cultural heritage sites. Therefore, the present study fills the literature gap and empirically validates a conceptual framework that shows how visitors' engagement with VR-enabled tourism activities could lead to an enhanced alternative attractiveness of virtual tourism, and their pro-cultural behaviors. A total of 571 valid responses from US visitors that have adopted VR-enabled tourism activities were collected to confirm the role of four VR attributes, i.e., immersion, vividness, presence, and enjoyment, in motivating users' engagement behaviors with VR tourism activities. The study findings also testified that visitors who engaged with VR tourism activities are likely to adopt pro-cultural behaviors in the future and assessed the alternative attractiveness of VR tourism against the traditional onsite visitation. The findings will provide valuable implications for policymakers who aspire to preserve the cultural heritage sites while promoting cultural heritage destinations through advanced VR technologies

Keywords: customer engagement, virtual reality, virtual tourism, alternative attractiveness, cultural heritage sites, pro-cultural orientation

1. Introduction

As a manifestation of advances in technology in general, information and communication technologies (ICTs) and artificial intelligence (AI) in particular, virtual reality's (VR) permeation of the travel and tourism industry gave rise to a digital transformation (Buhalis and Law, 2008). VR can be defined as a 3D simulation that entails lifelike and authentic computer-generated graphics to stimulate all five senses and thereby immerse users/participants for the entire duration of the experience (Wohlgenannt, Simons, & Stieglitz, 2020). Given the pandemic-induced acceleration in the adoption of VR-based technologies, a compelling argument can be made about being at the threshold of a transformation from mobile technologies to immersive technologies (Ong, 2020). This VR-enabled digital transformation found various applications throughout the travel and tourism industry as it had an impact on the perceptions of tourism destinations and offered opportunities for wider consumption of tourism services and content (Tussyadiah, Wang, Jung, & Dieck, 2018). Cultural heritage destination tourism is no exception (Little, Bec, Moyle, & Patterson, 2020). Cultural heritage is the legacy of the objects of archaeological interest and a culture's intangible attributes passed on generation to generation (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2021). As a tourism activity, cultural heritage comprises all the travel and visits that are aimed at exploring the cultural and historic sites and destinations that harbour these objects of interest (Munjal, 2021).

Over the past two decades, numerous studies have been conducted on VR across disciplines, stemming from the increased popularity of the technology and the growing interests of the scholars in the field. Several studies explored VR in various contexts (see Table 1 for contextual highlights). However, the existing conceptual models that embraced various VR attributes as antecedents of users' acceptance and attitudes, failed to examine the power of VR technologies in promoting the alternative attractiveness of virtual tourism compared to traditional onsite visitation. This is of great significance to the solution of overtourism issues frequently experienced in modern-day tourism destinations, especially the world-famous cultural heritage sites. Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic created a renewed impetus and urgency for the destination marketing organizations (DMOs) at tourism destinations that experience overtourism. VR-enabled tourism as an alternative to traditional travel holds a great potential to control and mitigate the overtourism phenomenon (Schiopu, Hornoiu, Padurean, & Nica, 2021). Through an integrated approach of all the stakeholders, VR-enabled tourism's alternative attractiveness can be marketed to simulate travellers' switching behaviour (Bansal, 2005). This, however, requires the economic growth and sustainability of the communities at cultural heritage sites, effective policy making, and cultural heritage destination planning and marketing (Jamieson & Jamieson, 2019). The present study proposes and examines a multidimensional model that encompasses both the impact of VR attributes on visitor engagement and the positive outcomes of VR-enabled tourism activities. Findings of this study will provide inspiration for tourism marketers and DMOs who intend to incorporate VR technologies in their marketing strategies. The findings will also yield implications for policymakers who aspire to preserve the cultural heritage sites while promoting cultural heritage destinations through advanced VR technologies. Further, this study shows how visitors' engagement with VR-enabled tourism activities could lead to an enhanced alternative attractiveness of virtual tourism, and their pro-cultural behaviours by empirically validating a conceptual framework.

2. Literature review

2.1 VR-enabled tourism

As the VR definition suggests, the application of the 3D technology is fundamental in creating a simulated environment as it enables the users to navigate and manoeuvre within the artificial dimension while interacting with the virtual environment (Cowan & Ketron, 2019). Although a consensus does not seem to have been reached in the existing tourism literature, Guttentag's (2010) definition manages to encapsulate what the term virtual reality signifies in the tourism context: "The use of a computer-generated 3D environment – called a 'virtual environment' (VE) – that one can navigate and possibly interact with, resulting in real-time simulation of one or more of the user's five senses.". The present study will adopt this definition. As a type of tourism that has been catalysed by the advancements in technology, virtual tourism centres around the virtual representation of touristic sights, destinations, and experiences. It is usually designed and marketed as either a preview of the touristic attraction before the arrival of the targeted audience or a prolongation of the visit that has already taken place (Kim and Hall, 2019). Despite its technology-based contemporary practices, virtual tourism is as old as the human history. As presented in Table 1, VR applications in various industries and the VR research in a diverse set of disciplines have gained significant recognition in contemporary literature.

Table 1: Interdisciplinary review of virtual reality

Studies	Context	Highlights
Choi and Kim (2017)	Museums	Incorporation of head-mounted display (HMD) to enhance display methods.
Lee et al. (2020)	Museums	VR's absorptive impact on immersion, museum experience and intention to visit.
Hamari (2015)	Gaming	Attitude toward virtual product purchases in free-to-play game environments.
Zyda (2005)	Gaming	Game sciences's influence on VR community, entertainment industry, and other domains.
Dickinson et al. (2020)	Gambling	VR-based experimental research in gambling behavior and problem gambling.
Liu, Dong, and Zhu (2021)	Gambling	Value creation through digital technologies in the gaming industry.
Ansari et al. (2022)	Entertainment	VR as a tool to minimize the impact of Covid-19 on the entertainment industry.
Bates (1992)	Art & Entertainment	Progress of VR as an artictic medium through content and style development.
Cardoş, David, and David (2017)	Healthcare	Virtual reality exposure therapy (VRET) to treat flight anxiety and fear-related avoidance.
Rothbaum et al. (2006)	Healthcare	VRET to treat fear of flying (FOF) in a control clinical trial versus exposure therapy (SE).
Van Benthem and Herdman (2021)	Healthcare	VR as a cognitive health screening tool to assess elevated risk for older pilots.
Davila Delgado et al. (2020)	Architecture	Organizational VR and AR applications in architecture, engineering and construction sectors.
Portman, Natapov, and Fisher-Gewirtzman (2015)	Architecture	Use of VR in (landscape) architecture, environmental planning in research and teaching.
Lai et al. (2020)	Engineering	Enabling high-quality VR apps on untethered mobile devices.
Wolfartsberger (2019)	Engineering	Development of a VR-based toool to support engineering design review process.
Wang et al. (2018)	Engineering	VR technologies and applications in consruction engineering education and training.
Kavanagh et al. (2017)	Education	Systematic review and thematic analysis of the use of VR in education.
Radianti et al. (2020)	Education	Benefits and applications of immersive VR in higher education via sytematic review.
Boardman, Henninger, and Zhu (2020)	Fashion	Applications of VR and AR in the fashion industry from TAM perspective.
Pizzi et al. (2019)	Retail	Consumers' hedonic and utilitarian shopping orientations in a VR store.
Israel, Zerres, and Tscheulin (2019)	Hospitality	Effects of telepresence in a smartphone-based VR system (SBVR) on booking intention.
Leung, Lyu, and Bai (2020)	Hospitality	Comparison of the effect of VR and traditional hotel commercials on purchase intentions.
(Han, Hou, Wu, & Lai, 2021)	Hospitality	Acceptance of VR and other smart technologies in the hospitality industry.
(Beck, Rainoldi, & Egger, 2019)	Tourism	Review of the applications and implications of VR and other technologies in tourism.
Huang et al. (2013)	Tourism	User acceptance of virtual worlds in tourism destination marketing from TAM perspective.
Lee, Agarwal, and Kim (2012)	Tourism	VR in travel helpnessness and intention to travel in disabled tourism market.
Bec, Moyle, Schaffer, & Timms (2021)	Tourism	Second chance tourism through innovative preservation methods such as VR and mixed reality.
Tussyadiah et al. (2018)	Tourism	The impact of sense of presence in VR experiences at tourism destinations.

2.1.1 Immersion

Pine, Pine, and Gilmore (1999) describe immersion as “becoming physically (or virtually) a part of the experience itself” (p. 31). As a result, immersion occurs when the experience that is taking place has a high level of involvement by the participant. With this in mind, a virtual environment’s capacity to generate engagement is directly corelated with its ability to elicit the active participation and, thus, immersion of participants (Loureiro, Guerreiro, & Ali, 2020). According to Lee, Jung, Dieck, and Chung (2020), knowledge and interest are significant contributors to the level of immersion. Highlighting the subjective aspect of immersive experiences, Raptis, Fidas, and Avouris (2018) argued that immersion does not only involve interaction with the other participants but is also an interplay between the virtual environment and the participant. As suggested, immersion is a key element in virtual, non-physical experiences as it dictates the engagement level, which in return determines the longevity of the interaction. Hudson, Matson-Barkat, Pallamin, and Jegou (2019) expounded the reinforcement capacity of social interactions in immersion levels during a virtual experience, while suggesting that social interactions may also lead to the opposite outcome when social interactions serve as a distraction.

2.1.2 Vividness

According to Zheng, Chen, Zhang, and Guo (2021), vividness of the virtual images, which are presented as a feature of the virtual tourism experience, is an effective attribute to create a stimulus in the participants’ mind. Wohlgenannt et al. (2020) described vividness as “the richness, resolution, or quality of the displays” (p. 457) and concluded that vividness was significant contributor in consumers’ perception of media richness. Lee, Lee, Jeong, and Oh (2020) empirically tested a quality-driven VR model and found that vividness positively influenced consumers’ attitude, resulting in a behavioural intention to visit the virtually experienced destination. Drawing on this theoretical and empirical background, the present study presents vividness as one of the four key VR attributes that positively influence visitors’ engagement level with the VR-enabled tourism activities.

2.1.3 Presence

Presence is a key attribute of VR technology in that it determines the activity’s level of effectiveness in diverse application settings, such as virtual heritage tourism. In a VR context, presence can be defined as a state of mind where the individual is immersed in the virtual environment, with limited or no connection to real world that exists outside the VR. This replacement or substitution of a real environment or an activity constitutes the foundation of the presence attribute of the VR technologies (Tussyadiah et al., 2018). VR experiences offer the users a virtual environment where the movements of the participant are tracked and reactions are digitally tailored depending on the purpose and theme of the VR-enabled activity (Bogicevic, Seo, Kandampully, Liu, & Rudd, 2019). The virtual presence created through this simultaneous interactive experience, represents the essence of the visitor engagement opportunity in the context of cultural heritage tourism. The virtual alternative to a cultural heritage destination can serve as a destination marketing strategy to entice potential visitors to actually visit the destination in the future. At cultural heritage destinations where the sustainability of the cultural heritage is sought due to overtourism, VR-enabled activities can replace the actual visitation through a virtual substation.

2.1.4 Enjoyment

As an emotional construct, enjoyment was introduced by Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw (1992) as a mediator in individual usage intentions of computers. In the virtual reality context, enjoyment can be defined as the extent to which visitors find the VR activity enjoyable, without a regard to the anticipated outcome of the experience (Davis et al., 1992). Hamari (2015) explored enjoyment as hedonic motivation in customers’ technology adoption behaviour in the gaming context. Mäntymäki and Salo (2011) conducted an empirical study to investigate teenagers’ continuous use intention and purchasing behaviour in social virtual worlds (SVWs) context and identified a relationship between teenagers’ continuous engagement with SVW and their perceived enjoyment. The present study further advances the construct by analysing its motivational dimension as a VR attribute in virtual cultural heritage tourism. More specifically, the present study postulates that enjoyment is a significant factor in visitors’ level of engagement with the VR-enabled tourism activities.

2.2 Customer engagement with VR-enabled tourism experience

Engagement was identified as one of the most recurring themes regarding happiness in the psychology literature by Seligman, Steen, Park, and Peterson (2005), concerning the individual’s immersion in engaging activities.

Customer engagement, on the other hand, is a psychological state that stems from the interaction and co-creation of the experiences with the object of interest, e.g., brand, tourism activity, etc. (Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, & Ilić, 2011). Therefore, it can be defined as the customer's personal relationship with this object, which manifests in her cognitive and affective states and behavioural actions (So, King, & Sparks, 2012). In customer behaviour studies, engagement concept is often utilized due to its potential to explain behavioural outcomes of the customers (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). The concept, however, usually transcends the conventional buyer-seller relationship as a consequence of the increasing levels of interconnectivity between these actors (Hollebeek, Jaakkola, & Alexander, 2018).

In the VR context, Willems, Brengman, and Van Kerrebroeck (2019) explored how three types of virtual representation media, i.e., pictures, 360° video, and VR, differed in terms of their capacity in engaging millennials. The assessment was based on three VR attributes, namely interactivity, vividness, and telepresence, in terms of their influence on flow, enjoyment, and purchase intentions, and the results indicated that VR received the highest scores on all three dimensions (Willems et al., 2019). Kim, Lee, and Jung (2018) deployed an extended stimulus-organism-response (SOR) model to explore tourists' visit intensions based on their VR-based experience of the destination. The authenticity of the activity constituted the stimulus dimension, cognitive and affective responses form the organism dimension, and the attachment and visit intention were the response dimension of the framework (Kim et al., 2018).

> ***H_1:*** *Immersion will have a positive influence on the customer engagement with VR enabled tourism activities at cultural heritage sites.*
>
> ***H_2:*** *Vividness will have a positive influence on the customer engagement with VR enabled tourism activities at cultural heritage sites.*
>
> ***H_3:*** *Presence will have a positive influence on the customer engagement with VR enabled tourism activities at cultural heritage sites.*
>
> ***H_4:*** *Enjoyment will have a positive influence on the customer engagement with VR enabled tourism activities at cultural heritage sites.*

2.3 Alternative attractiveness

Alternative attractiveness refers to the degree of satisfaction that consumers can expect when dealing with alternative suppliers (Ping, 1993). Virtual reality tourism has great potential to replace traditional tourism in solving overtourism at heritage sites, but there is little research on whether and how users can improve their acceptance of this new alternative (Guttentag, 2020). The related research of alternative attractiveness shows that attractive features from competitors can stimulate consumers' switching behaviour (Bansal, 2005). Once customers find alternative products or services that can provide low price, convenience, completeness, higher profit return or more attractive, they may terminate their relationship with current service providers and choose other service providers (Tesfom, Birch, & Culver, 2016). In other words, alternative attractiveness will negatively affect customers' loyalty to existing products (Ghazali, Nguyen, Mutum, & Mohd-Any, 2016) and retention rate (Vázquez-Carrasco & Foxall, 2006), and stimulate the willingness to switch to alternative products (Amoroso & Magnier-Watanabe, 2012). Then introducing alternative attractiveness into this study can make up for the gap that emerging VR tourism products have not empirically tested their substitution potential for traditional tourism products in heritage sites and improve the conclusion scientifically so that VR tourism solves the problem of overtourism in heritage sites through substitution (Guttentag, 2020).

> ***H_5:*** *Customer engagement with VR-enabled tourism activities will have a positive influence on alternative attractiveness at cultural heritage sites.*

2.4 Pro-cultural orientation

The principle of sustainability involves the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development (Chang, McAleer, & Ramos, 2020). In the economic field, the role of tourists' consumption behaviour in promoting the economic sustainability of destinations is emphasized. Because culture can achieve sustainable development at different levels and protect cultural beliefs, traditions and heritage (Samaddar, Mondal, & Sharma, 2021), the concept of socio-cultural sustainability has become an important concern of global destination management organizations and tourism researchers (Qiu Zhang, Fan, Tse, & King, 2017). However, in the social and cultural field, there are relatively few studies on tourists' behaviours or attitude towards different cultures (Lin et al., 2021), while pro-cultural orientation refers to tourists' active participation and contribution after interacting with different cultures, and it is considered that sustainable tourism should promote tourists' responsible behaviours in cultural or cross-cultural experience, the goal of sustainable tourism service providers is to enable tourists to explore local culture responsibly and take actions according to cultural background (Chang et al., 2020). As for the interaction between tourists and cultural environment, some studies suggest that tourists should respect and appreciate different local cultures and propose codes of conduct according to different cultural situations (Lin, Chen, Trac, & Wu, 2021). Artal-Tur (2018) believes that cultural tourists should maintain and attach importance to local culture in cultural tourism, so as to promote the sustainability of destinations.

> ***H_6:*** *Customer engagement with VR-enabled tourism activities will have a positive influence on their pro-cultural behaviours at cultural heritage sites.*

The following figure (Figure 1) is the proposed model that delineate how visitors’ engagement with VR-enabled tourism activities could lead to an enhanced alternative attractiveness of virtual tourism, and their pro-cultural behaviours.

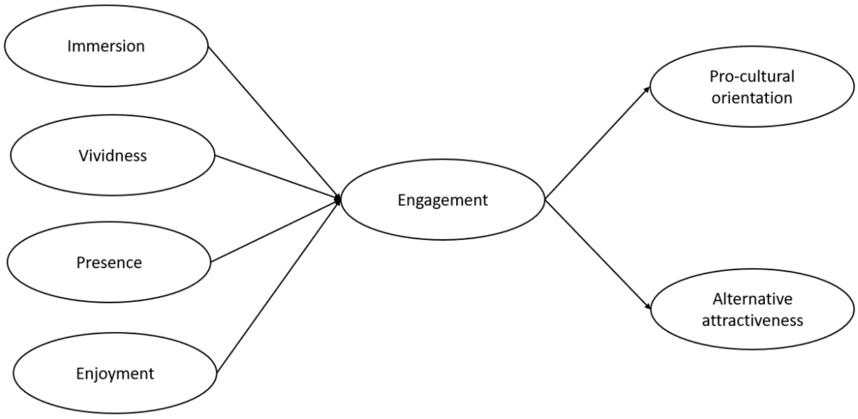

Figure 1: Proposed conceptual model

3. Methodology

3.1 Data collection and sample profile

Data were collected in November 2021 through Amazon Mechanical Turk, a crowdsourcing platform that is now commonly used to sample participants for hospitality and tourism research. There was a recruitment incentive ($1) to increase participation. Sampling method was convenience sampling due to constraints of budget and time. Participants took part in an online self-administered survey. In the beginning of the survey, the respondents were introduced to the VR-enabled tourism concept and examples. Then only participants who agreed to proceed were invited to complete the rest of the survey. Before rating their perceptions of VR-enabled tourism activities and their overall assessment of behavioural outcomes, participants were asked to experience a VR-enabled tourism product by clicking a provided link to Machu Picchu VR-enabled travel video. There was a timer to time out those who didn’t complete the entire VR-enabled travel video. The rest of the survey is composed of three sections: First, several screening questions regarding previous experience of VR-enabled tourism activities and travel experience of Machu Picchu were provided. Second, measurements for each proposed construct were stated to allow participants to evaluate. Finally, participants were asked to provide their demographic information such as age, gender, marital status, income, ethnicity, and education. Total of 571 valid responses were collected after data cleaning (attention checks, incomplete answers, invariance of scores, etc.). Among the respondents, the majority of the sample were male (66%) and between 25-34 years old (55%). About 51% of the sample had an annual household income between $45,000 and $85,000. Caucasians (65%) and Asians (25%) were the two major ethnicities in the sample. Most of the respondents were married (88%), followed by single (10%). About 70% of the sample had a bachelor’s degree, followed by 22% who had a master’s degree.

3.2 Measures

All measurements for the proposed constructs were adapted from previous literature. Immersion was measured using four items derived from Hudson et al. (2019). Vividness and presence were measured using three and seven items respectively adapted from works of Kim and Ko (2019) and (Wei, Qi, & Zhang, 2019) respectively. Enjoyment was measured using four items adapted from Hu et al. (2021). Alternative attractiveness was measured with four items from Ha and Park (2013). Pro-cultural behaviours were measured from Choi, Papandrea, and Bennett (2007). All the scales were measured using 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). Table 1 displays the measurement items for each construct.

4. Results

4.1 Measurement model validation

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was employed by the aid of SmartPLS statistical packages to assess the reliability, convergent, and discriminant validity of the constructs. Table 2 shows the factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and AVE (average variance extracted) for the constructs to reveal the constructs' reliability and convergent validity (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2013). Table 3 shows that the inter-construct correlations were smaller than the square roots of AVEs on the diagonal, indicating the scale's sufficient level of discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2013).

Table 2: Reliability and convergent validity

Constructs	Items	CR	FL	AVE
Immersion (IM)	IM_1 I could interact with the scenes in the VR tourism as if I was at the cultural heritage site in person.	0.715	0.882	0.778
	IM_2 I felt detached from the outside world while experiencing the VR tourism at the cultural heritage site.		-	
	IM_3 I felt completely immersed while experiencing the VR tourism at the cultural heritage site.		0.883	
	IM_4 I forgot about my everyday concerns while experiencing the VR tourism at the cultural heritage site.		-	
Vividness (VV)	VV_1 I thought the sensory information provided by the VR tourism at the cultural heritage site was highly vivid.	0.763	0.904	0.808
	VV_2 I thought the sensory information provided by the VR tourism at the cultural heritage site was highly rich.		0.894	
	VV_3 I thought the sensory contents provided by the VR tourism at the cultural heritage site was highly detailed.		0.809	
Presence (PS)	PS_1 I felt like I was actually at the cultural heritage site shown in the VR tourism.	0.848	0.793	0.566
	PS_2 It seemed as though I actually took part in the action of the VR tourism at the cultural heritage site.		0.708	
	PS_3 It was as though my true location had shifted into the cultural heritage site in the VR tourism.		0.777	
	PS_4 I felt as though I was physically present at the cultural heritage site in the VR tourism.		0.743	
	PS_5 The objects in VR tourism gave me the feeling that I could do things with them at the cultural heritage site.		-	
	PS_6 I had the impression that I could be active in the VR tourism at the cultural heritage site.		0.753	
	PS_7 I felt like I could move around among the objects in VR tourism at the cultural heritage site.		0.738	
Enjoyment (EN)	EN_1 I am thrilled about having such VR tourism experience at the cultural heritage site.	0.747	0.901	0.798
	EN_2 I really enjoy this VR tourism experience at the cultural heritage site.		-	
	EN_3 The VR tourism experience at the cultural heritage site is exciting.		0.886	
	EN_4 I am indulged in the VR tourism experience at the cultural heritage site.		-	
Alternative attractiveness (AA)	AA_1 Live-stream tourism provides me with opportunities to communicate with the tourism practitioners in the destination.	0.774	0.893	0.688

	AA_2 Live-stream tourism provides me with opportunities to communicate with other viewers.		-	
	AA_3 Live-stream tourism enables me to feel part of the community.		0.865	
	AA_4 VR tourism at the cultural heritage site gives more benefits.		0.721	
Pro-cultural orientation (PC)	PC_1 The cultural values of our forefathers are important to me.	0.76	-	0.541
	PC_2 Culture does not help me to identify myself*.		0.808	
	PC_3 I want to know the foods our grandmothers made.		0.764	
	PC_4 We are not losing our cultural heritage*.		-	
	PC_5 We need to conserve more cultural heritage for future generations.		-	
	PC_6 Cultural heritage does not mean anything to my wellbeing*.		0.771	
	PC_7 I would like to know our traditional style of dress.		-	
	PC_8 Students do not need to learn what their culture is*.	0.887	0.873	
	PC_9 The present cultural heritage should be available for my children's children.		0.753	
	PC_10 Cultural heritage is not disappearing*.		-	
	PC_11 The foods our grandmothers made are important to be.		0.728	
	PC_12 We do not need to care about cultural heritage*.		0.843	
	PC_13 Cultural heritage must be a part of our life.		0.734	
	PC_14 Although we do our business as usual, there won't be any major cultural loss*.		0.716	
	PC_15 Our traditional style of dress is important to me.		-	
	PC_16 Buildings, museums and paintings do not have the right to be preserved*.		0.722	
	PC_17 Future generations have the right to enjoy the present cultural heritage.		0.707	
	PC_18 Ideas, beliefs and customs do not have the right to be preserved*.		0.769	
	PC_19 Culture helps us to live with people of different backgrounds.		0.703	
Engagement (EG)	EG_1 I was absorbed in the VR tourism experience at the cultural heritage site.	0.78	0.866	0.695
	EG_2 Using VR in the cultural heritage tourism site was worthwhile.		-	
	EG_3 My VR tourism experience at the cultural heritage site was rewarding.		0.793	
	EG_4 The time I spent using VR to experience the cultural heritage tourism site just slipped away.		-	
	EG_5 I felt interested in this VR tourism experience at the cultural heritage site.		0.84	

Note: *reverse coded during analysis so that endorsement of all items equates to stronger pro-cultural orientation.

Table 3: Discriminant validity

	AA	*EG*	*EN*	*IM*	*PC*	*PS*	*VV*
AA	*0.829*						
EG	*0.684*	*0.834*					
EN	*0.628*	*0.782*	*0.893*				
IM	*0.676*	*0.697*	*0.676*	*0.882*			
PC	*0.58*	*0.699*	*0.63*	*0.56*	*0.898*		
PS	*0.775*	*0.724*	*0.711*	*0.712*	*0.61*	*0.753*	
VV	*0.619*	*0.773*	*0.698*	*0.708*	*0.61*	*0.698*	*0.899*

Note: AA= alternative attractiveness, EG=engagement, EN=enjoyment, IM=immersion, PC=pro-cultural orientation, PS=presence, VV=vividness

4.2 Hypothesis testing

The model fit was assessed through SRMR and corrected R^2 values. SRMS was 0.070, which was less than the recommended cut-off value of 0.08 (Henseler, Hubona, & Ray, 2016), indicating a satisfactory model fit. Moreover, corrected R^2 values were computed to explain the power of the predicting variables on the respective construct. In the proposed model, four features of VR-enabled tourism activities, namely, enjoyment, immersion, presence, and vividness, explained 73.1% of the users' engagement with such VR-enabled tourism activities construct (R^2=0.731). The model's explanatory power is substantial, approaching substantial according to the standard suggested by (Chin, Peterson, & Brown, 2008), which classify the levels as substantial (R^2=0.67), moderate (R^2=0.33), or week (R^2=0.19). Model testing results reveal the significant influence of enjoyment (β=0.370, $p<0.001$), presence (β=0.158, $p<0.01$), and vividness (β=0.336, $p<0.001$) on the engagement variable, thus supporting H2, H3, and H4. However, the link between immersion (β=0.096, $p>0.05$) and engagement was found not statistically significant were found not statistically significant, thus failing to support H1. The construct of engagement was found significantly associated with pro-cultural orientation (β=0.699, $p<0.001$) and alternative attractiveness (β=0.684, $p<0.001$), thus supporting H5 and H6.

4.3 Robustness test

In order to improve the robustness of the proposed model, the researchers tested the moderating role of previous visiting experience of the tourism destination in the relationships between users' engagement with VR-enabled tourism activities and pro-cultural orientation. SmartPLS software was employed to conduct the moderation test on the model. The statistics confirmed visitors' previous visiting experience (β=0.184, $p<0.05$) moderated the effect of engagement with VR-enabled tourism activities on their pro-cultural orientation. Specifically, visitors who had previous visiting experience of the destination exhibited more pro-cultural orientation after they engaged with the VR-enabled tourism activities about this destination, compared with their counterparts who never visited the destination in person before.

5. Conclusion and discussion

The modern-day travel and tourism industry, recognized as one of the largest industries in the world (Guttentag, 2010), has shown considerable amount of success in synthesizing technology and tourism products. As a popular advanced technology with versatile applications, VR has gained prevalence in the last decade thanks to the advancements in ICTs and the increased awareness around the preservation of cultural heritage sites (Arias, Escobar, Padilla, & Matamoros, 2020). The results of the study confirmed the link between the four VR attributes, immersion, vividness, presence, and enjoyment, and visitors' engagement with the VR-enabled activities. Engagement has also been verified as a predictor of visitors' willingness to continue using the VR-enabled activities against the alternatives, i.e., the alternative attractiveness, and their pro-cultural orientation in the cultural heritage destination context.

The study findings provide several distinct and significant contributions to the theoretical understanding of the VR-enabled tourism activities. First, we elaborated on the four VR attributes and empirically evaluated their significance as the antecedents of visitors' engagement with the VR-enabled activities. Second, we examined engagement as a predictor of visitors' intention to seek alternative attractiveness and their pro-cultural orientation. This is a particularly significant contribution of the present study as the prior research on various VR attributes neglected to assess the ability of VR technologies in promoting the alternative attractiveness of virtual tourism compared to conventional visitation patterns. As the results indicated, assessment of the said VR attributes establishes an important first step for DMOs and other stakeholders to motivate potential visitors to be more culturally aware and environmentally conscious by adopting the VR-enabled tourism activities. This particular aspect provides significant insights for cultural heritage destinations that experience overtourism, where the levels of the tourism activity is beyond what is sought by the destination stakeholders and has a detrimental impact on the destination (Goodwin, 2017). In such a circumstance, VR-enabled tourism activities present a noteworthy potential to control the levels of visitation while engaging with the potential visitors. Moreover, the virtual alternative to a cultural heritage destination can be adopted as a destination marketing strategy to engage with the potential visitors to motivate them to actually visit the destination in the future.

6. Limitations and future directions

Future research endeavours can incorporate other VR attributes to extend the model proposed by the present study. Furthermore, given the number of the destinations that are recognized as cultural heritage sites by UNESCO, future studies can expand the scope of the proposed model by evaluating the visitor perceptions of VR-enabled tourism activities in countries other than U.S. This expansion can also provide valuable insights about the cultural dimension of VR adoption behaviour in other geographies. Furthermore, the present model can be assessed in different contexts, such as museums, disabled tourism markets, and ecologically sensitive tourism destinations, to generate further theoretical and practical results.

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An Analysis of Sustainability Reporting Practices of the Global Airline Industry

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Abstract: Sustainability reporting (SR) has become a standard practice for many organisations worldwide. The purpose of this paper is to explore and develop our understanding of the global airline industry's SR practices. Content analysis was employed to map which reporting frameworks the global commercial airline industry has recently used to report their non-financial impacts. Additionally, comparisons were made in the application of SR between geographical regions. The results indicate that two-thirds of the global airline companies had not published sustainability reports online (reporting period 2019). The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) was the most widely used reporting instrument from the five major non-financial reporting organisations' frameworks. Also, over two-thirds of the reports had used the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a reference framework or referenced SDGs in other ways. This paper provides one of the broadest overviews of global airline SR practices. It is expected that the results will be of interest to practitioners and scholars in aviation SR.

Keywords: airline industry, CDP, global reporting initiative, reporting framework, sustainability reporting, sustainable development goals

1. Introduction

According to a recent global survey conducted by KPMG (2020), sustainability reporting (hereafter SR) amongst the 250 largest companies by revenue has risen from 35% in 1999 to 96% in 2020. Also, the same survey noted an increase in reporting from 24% to 80% amongst a sample of 5,200 large and mid-cap firms, comprising the top 100 companies by revenue in each of the survey's 52 countries and jurisdictions. Since SR has become mainstream practice across all sectors, it is also relevant and important for airlines, which in 2019 constituted an $838 billion industry in revenue (IATA, 2020a), transporting about 4.5 billion passengers worldwide while supporting nearly 88 million jobs in global aviation and related tourism (ATAG, 2020). Despite the industry's economic contributions, the societal concerns over flying and its climate impact have grown. Thus, the demand for more meaningful climate-related reporting is likely to increase, making it worthwhile to explore the industry's SR practices.

In order to demonstrate accountability in the area of climate impact, airlines can disclose GHG (greenhouse gas) information about their performance in sustainability reports. The credibility of information in these reports has been associated largely with the use of the external reporting frameworks, notably the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) (KPMG, 2013), which has become the most prominent SR framework worldwide (e.g. KPMG, 2020), also in the aviation sector (Karaman et al., 2018). Additionally, many companies report their GHG information by participating in CDP's annual climate change survey (CDP, 2022).

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the still relatively young and underexamined research area of airline SR. This is evident in Zieba and Johansson's (2022) recent systematic review, according to which the first scholarly papers touching upon this topic were published in 2005, and by 2019 only 23 related papers had been published. In recent years, the application of GRI in SR has become one of the central themes in this research, yielding some interesting findings. For example, statistical analyses have demonstrated that the firm size is likely to increase the implementation of GRI (Karaman et al., 2018) and that aviation companies based in countries with a strong governance structure and high social and environmental standards are more likely to engage in such reporting (Kılıç et al., 2019). Additionally, recent quantitative content analyses have contributed to our understanding of the development and scope of environmental, social and economic disclosure in airlines' GRI-based reporting (Yang et al., 2020; Zhang, 2021).

While the increasing application of GRI in the airline industry has undoubtedly provided convenient data for researchers to analyse the determinants and extent of GRI reporting, we know very little about what other frameworks airlines use to report their sustainability and climate-related information. This short study aims to fill this gap by addressing the following research question: *What reporting frameworks are currently used in the global commercial airline industry's sustainability reporting?*

The following section provides an overview of non-financial reporting and the commonly used SR frameworks. Next, the paper explains the research method used to address the research question, followed by a presentation of the results. Finally, concluding remarks, limitations and recommendations for future studies are presented.

2. Review of sustainability reporting and related frameworks

Non-financial reporting originated in the 1970s when its practice evolved from making social disclosures to producing broader social and environmental reports in the 1990s, which after the Millennium became increasingly combined and known as sustainability reports (Fifka, 2013). Regardless of many large corporations worldwide engaged in SR, the practice has remained largely voluntary in most countries (Tyson and Adams, 2020). However, recent evidence indicates intensified policy developments towards mandatory disclosure requirements introduced by (self-)regulatory actors (Van der Lugt et al., 2020). For example, the European Commission has set a directive for non-financial reporting (NFRD), requiring large public-interest entities with over 500 employees to disclose certain non-financial information from 2018 onwards (Hahnkamper-Vandenbulcke, 2021). The Commission also published non-binding guidelines on reporting (European Commission, 2017), later supplemented with guidelines on reporting climate-related information (European Commission, 2019). It is worth noting that NFRD (still) leaves flexibility to companies regarding the aspects disclosed and how the reporting is operationalised (Hahnkamper-Vandenbulcke, 2021).

SR can generally be done in conjunction with annual reports or published as stand-alone reports. A third type of report, an integrated report, has also emerged, incorporating financial and sustainability information into a single document, emphasising the relationship between financial and non-financial performance (Owen, 2013). Also, some believe that in the loosest sense, any report can be identified as a sustainability report if it explains how the company meets its sustainability challenges (Schaltegger et al., 2003). Others are stricter, asserting that sustainability reports must include qualitative and quantitative data about how companies manage their economic, environmental, and social impacts (Daub, 2007).

It is also increasingly recommended that companies report only issues that are significant for them and their stakeholders to maintain their relevance (GRI et al., 2015). Such issues are often referred to using the term ‘materiality’, which is initially a financial accounting concept (Jones et al., 2015), where an issue is considered material if its omission or misstatement influences the economic decision of users (Dosal, 2013). Addressing materiality in SR is argued to be more challenging for companies because there is less consensus on what constitutes materiality in a non-financial context (Jones et al., 2015).

The lack of clarity of how to operationalise SR is argued to be reflected in the existence of numerous sustainability performance indicators and the varying ways of applying them (Antolín-López et al., 2016). Indeed, various SR frameworks have emerged to guide corporations in SR. Five major non-financial reporting organisations are the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB), the International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC), the Climate Disclosure Standards Board (CDSB), and CDP (formerly Carbon Disclosure Project) (KPMG, 2020). Table 1 outlines the key characteristics of these organisations’ reporting instruments, their target audience, where the disclosure is placed, and a brief description of their associated environmental and climate-related information. The frameworks summarised in the table should not be seen as competing ones but rather something complementing each other. In fact, the “group of five” has argued and indicated pursuing alignment in areas of environmental, social and governance (ESG) disclosures (CDP et al., 2019). The consortium has also indicated that their frameworks align against the recommendations set forth by Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) (CDP et al., 2019).

The G20’s Financial Board initiated TCFD to develop a set of recommendations, published in a report in 2017, to encourage financial institutions and non-financial companies to disclose information on climate change-related risks and opportunities (Hahnkamper-Vandenbulcke, 2021). The report structured these recommendations around four thematic areas: governance, strategy, risk management, and targets; which are supported by guidance on specific disclosures for all sectors and supplemented disclosures for certain sectors that organisations should include in their mainstream financial filings, providing decision-useful information for investors in understanding material risks (TCFD, 2017). Worth mentioning is that the report identified the transport sector and its associated passenger air transportation industry amongst those that would benefit from the TCFD’s supplemental guidance.

Table 1*:* Commonly referenced sustainability frameworks

	Description	Target audience	Disclosure location	Environmental/Climate-related information
GRI	GRI is an independent, international organisation established in 1997, offering a framework for businessesand organisations for sustainability reporting. In 2016, it transitioned from guidelines to set the first global standards for SR. [a]	Various stakeholder groups[b,c]	Sustainability or annual report or other published material including information on sustainability[c]	Comprises topic-specific standards to report climate change when identified as a material topic[e]
SASB	Independent standard-setting organisation, established in 2011, setting industry-specific sustainability disclosure standards and sustainability matters that are financially material.[a]	Investors[b,c]	SEC filings[b,c]	Information on sustainability topics deemed material, standardised metrics by industry.[c]
IIRC	Formed in 2010[b], IIRC is a coalition of various stakeholders, promoting value creation as part of corporate reporting to establish integrated reporting and thinking within the mainstream business practice as the norm in public and private sectors. [a e]	Investors[b,c]	Integrated annual report or standalone sustainability report[b,c]	General challenges related to climate change, loss of ecosystems, and resource shortages.[c]
CDSB	CDSB is a global consortium consisting of businesses and environmental NGOs, providing a framework for reporting environmental information. Initially, in 2010, the framework focused on risks and opportunities concerning climate change and GHG, but it was later expanded to cover other environmental information and natural capital. [d]	Investors [d]	Mainstream annual financial reporting. [d,e]	The framework consists of 7 guiding principles and 12 reporting requirements, which set out the 'how' and 'what' for reporting relevant and material environmental and climate-related information. [e]
CDP	Established in 2000[b], CDP is a not-for-profit charity running the global disclosure system for investors, companies, cities, states and regions to manage their environmental impacts. [f] CDP facilitates both reporting and ranking. [b]	Investors[c] and other stakeholders[b]	Questionnaire[b] submitted to CDP database[c]	Information on climate change risk procedures and opportunities, energy use and GHG emissions. [c]

[a]Hahnkamper-Vandenbulcke (2021). [b]Deloitte (2016). [c]TCFD (2017). [d]UN Global Compact and Deloitte (2010). [e]CDP et al. (2019)

Besides the group of five and TCFD recommendations, other often referenced SR frameworks include the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and ISO 26000 (Guidance on Social Responsibility) (e.g. Hahnkamper-Vandenbulcke, 2021).

The UNGC was launched in 2000 to call companies worldwide to align their strategies and operations with its ten principles in human rights, labour, environment, and anti-corruption and support broader UN goals (UN Global Compact and Deloitte, 2010). In 2004, UNGC began to request its signatories to produce Communication on Progress (CoP), which serves as the initiative's primary accountability measure based on commitments from companies to make progress towards the ten principles (Hahnkamper-Vandenbulcke, 2021). The overall format of CoP is flexible, but the signatories should incorporate it into their main stakeholder communication like SR (UN Global Compact, 2013).

As part of the broader UN goals, SDGs were introduced in 2015 as 17 global goals for sustainable development, ranging from ending world poverty to taking action to combat climate change by 2030 (Rosati and Faria, 2019). Organisations can use SDGs as a reference framework to improve their sustainability engagement (Schönherr et al., 2017) and subsequently as a framework to report publicly on how they address the SDGs (Rosati and Faria, 2019). Soon after introducing the SDGs, the GRI, UNGC and WBCSD (2015) published a guide, SDG Compass to help companies harness the SDGs. Later on, at least GRI (2021; GRI and UNGC, 2018), SASB (2020), and IIRC (Adams, 2017) have all provided additional guidance on SDG reporting.

Another guide supporting companies' SR efforts comes from the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), whose ISO26000, published in 2010, guides organisations on communicating their commitments, performance and other information related to social responsibility (Hahnkamper-Vandenbulcke, 2021). The guidance addresses seven core subjects, one of which covers issues related to the environment (ISO, 2018). Unlike some other ISO standards, ISO26000 provides guidance rather than requirements and thus cannot be considered a certification (Hahnkamper-Vandenbulcke, 2021). The guidance is also compatible to be used in conjunction with UNCG (2010), GRI (Bastian Buck et al., 2014) and IIRC (ISO, 2015).

All in all, the current sustainability and climate reporting landscape can seem like a jungle of acronyms consisting of standards and frameworks with synergies, overlaps and differences. On the one hand, there exists cooperation in the development and support of these instruments, which all aim to accomplish similar goals of promoting sustainability; on the other hand, various standard-setters and reporting organisations can be seen competing for control and dominance in the field of non-financial reporting and potential users (Zinenko et al., 2015). In this respect, GRI has become widely recognised as the leading voluntary guideline for SR (KPMG, 2017, 2020). Since its first guidelines, introduced in 2000, its framework has been updated several times, with the most recent edition, GRI Standards, in 2016 (Sisaye, 2021).

GRI emerged as a framework to standardise, simplify and globalise SR that lacked comparability. Brown et al. (2009) recognise its scope, flexibility (descriptive quantitative measures) and stakeholder base (wide range of industries, organisations and movements) as reasons for its global success. The authors identify that the GRI's original strategy, which enabled it to grow, was based on three revolutionary goals: 1) to form a broad collaborative coalition of various actors of the same political or policy network to discuss and create rules; 2) to build a sense of ownership of the new rules and practices among the collaborators, and; 3) to establish GRI as a steward of the guidelines. This strategy meant that GRI would become an everchanging document produced not by the steering organisation but by the users for other users. Brown et al. (2009) note that while thousands of actors have contributed to the GRI's development, the proportion of NGOs and such kinds of organisations have declined. The authors argue that this was a tactical decision by GRI to ensure the attendance of large global organisations. Other scholars (e.g. Milne and Gray, 2013) have also raised doubts over the credibility of GRI and whether its implementation reflects companies' actual practices.

From the theoretical perspective, SR is often explained in the light of the overlapping legitimacy theory and stakeholder theory, both of which are based on the notion that there exists a social contract between an organisation and those affected by its actions, where the organisation agrees to perform socially desired actions to gain approval of its operations (Deegan and Blomquist, 2006). The main difference of the theories in relation to SR is that legitimacy theory discusses the societal expectations in general, and stakeholder theory recognises different stakeholders holding different opinions about how organisations should operate. There has also been a growing interest in examining SR from the institutional theory perspective (Fusco and Ricci, 2019), according to which organisations are influenced by their institutional environment and, thus, try to demonstrate conformity to regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive patterns (Scott, 2013).

3. Methodology

This study sought to identify and describe various frameworks associated with sustainability and climate-related reporting and measure the frequency of their application in the global passenger airline industry. The target population covers airlines whose primary business is to fly commercial flights. Hence, companies primarily operating on-demand flights (i.e., commercial business aviation and private charter) or cargo-only flights were excluded. It was also decided that the scrutinised data would need to cover the airlines' operational year 2019. This decision was made to evaluate reporting from the recent past before COVID-19 disrupted the industry.

The accessible study population was obtained from the International Air Transport Association's (IATA, 2020b) annual review, comprising 297 airlines. This list was supplemented by airlines (n=42) from the Skytrax ranking organisation's list (skytraxratings.com/airlines, extracted on Oct 10, 2020), as some major airlines, especially low-cost carriers, are not members of IATA. As IATA welcomes different types of airlines as its members, cargo airlines (n=25), wet leasing companies (n=3) and private charters (n=1) were removed from the sample.

Additionally, three companies were removed as they had ceased their operations. Consequently, the initial sample consisted of 307 commercial passenger airlines.

To assess the airlines' participation in SR, the research data under scrutiny consisted of sustainability reports. All types of sustainability reports (i.e. annual report, stand-alone report, integrated report) were considered to serve as appropriate data. Reports were searched and downloaded from the airlines' websites or the GRI database. Next, references to SR frameworks informed by the literature review (i.e. GRI, SASB, IIRC, CDSB, TCFD, UNGC, SDGs, ISO 26000) were searched across the reports using keywords corresponding to their names or acronyms. The identified frameworks were recorded on an Excel spreadsheet whose frequencies were measured using pivot tables. The airlines were also sorted by region, based on IATA's classification (i.e. Africa & Middle East, Asia Pacific, China & North Asia, Europe, the Americas) to measure the geographical distribution of SR.

As the submitted CDP questionnaires reside primarily in the organisation's database, the airlines' participation in the CDP's climate change survey was assessed separately using data from the CDP's website (https://www.cdp.net/en). As CDP facilitates both reporting and ranking, the level of GHG disclosure was also recorded based on the CDP scoring system, which gives a letter grade for firms according to their response to the questionnaire. The score is based on a four-level scale: Leadership level (A and A-) means that firms look for specific steps to implement best practices in environmental management; Management level (B and B-) indicates firms implementing strategies, policies and actions that address environmental issues; Awareness level (C and C-) indicates that firms assess environmental impacts and; Disclosure level (D and D-) means that firms only respond to the questionnaire (Al-Qahtani and Elgharbawy, 2020). CDP also assigns a grade F to companies invited to participate in the questionnaire but failed to provide sufficient information. Moreover, companies may be left without a score if their response is not eligible. Companies can also request their score to remain private to them and their requesting stakeholders.

4. Results

As indicated above, the sampling procedure resulted in an initial sample of 307 commercial passenger airlines, used as a base for further analysis. The results of this analysis are presented under two subsections. Section 4.1. details the types of reports found and the extent to which these reports have applied or cited various SR frameworks. Section 4.2 examines the airlines' participation in the CDP questionnaire.

4.1 Sustainability reports and frameworks

After the online search, 98 commercial passenger airlines out of 307 (32%) were identified to be represented in sustainability reports. In turn, 209 airlines (68%) had not published sustainability reports or made them accessible online. Table 2 shows that the Americas outperformed other regions in the number of airlines covered in sustainability reports (51%), followed by Europe (38%), Asia Pacific (36%), China and North Asia (20%). African and Middle East airlines were the least represented (8%).

Table 2*:* Geographic distribution of airlines represented in sustainability reports

	No report		Report		Total
Region	**Frequency**	**%**	**Frequency**	**%**	**Frequency**
Africa & Middle East	56	92%	5	8%	61
Asia Pacific	38	64%	21	36%	59
China & North Asia	28	80%	7	20%	35
Europe	61	62%	38	38%	99
The Americas	26	49%	27	51%	53
Total	209	68%	98	32%	307

As the level of the following assessment is essentially associated with airline sustainability reports and not the airlines per se, further adjustments were made to the sample. Three reports were removed because they were published in other languages than English, making it difficult to confirm their content. Two reports were removed because they were published by conglomerates whose disclosures on airline division were partly indistinguishable from other divisions. Finally, 49 airlines reported in joint reports published by their parent companies representing multiple airlines. As a result, the number of reports (n=60) taken to further analysis was fewer than the number of airlines represented in these reports (n=93).

A slight majority of the reports were stand-alone reports (57%), of which 'sustainability report' was the most used title (see Table 3). Sustainability information was presented in conjunction with financial statements or integrated reports in 38% of the sample. Three airlines (5%) disclosed information in multiple documents holding various titles.

Table 3: Titles used for airline sustainability reports

Report name	Frequency	%
Sustainability Report*	19	32%
Annual Report	16	27%
Sustainable Development Report*	4	7%
Annual Report and Accounts	3	5%
Corporate Social Responsibility Report*	3	5%
Corporate Responsibility Report*	2	3%
Corporate Sustainability Report*	2	3%
Environmental, Social and Governance Report*	2	3%
Integrated Report	2	3%
Annual and Sustainability Report	1	2%
One Report*	1	2%
Social Responsibility Report*	1	2%
Universal Registration Document	1	2%
Multiple documents	3	5%
Total	60	100%

*) stand-alone reports

All reports were screened for the SR frameworks, whose frequencies and geographical distributions are displayed in Tables 4 and 5. GRI was the most widely referenced instrument (60%) from the major non-financial reporting organisation's frameworks across all regions. Worth noting is that GRI Standards offers two main options for companies to prepare reports: Core and Comprehensive, of which the Core option necessitates less extensive disclosure (GRI, 2016). Companies may also opt for a 'GRI-reference' claim, which can be used if they wish to report only on selected topic-specific impacts but are not looking to provide a complete picture of their material topics and related impacts (GRI, 2016). Only one report claimed compliance with the Comprehensive option; 22 (61%) claimed compliance with the Core option, and; 12 (33%) used the reference claim or cited the framework in other ways. Also, one report claimed compliance with the GRI's previous generation (G4) reporting guidelines.

Concerning the other three major SR organisation's frameworks, eight reports claimed alignment with or cited SASB (alignment n=6, 10%; cited n=2, 3%), all of which, except for one, were from the Americas, which is unsurprising, given that the target readers of SASB are U.S. investors. Six reports (10%), in turn, had referenced or claimed alignment with IIRC. Interestingly, no report had indicated following CDSB. Also worth noting is that 20 reports made references to none of the major SR frameworks.

Table 4*:* Application of the major reporting organisations' frameworks and their geographical distribution

		GRI		SASB		IIRC		CDSB	
Region	No. of reports	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Africa & Middle East	5	1	20%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Asia Pacific	14	9	64%	1	7%	2	14%	0	0%
China & North Asia	6	6	100%	0	0%	1	17%	0	0%
Europe	20	11	55%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
The Americas	15	9	60%	7	47%	3	20%	0	0%
Total	60	36	60%	8	13%	6	10%	0	0%

Table 5*:* Application of other frameworks associated with SR

Region	No. of reports	SDG		UNGC		TCFD		ISO 26000	
		Freq.	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
Africa & Middle East	5	3	60%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Asia Pacific	14	11	79%	6	43%	4	29%	3	21%
China & North Asia	6	6	100%	2	33%	4	67%	2	33%
Europe	20	12	60%	10	50%	3	15%	0	0%
The Americas	15	9	60%	5	33%	4	27%	1	7%
Total	60	41	68%	23	38%	15	25%	6	10%

Concerning the other SR frameworks, a rather big proportion (68%) of the reports had used SDGs as a reference framework to structure their reports or referenced SDGs in other ways to demonstrate their contributions to the 2030 Agenda. On the one hand, this is unsurprising as GRI, SASB and IIRC, whose frameworks were used by the sampled companies, have guided organisations to incorporate SDGs into reporting. On the other hand, the engagement with the SDGs can be demonstrated on quite loose grounds, which may explain their broad application, even higher than the GRI.

Concerning the remaining frameworks, 23 reports claimed to be signatories of UNGC; 15 reports made references to TCFD, and; six reports indicated following ISO26000. Regarding TCFD, it is worth noting that TCFD recommends its related climate disclosures to be included in companies' mainstream financial filings, which is why its frequency in SR may not represent the whole application level.

4.2 Participation in CDP

The airlines' participation in the CDP's 2019 climate change questionnaire was assessed using the CDP database. Again, the initial sample of 307 airlines was refined by removing two conglomerates and 39 airlines because of recognised parent companies. Consequently, the participation in the climate change questionnaire was assessed on 266 companies.

Table 6 presents the geographical frequency distribution of participation in the questionnaire over the different levels of GHG disclosure. At least 21 airline companies out of 266 (approx. 8%) had participated in CDP's climate change survey, given that they had reached at least the Disclosure level (D or D-). 10.2% of the companies requested to respond to the climate change questionnaire had failed (F) to disclose their data or provide sufficient information to CDP to be assessed. Most notably, most companies had not been requested to participate in the questionnaire (approx. 81.2%). All of the companies in Africa and the Middle East were nonparticipants. In contrast, the participation was the highest amongst companies based in the Americas (approx. 19.6%). The only two companies reaching the Leadership-level score were also from the Americas.

Table 6*:* Cross-tabulation: Region x level of CDP GHG disclosure

Region		Not found	Not scored	Not available	F	D and D-	C and C-	B and -B-	A and A-
Africa & Middle East (n=61)	freq.	61							
	%	100.0%							
Asia Pacific (n=47)	freq.	34			10			3	
	%	72.3%			21.3%			6.4%	
China & North Asia (n=35)	freq.	28			4			3	
	%	80.0%			11.4%			8.6%	
Europe (n=82)	freq.	66	1	1	7	1	2	4	
	%	80.5%	1.2%	1.2%	8.5%	1.2%	2.4%	4.9%	
The Americas (n=41)	freq.	27			6		4	2	2
	%	65.9%			14.6%		9.8%	4.9%	4.9%
Total (N=266)	freq.	216	1	1	27	1	6	12	2
	%	81.2%	0.4%	0.4%	10.2%	0.4%	2.3%	4.5%	0.8%

5. Concluding remarks

This paper contributed to the strand of research developing our understanding of the airline SR. The intention of this descriptive study was not to infer any meanings in the reports or make any statistical inferences but to measure the application of the widely used SR frameworks in the global passenger airline industry. As such, this paper represents one of the broadest overviews of the global airline SR practices (cf. Kılıç et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2020). Using quantitative content analysis to examine reports found from airlines' websites and the GRI database and the data reported by CDP, this paper revealed the extent to which the globally recognised SR instruments were used by airlines in their 2019 reporting period.

Overall, the results suggest that only one-third of the world's commercial passenger airlines produce sustainability reports. The reporting level in the airline industry may, thus, be even lower than in the aviation sector (incl. aerospace, airline, airport) as a whole (Karaman et al., 2018). In line with previous research, inconsistency characterises the industry's SR (Zieba and Johansson, 2022). The inconsistent levels of SR over regions can likely be explained in the light of institutional theory. While socio-political expectations to practise SR may be low in some regions – possibly explaining the African airline's low engagement in SR and CDP questionnaire – such expectations are likely higher in other regions. For example, SR and participation in CDP were the highest in the Americas, likely due to North America's influence where shareholders highly expect voluntary disclosure (Tschopp, 2005). On that note, the findings may contradict previous research, which often indicates European aviation companies as forerunners of SR (cf. Karaman et al., 2018). Indeed, the rather low coverage (38%) of European airlines in SR is surprising, considering the NFRD has required all large companies (500+ employees) based in the EU to disclose non-financial information since 2018. Although this study does not reveal the size of the sampled companies, the findings may, nevertheless, signal broad noncompliance with NFRD.

The findings demonstrate the airline industry having used GRI, SASB, IIRC and CDP reporting instruments from the five major non-financial reporting organisations. The application of CDSB from this group was not recognised in this study. In turn, GRI was the most widely used reporting instrument. This study also identified the reports having referenced SDG, UNGC, TCFD, and ISO 26000 to varying degrees. Over two-thirds of the reports had used SDGs as a reference framework or referenced SDGs in other ways.

This study has several limitations that future studies can address. The sample was limited to the reporting year 2019 only. Therefore, longitudinal studies could explore the changing reporting trends. Such studies could also verify the regional differences statistically. Causal studies, in turn, could shed light on the determinants of using various reporting instruments, which was outside this study's scope.

Moreover, this study was solely based on measuring the extent of reporting frameworks used; thus, it does not evaluate the difference between genuine reporting and potential greenwashing. On that note, it is important to acknowledge that GRI, for instance, allows certain degrees of flexibility in disclosure and compliance depending on its adopted adherence level. Consequently, future research is encouraged to assess the quality of GRI disclosure. In this regard, academia could also help practitioners develop a scoring mechanism for GRI disclosure, similar to CDP, and evaluate how public scoring would influence SR. Finally, while SR can be seen as an enabler of SDG actions, investments and strategies (Rosati and Faria, 2019), SDG reporting has also been considered unbalanced and often disconnected from business goals (KPMG, 2020). Therefore, assessing the relevance of SDGs in airline SR represents another important future research area.

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Sustainable Management of Tourism: Insights From Portugal

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Abstract: The importance of achieving effective sustainability performance in destinations worldwide has long been renowned (Cohen, 2002; UNEP and UNWTO, 2005; Castellani and Sala, 2010; Franzoni, 2015; McLoughlin and Hanrahan, 2019). Destination policy makers and planners have been working towards a continual and ongoing transition towards the development of sustainable industries for the past three decades. This has subsequently been influenced through the development, provision and implementation of sustainable tourism plans, policies and strategies at International, European, National and local levels. Such plans and strategies are aimed at promoting balanced development that ensures tourism takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, while at the same time addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities (UNEP and UNWTO, 2005). However, sustainability is a transition and learning process (Miller and Twining-Ward, 2006) and managing tourism growth together with addressing the needs of the industry, society and the environment as a whole has become a challenge for policy makers and DMO's alike. Nevertheless, it is incremental that destinations look to develop new ways of planning and seek to achieve new strategic positions to ensure the long-term sustainability, competitiveness and resilience of destinations moving into the future. In Portugal, tourism growth has been exponential with tourist activity accounting for €18.4 billion in tourism revenue and responsible for employing over 416,000 people (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2020).Although, the industry has been impacted significantly by the COVID-19 pandemic, there are positive signs that tourism numbers are beginning to increase once again and are expected to rise to pre-covid figures by the end of 2022, according to the European Commission (Costa, 2021). With this in mind, there is a fundamental need to make sustainability the "new normal" for destinations when planning for and managing tourism in both the short and longer term. Thus, for the purpose of this research, it is essential to understand the various impacts, both positive and negative, that can be generated by tourism activity to the economic, socio-cultural and environmental resource base in order to permit an examination into the current level of sustainable management of tourism in Portugal.

Keywords: tourism, sustainable tourism, sustainable tourism management, new normal, Portugal

The development and expansion of tourism worldwide has highlighted the value of tourism as an economic development tool (Marin, 1992) but also the reputation of tourism to act as social and environmental disrupters to host destinations (Mason, 2021). It is this reputation of tourism that has given rise to the need for effective solutions to maximise the positive outcomes from tourism while minimising the negative impacts that can be caused as a result of such growth (UNEP and UNWTO, 2005; Hashemkhani Zolfani *et al.*, 2015; McLoughlin and Hanrahan, 2019). According to the World Tourism Organization (2005), sustainable tourism is "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, meeting the needs of visitors, industry, the environment and host communities". Therefore, tourism planners must act to ensure equal benefits for the industry, visitors, communities and the environment in the development, planning and management of tourism.

Tourism activity has been noted to create irreplaceable impacts on the economic, socio-cultural and environmental resource base of host destinations (Maguire and McLoughlin, 2019). However, these impacts can be considered as either beneficial or harmful for the destination (Mason, 2021). According to UNEP and UNWTO (2005), economic impacts are the impacts destinations look at from a positive perspective given the generation of increased capital and direct employment from tourism (Lozano-Oyola and González, 2015) as well as the potential of tourism to alleviate and increase tax revenues. On the other hand, the loss of investment in other sector from leakages and the increase in the cost of living in localities and a dependence on tourist revenues can also be seen a cost of tourism (Mason, 2006). Likewise, tourism can create many social impacts including the revitalisation to customs and traditions and preservation of culture which can strengthen local communities and garner community support and participation for such developments (Buckley, 2012). Yet, it has also been noted to lead to a loss of authenticity and the potential for acculturation, overcrowding, crime, vandalism and anti-social behaviour (Maguire and McLoughlin, 2019), which often accentuates differences between social classes and leads to hostility towards tourists. Accordingly, environmental impacts are those caused by human activity and requiring great amounts of natural resources, a number of authors have discussed how tourism can increase the potential for pollution to air and water systems, increase global warming caused by the emission of gases, lead to excessive consumption of non-renewable natural resources, cause damage to fauna and flora of the destinations and disturb wildlife (Buckley, 2012). Others have stated how tourism leads to generation and accumulation of waste and excessive soil erosion. On the other hand, awareness of the importance of preserving the environment and investment in infrastructure has been known to benefit local populations and generate recognition of the problems caused by the interaction between human activity and the environment (Mason, 2021). These impacts, both positive and negative need to be taken into account by policy makers and planners to better manage the industry.

The greater perception of the impacts caused by tourism activity, as well as its exponential increase over time, has given rise to the need to create sustainable tourism development policies (McLoughlin and Hanrahan, 2019). Thus, organizations must work to achieve effective sustainable performance in destinations (Cohen, 2002; UNEP and UNWTO, 2005; Castellani and Sala, 2010; Franzoni, 2015; McLoughlin and Hanrahan, 2019) in order to achieve sustainability, competitiveness and resilience of this industry in the long-term (Lozano-Oyola and González, 2015). Destination policy planners have been working in this direction, seeking to make a gradual transition to a system that allows for a balance between these dimensions (UNWTO, 2005). However, It is essential that new strategies are created and developed (Lozano-Oyola and González, 2015), as the present transition and learning process (Miller and Twining-Ward, 2006) for the development of sustainable tourism has become a challenge for all policy makers and DMOs in the field of tourism.

One of the challenges that will be faced by planners and policy makers will be how best to manage the sustainable development and management of the industry moving into the future following the Covid-19 pandemic. Although, it has been recognised that tourism is expected to boom once again. Many studies are attempting to understand further how destinations can better prepare the industry moving forward but more attention however is needed on the practical application of sustainability measures. In light of the European Union goal to "promote sustainable tourism and stimulate the competitiveness of the tourism sector in the European market" (Lozano-Oyola and González, 2015), destinations need to take action to ensure a responsibility and sustainability within the industry. Therefore, Local Authorities and destination planners will need to better control the planning process required for the development of local tourism moving into the future (Charlton and Essex, 1996; Mason, 2006; Connell, Page and Bentley, 2009; Maxim, 2013; McLoughlin and Hanrahan, 2019).

In Portugal, as in the rest of the world, the need for sustainable tourism development measures is urgent. The growth of tourism in this country has been exponential (Costa, 2021), with tourism representing 18.4 billion euros in tourist revenue and employing more than 416 thousand people (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2020). fundamental in the country's economic growth, contributing an estimated value of 202.5 billion euros to the country's GDP (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2021). Although the Portuguese tourism industry has suffered significant losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there are some indicators that point out that the popularity of tourism in Portugal as a tourist destination remains, giving signs that the arrival of tourists will return to pre-pandemic numbers at the end of 2022 (Costa, 2021). Although these indicators are positive with regard to the increase in job offers and income (Franzoni, 2015), it also raises some doubts about the sustainable capacity of tourism in the long term in Portugal and once again emphasizes the need and urgency for sustainable development measures.

This research aims to examine the level of sustainable management of tourism in Portugal by policy makers and planners and will critically analyse stakeholders role and responsibilities in the sustainable management of tourism. In the long term, these data will be used to inform policy decision-makers to assist in the development of sustainable management policies and strategies for tourism in Portugal. Without effective policies and strategies, Portugal may run the risk of not guaranteeing its long-term tourism viability and sustainability.

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Research on the Applications of Blockchain Technology Within Tourism Industry in Vietnam: Proposed Model in Phu Quoc Island

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Abstract: In recent years, blockchain technology has garnered interest from a diverse range of industries and areas, mostly due to its enormous possibilities for transforming the way data is stored and utilized, enhancing security and transparency, and facilitating transactions. In light of the rapid advancement of blockchain technology and the trend toward increasing the awareness of its benefits in the tourism sector, the Vietnamese government, particularly Ministry of Culture- Sports and Tourism, has made significant efforts and played a pivotal role in trying to establish an ecosystem, facilitating blockchain technology to gradually integrate into tourism activities. This contemporary study was conducted to ascertain the level of government interest in fostering an environment conducive to the adoption of blockchain technology in Vietnam. To begin, the author collected secondary data on the number of seminars held and sanctioned by local governments in Vietnam about the use of blockchain technology in tourism since 2018. Second, fifteen tourism specialists who work in resorts, travel agencies, and tourism-related enterprises on Phu Quoc Island were chosen to collect primary data using a mix of open- and closed-ended questionnaires. The Delphi technique was used to evaluate the data collected in order to estimate the outcome of a future scenario involving the establishment of a blockchain system on Phu Quoc Island. The findings indicate that local governments are likely to be interested in expanding the legal framework for access to blockchain technology, and tourism organizations are willing to incorporate blockchain technology into their current operations if the legal framework allows for this new technology. According to the findings, there are two distinct views on which business scope should be prioritized first. For example, hotel and resort representatives prefer to integrate booking and luggage checking first, while travel agencies prefer automatic commission allocation for travel parties involved in the entire tourism procedure.

Keywords: blockchain technology, tourism industry, Vietnam, blockchain applications

1. Introduction

Since its worldwide prominence in 2017, the promise of blockchain technology is now being realized through its application in a variety of other fields (Boucher, Nascimento, & Kritikos, 2017), including financial services, healthcare, and insurance, as well as supply chain and logistics, entertainment, and government (Schlegel, Zavolokina, & Schwabe, 2018), as well as tourism (Kwok & Koh, 2018; Onder & Treiblmaier, 2018). Blockchain technology is a distributed, secure, and immutable public ledger that ensures the security and stability of all transactions. Due to the decentralized structure of this ledger, data saved in it is never lost or deleted accidentally or as a result of a virus attack, and even the smallest details of transactions remain traceable. The travel and tourism industries must share customer information with several providers, which always involves some danger of losing the tourists' personal information. Financial transactions are also critical to this industry, as are money losses as a result of transaction costs. Due to the fact that blockchain is a decentralized storage method, it gives all solutions for securing tourist information while concealing the clients' personal information. It also provides a commendable solution for financial transactions, as it avoids the involvement of a third party and the associated loss of funds due to transactional commission. Recognizing the positive and beneficial application of blockchain in the tourism industry, Vietnam's authorities were among the first in South East Asia to conduct research and initially announce some government-backed legislations to lubricate and ease the use of blockchain in the local tourism sector. Specifically, in March 2020, the Vietnamese government issued Resolution No. 17/NQ-CP, which outlines the critical tasks and solutions necessary for the country's e-government system development. The resolution establishes a legal framework for the use of cutting-edge technologies such as blockchain, the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, big data, and open APIs. Vietnam's tourism sector is regarded as a spearhead economic sector by the government due to the country's diverse and abundant tourism prospects. In 2019, Vietnam's tourism industry achieved its first miracle, welcoming 18 million international visitors and earning $32.8 billion in revenue.While tourist arrivals climbed at an average annual pace of 22.7 percent from 2015 to 2019, the tourism industry's contribution to GDP increased from 6% to 9.5 percent during the same period. The desire for simple and inexpensive international transaction procedures and payment systems is being driven by the globalization and digitization of travel and tourism in Vietnam. Thus, "Vietnam's tourism development strategy to 2030" is a policy breakthrough for Vietnam's tourism development in the new era, leveraging advanced technologies to develop tourism and transforming Vietnam into one of the world's top 30 smart tourist destinations, according to Central committee Resolution No. 08-NQ/TW dated January 16, 2019. There are issues about the current status of the blockchain literature and its relevance/use in the tourism sector, notably in terms of operational issues and the interconnectivity system that links all entities involved in the tourism environment. To achieve success in adopting new technology it should be a result of a mix of government-backed legislation and industry participants' approval and willingness. This study contributes to the Vietnamese tourism industry by assessing the local government's attitude toward blockchain applications, as well as the readiness of tourism entities and the areas of travel enterprises that should be piloted for blockchain applications in Phu Quoc Island-- a Special Economic Zone in Vietnam with strong local government support and minimal bureaucracy. The findings will help some experts to build up the framework model to apply blockchain technology in Phu Quoc Island as the first smart tourism destination in Vietnam. This essay is structured as follows. To begin, an overview of blockchain technology and government regulation surrounding it. This is followed by a study of the literature on the importance of blockchains to the tourism industry, the potential application of BCT in this business, and local government rules and regulations. Following that, the study's methods are reviewed in detail, followed by the presentation of the results and findings. Finally, judgments are taken in light of the data.

2. Literature review

2.1 Blockchain application in tourism industry

The conventional field of tourism and hospitality is being disrupted by blockchain technology's economic and technical paradigm shift, as its underpinning premise allows for the transition from a centralized server-based internet infrastructure to a transparent cryptographic network (Saberi et al., 2019; Flecha-Barrio et al., 2020). Online Travel Agencies (OTA) wireless transmissions encounter challenges with transaction fees due to inefficiencies in the finance and banking industries, which can be readily handled with blockchain technology removing intermediaries. By simplifying digital identification of visitors (travelers), increasing provenance, and enabling effective identity, inventory, and credential management, blockchain has the potential to revolutionize the tourist and hospitality sectors (Erceg, Damoska Sekuloska, and Kelic, 2020). The diverse features of DApps, which use smart contracts and cryptocurrencies, facilitate the creation of new business models, which will improve and enhance current business practices, thereby benefiting citizens and travelers alike, because it is expected that more DApps will be introduced into the market, which will streamline the implementation of smart cities and smart tourism.

2.2 Blockchain situation in Vietnam

The year 2021 was predicted to be devastating for a number of businesses, yet Blockchain soared throughout this time period, with all Blockchain-related indexes experiencing significant growth. Vietnam is ranked 10th on the Global Cryptocurrency Acceptance Index, indicating that the Vietnamese people are quite receptive to Blockchain technology. In 2021, Vietnam was a shining light in the global Blockchain world. Historically, it was difficult for Vietnamese firms to compete with international technology corporations. This disparity appears to have reduced in the Blockchain world, where countries' starting points are not that dissimilar. According to Chainalysis, Vietnam is an ideal example of a country whose participation in bitcoin transactions much exceeds its economic position. Vietnam, which ranks 53rd in terms of GDP at approximately $262 billion and is classed as a low-middle-income country, has a rather high degree of acceptance for bitcoin transactions. It is ranked tenth out of 154 nations on the Global Cryptocurrency Acceptance Index, comparable to industrialized countries such as the United States, China, or South Africa, and even higher than the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain, Japan, and Korea. Additionally, according to Finder's poll of 42,000 people in 27 countries, Vietnam has the highest percentage of bitcoin usage. Vietnamese respondents reported purchasing cryptocurrencies at a rate of 41% and Bitcoin at a rate of 20%. This is the highest rate of any country surveyed.

2.3 Vietnamese legal framework

According to the Financial Operations Task Force (FATF), virtual currency is a digital expression of value that can be used in a digital transaction and has functions such as (i) a medium of exchange change; (ii) an accounting unit; and/or (iii) a non-fiat store of value in a country or territory; not issued or guaranteed by any country or territory; the above functions are performed only on the basis of agreement among the virtual currency's user community. Similarly, the European Union (EU) has stated that virtual currency is designed to be a technological representative in Directive No. 2108/843 dated May 30, 2018 relating to the prevention and combat of financial fraud and money-laundering. Digital value that is not issued or guaranteed by a central bank or government agency, is not tied to fiat money, and does not have legal value in the same way that fiat money does, but is accepted as a medium of exchange by a person or legal entity and can be transferred, stored, and transacted electronically. Additionally, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) defines virtual currency as a virtual asset with monetary characteristics, meaning that it can be used as a medium of exchange or a store of value in a particular environment, such as a video game or a financial transaction simulation game.

The Vietnamese government is continually upgrading and altering its Bitcoin legislation and regulations in order to stay current with technology breakthroughs while increasing its competitiveness in terms of attracting global investment capital. Indeed, their initial reaction to bitcoin was negative; as stated in Clauses 6 and 7 of Article 4 of Decree 101/2012/ND-CP, as amended by Decree 80/2016/ND-CP. Checks, payment orders, payment orders, collection orders, bank cards, and other non-cash payment instruments, as well as other means of payment, are non-cash payment instruments used in payment transactions, according to Clause 6. And, according to clause 7, "illegal payment methods are those that are not listed in this Article's Clause 6." Additionally, the State Bank of Vietnam's Official Letter 5747/NHNN-PC, dated July 21, 2017, delivered to the government office, states that virtual currencies in general, and Bitcoin and Litecoin in particular, are not currencies and are not authorized means of payment under Vietnamese law. It is illegal to issue, supply, and utilize virtual currencies in general, and Bitcoin and Litecoin in particular (illegal means of payment) as a currency or a method of payment. The local government, on the other hand, has modified its behavior since 2019 as a result of the expansion of blockchain technology and the exponential growth rate of bitcoin. The Ministry of Justice has worked actively and pro-actively with relevant ministries, branches, organizations, and experts in the fields of technology, domestic, and international law since 2019 to organize economic research, learn from foreign experience through documents, and review the relevant domestic legal system. Additionally, conducting seminars and discussions with professionals and scientists to exchange and explore the practice and requirements for developing and completing the legal framework governing the application and development of blockchain-based products and services (blockchain technology). According to the Ministry of Finance, it established a Research Team on virtual assets and virtual money pursuant to Decision No. 664/QD-BTC dated April 24, 2020 in order to conduct research and propose policy contents and management mechanisms consistent with the Ministry of Finance's functions and responsibilities. As a result, on December 16, 2020, the Prime Minister released Decision 2117/QD-TTg promulgating a list of prioritized technologies for research, development, and implementation in order to engage actively in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, including blockchain technology.

3. Materials and methods

3.1 Secondary data- study of number of seminars

This study analyzed secondary data to compile a list of all seminars given by the Vietnamese government and foreign organizations on the application of blockchain technology in the tourism industry in Vietnam. Secondary data was gathered from all seminars held in Vietnam between 2018 and October 2021 to determine the possibilities and benefits of implementing blockchain technology in the tourism sector, as well as to discuss and brainstorm on how certain blockchain applications could be used in Vietnam. The author conclude and propose a piloted plan for the adoption of blockchain applications in terms of payment, customer loyalty, luggage screening, and the commission structure of intermediaries based on the conclusion of examined seminars and consolidation of suggested proposals from experts and speakers at seminars.

3.2 Primary data- online interview

Second, the study incorporated a forecasting process framework known as the Delphi method via a focus group interview. In this case, the opinions of local travel agencies on Phu Quoc island regarding blockchain applications were elicited in order to ascertain their readiness to implement sophisticated technology in the island's ecotourism system and which business sector should be targeted first if the government approves blockchain application in the tourism sector completely. The respondents for this study were chosen based on their experience working in the tourism business on Phu Quoc Island for more than five years and were classified into two categories: tourism service providers such as resorts or hotels ranked 4-star above and travel agencies. The depth of experience was justified since these individuals could provide basic knowledge of blockchain technology and its potential impact on the tourism industry in term of immediate and secure payment, loyal customer scheme, luggage screening, and the commission structure of operating travel agencies. Additionally, their level of experience was deemed to increase the dependability of their responses. This method established a context based on practical information received from specialists (Taylor & Wallace, 2007). The researcher sought the viewpoints of these professionals on how they saw the adoption of blockchain technology affecting the future of tourism on Phu Quoc Island. To do this, the study performed two rounds of semi-structured online interviews with a variety of tourist sector expertise (Cres-well, 2014).

As a first step, the researcher emailed to invite for an online interview fourteen top resorts with five years of experience and seven top travel companies with extensive knowledge in the tourism industry on Phu Quoc Island, receiving responses from ten resorts & hotels and five travel agencies. Prior to the interviews, questions were prepared focusing on their readiness and willingness to adopt blockchain technology in the tourism business. The first round of questions centered on how these stakeholders defined blockchain technology's current role in the industry and how they believed BCT could be used to improve existing business models. The second round of questions fixated on how BTC can be used in payment systems, luggage checking, loyalty programs, and commission fee structures within travel intermediary entities. Following each round of questions, experts are supplied with an aggregated summary of the previous round, which enables them to change their responses in light of the group response. Due to the lockdown situation in Vietnam, the interviews were performed online via Skype with resort and tourist agency management. The purpose of the research and the researcher's responsibilities were explained orally to the participants at the start of the interview; it was emphasized that the interviews would be used solely for research purposes; and it was noted that the participants' identities would not be disclosed in research reports. All interviews were recorded using a laptop recording tool and typed as notes in Microsoft Office Word for later analysis.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Study of number of seminars regarding to blockchain technology in Vietnam

Table 1: Number of seminars held during 2018-2021

No.	Name of seminar	Organization	Date	Participants	Speakers	Main Content
1	Blockchain application and data management system	Vietnam National University and Vietnam Internet Association	4th May 2018	300 Blockchain experts and academia	Mr.Pierre Bonnet – CEO of Orchestra Networks Mr.Đỗ Văn Long – Strategic Director of Infinity Blockchain Lab Ms.Nguyễn Huỳnh Phương Thảo – Legal Advisor of Infinity Blockchain Lab	Examine the core issues of Blockchain and Master Data Management, as well as their wide range of applications. Discuss the potential of applying blockchain technology in Vietnam
2	Blockchain for tourism development in Vietnam	Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism	15th June 2018	200 Government Blockchain experts Tour operators, Traveler, Hotels, Airlines & Land Transport, Insurance	Mr. Alexander Rayner – Advisory Executive of Amadeus Travel Intelligence	The Blockchain approach is comprised of three components in Vietnam. The first is about demand. the second is about connectivity. The third is about the booking decision.
3	Developing Vietnam tourism-Enhancing decision-making efficiency using Big Data and Blockch	Tourism Associations in Mekong countries	8th September 2018	120 Travel companies from Lao, Thailand, Cambodia Government representatives from different ministries	Mr.Patrick Basset-Operational Director Accor Mr. Hà Văn Siêu – Deputy General Director of Vietnam National Tourism	Utilizing blockchain technology for the tourism industry is one of the government's objectives for developing Vietnam tourism. Due to its location and status as a free economic zone, Phu Quoc Island should be regarded the first attempt to implement blockchain technology.

No.	Name of seminar	Organization	Date	Participants	Speakers	Main Content
	ain technology					
4	Application of blockchain technology to agricultural product traceability	The Asia Foundation Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Vietnam	3rd April 2019	100 Government representatives Australian government representatives Australian Tech Company Representative of The Asia Foundation	Ms. Le Thu Hien-Manager of the Asia Foundation's institutional and economic development programs Representative - Ethitrade International,Australia	Launch APEC Connect Project- assisting farmers and participants in the deployment of blockchain technology for agricultural product traceability via QR code for export and participation in the global supply chain.
5	Blockchain and artificial intelligence applications to optimize company processes and operations	Department of Science and Technology of Vietnam	12th December 2020	150 Ministerial leaders from a range of ministries	Dương Ngọc Tuấn – Director of Department of Science and Technology Mr. Bui Thanh Tung-Deputy Head of National Assembly Delegation	Overview of Blockchain and AI uses for business and operations; Employing Blockchain in business and organizations particularly in payment system;and identification.
6	The trend of blockchain applications for government and companies	Vin University	October 2020	100 Academia Tech Experts	Prof. Duc Tran – Head of Information Technology Faculty	Panel discussion on the distinctions between blockchain technology and artificial intelligence, as well as some examples of how other countries throughout the world have successfully used blockchain technology. The key sectors in which blockchain technology is being used by governments and businesses are e-government, environmental resources, medicine, tourism, education, logistics, and manufacturing, as well as smart cities.
7	Creating a non-fungible token (NFT)-based online transaction platform for hotel stays	Vietnam Tourism Association	5th October 2021	70 Government representatives Travel agencies Hotels and Resorts	Mr. William Nguyen – Founder of Beowulf Mr. Nguyen Tien Trung- CEO of Crystal Bay	Each hotel night, airbnb rental day, and related travel product will yield NFT tokens. These NFT coins will be listed on the NFT exchange and traded. Travelers who have reserved a hotel stay or an AirBNB room, or other travel services that cannot be used for whatever reason, can sell or trade the reserved dates, as well as their own services,

No.	Name of seminar	Organization	Date	Participants	Speakers	Main Content
						on the NFT market to recoup costs or even profit.

We can deduce the government's level of interest in developing and deploying blockchain technology in tourism and other industries based on the number of seminars held over a two-year period from 2018 to October 2021, which includes nearly two years of global pandemic and a year of lockdown in general in Vietnam. All government representatives speak positively about the adoption of blockchain technology, particularly Ha Van Sieu, Deputy Director General of the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, who emphasized the role of the fourth industrial revolution and the application of blockchain technology in tourism development. These programs not only save time while searching for information, but also facilitate travel by establishing optimal connections. The fourth industrial revolution brings about significant advances but also presents numerous problems to all businesses, including tourism. Vietnam's tourism authorities view information technology adoption as an unavoidable development trend that should be accelerated in order to achieve breakthroughs in development and competition. Simultaneously, the government official designated Phu Quoc as a pilot for becoming a smart tourism destination for domestic and international tourists by integrating blockchain technology applications throughout tourism ecosystem.

From the perspective of travel companies and hotel providers, they are all eager to structure their businesses in such a way that they can adopt a variety of blockchain applications aimed at improving the ease and convenience of international payments from international travelers, shortening the time required for authentication, and automating commission frameworks among all involved players.

From the point of view of international and local technological experts regarding of applying blockchain technology in Vietnam, its start-up ecosystem is thriving and might provide fertile ground for blockchain application development. The government has demonstrated a strong commitment to tech startups and has initiated a program to provide resources and training to technology companies over the next few years. Particularly, according to Mr. Dương Ngọc Tuấn – Director of Department of Science and Technology, stated that among the four technological pillars of the fourth industrial revolution, namely the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, and blockchain, the most likely area for startups to exploit and develop is blockchain technology, whereas the remaining technologies require much larger infrastructure investments. Stability and security are the most desired benefits that Blockchain technology may provide to the tourism industry. Due to the decentralized nature of the blockchain, information cannot go "offline" or be lost due to inadvertent deletion or hacker attack, ensuring that each transaction is traceable. The travel sector is significantly influenced by companies exchanging information. For instance, a travel agent must send customer information to airlines and hotels, and tourists' personal belongings are frequently exchanged and tracked between organizations. Accessing and preserving critical information can become easier and more dependable using blockchain technology, as the duty for data storage is now shared across the whole network.

5. Results of online interview internal stakeholders in Phu Quoc Island

For middlemen or provider users – hotel and travel agency managers, for example – the researcher would undertake an initial investigation on their current operational status. The facilitator chose to perform a preliminary round of information gathering from specialists prior to assigning forecasting assignments relating to the feasibility of blockchain application and what and how the business scope should be initially applied using blockchain technology in the tourism context. The preliminary round questioned applicants about their use of blockchain technology across their system's divisions. Except for Fusion Resort Phu Quoc, nine hotel and resort respondents claimed that they have not yet integrated blockchain technology into their operations. According to the resort's representative, they use blockchain technology to generate a token to recognize loyal customers. While three travel agencies stated that they do not employ any technology advancements, two travel agencies began by connecting their systems to Bamboo Airway, one of Vietnam's largest airline businesses, in order to provide trip tickets via smart contract. As a result, the author concluded that the blockchain environment on Phu Quoc Island is not typical, given that the majority of resorts and hotels surveyed have not implemented blockchain technology and nearly half of tourism agencies have begun integrating with airline services to initiate basic blockchain functions.

The first forecasting task/challenge through second question is to determine whether hotels and travel companies are prepared to integrate blockchain technology, provided the government develops a legal framework and guidelines for technology adoption, and that the entire system is in sync to operate apps. All good and positive response was received from respondents, with Interviewee No.7 representing Pullman Phu Quoc – an Accor member – stating: "Worldwide, Accor members have already begun using blockchain technology to book and pay for travel reservations and other travel-related activities. And we are still awaiting approval from the local government to integrate Pullman Phu Quoc into our global operation."Indeed, Webjet, CheapoAir, Expedia, and One Shot Hotels are among the travel companies that accept Bitcoin as a form of payment (Cho-kun, 2013). It can be inferred that all hotel and travel agency representatives are willing to implement blockchain technology and integrate their operations with the local operational system once an approved decree is released by authorities. Within two days, the researcher gathers all of the participant input into a consolidated report. After seeing the first round summary, each Delphi participant is given a third questionnaire in which they are asked to evaluate the things specified by the investigator using the information provided in the first round, with their response staying unchanged.

Delphi Round 2 findings were based on a 5-point Likert scale to determine which areas of business should implement blockchain applications first, including improving customer experience in terms of payment system, booking and checking baggage, incentive systems for loyalty programs, and commission allocation for intermediaries. The results of the exerts' opinions are quite disparate: eight hotel representatives believe that booking and checking baggage should be integrated into the blockchain system to increase booking ratios and tourist visits, while five travel agency representatives believe that commission allocation for intermediaries should be the priority blockchain integration. As a consequence, the researcher recommended a piloting plan for the use of blockchain on Phu Quoc Island, as demonstrated in Figure 1, and proposes Dapps (current Dapps) with easy-to-use and viable features for use in the context of tourism, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Dapps for Phu Quoc Island

No.	Company Name	CryptoCurrency	Functions
1	Locktrip https://locktrip.com/	Name: LOC - Ethereum (ERC20) based token - Total Supply: 18,579,041 - Market Cap: $112,808,874 -Vol(24h): $219,290	A decentralized, open-source online travel agent that allows customers to contact directly with property owners via the website or app without paying a commission. - All transactions on the Ethereum-based platform will be recorded and regulated by smart contracts, with the LOC token being the only accepted payment mechanism, but other ways may be used as long as they are converted to LOC at the booking stage. - Value-added services, such as priority listings, will generate revenue.
2	Winding Tree https://windingtree.com/	Name: LIF - Ethereum (ERC20) based token - Total Supply: 24,976,439 - Market Cap: $1.8M -Vol(24h): $7,286	A decentralized, open-source online travel agent that enables consumers to contact directly with property owners. The Winding Tree technology, which also includes ticketing, is perhaps the best example of luggage monitoring via blockchain today. Eliminating middlemen simplifies, secures, and streamlines booking and tracking, since every process benefits from transparency. Winding Tree charges suppliers and consumers a nominal price to post and book packages, respectively. - Smart contracts will track and govern all transactions that occur on the Ethereum-based platform. - Miners will be compensated for providing computing power to the network. - Winding Tree is a back-of-the-house system that encourages third parties to develop user-facing interfaces. Future improvements will include the ability to communicate with property management and travel agent systems.
3	ShoCard & SITA https://www.sita.aero/	Type: project - N/a - Total Supply: n/a	ShoCard and SITA collaborated on a project to apply Blockchain technology to identity management. Although the platform is still in its infancy, it is expected to pave the

No.	Company Name	CryptoCurrency	Functions
		- Market Cap: n/a -Vol(24h): n/a	way for a decentralized ID database using a standardized format that would enable travel operators to rapidly and effectively identify clients.
4	Trippki **www.trippki.com**	Name: Trip token - Ethereum (ERC20) based token - Total Supply: 100,000,000 - Market Cap: $112,808,874 -Vol(24h): $16,086	Trippki is a consumer loyalty system in action. Customers will be connected to the system, as will a chain of hotels or travel service businesses. Through their stay at a hotel, eligible clients will earn "TRIP" bonus points, which will be permanent, stored on the Blockchain, and can be redeemed - Reservations and payment via Trippki, as well as customer reward/incentive schemes utilizing tokens - A booking, payment, and incentive system built on smart contracts - Users are always rewarded with tokens by the hotels.
5	Travel Block **https://travelblock.io**	Name: Travel Block token - Ethereum (ERC20) based token - Total Supply: 600,000,000	TravelBlock users acquire TRVL tokens to book airline, hotel, cruise, or auto rental reservations, and the ensuing transactions are safely processed and recorded on the blockchain. TravelBlock lists its own inventory and charges no commissions to its members.
6	Tripago **www.tripago.io**	Name: Travel Block token - Ethereum (ERC20) based token - Total Supply: n/a	Allows for the creation of a wallet to store TPG for the purpose of purchasing tourism packages quickly and without regard for currency exchange rates. - Allows for fast booking and redemption of reward points. - Tripago's goal is to provide a comprehensive travel solution that includes mobile roaming and Wi-Fi packages, as well as currency exchange services.
7	TUI-BED SWAP	Project: Bed Swap	TUI, the world's largest tourism corporation, was one of the first to demonstrate a genuine commitment to blockchain technology with the launch of 'Bed-Swap,' an in-house Blockchain project. TUI can use the technology to analyze demand and transfer inventory between points of sale in real time. From there, it can adjust its selling margins in response to demand.

Note: Market Capital value and daily volume value were captured from CoinGecko on 31st October, 2021.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this article is to conceptualize the role that blockchain technology can play on Phu Quoc Island, with an emphasis on assisting in the achievement of the Smart Tourism Destination's primary objectives, based on suggestions made by experts during seminars and responses from tourism stakeholders during an online interview. Given the extremely competitive and innovative environment in which tourism destinations operate, blockchain technology may offer a realistic solution for improving the tourism experience, rewarding sustainable behavior, and ensuring benefits to local communities. Additional research could include additional business-related factors that tourism participants should consider, such as inventory control and enhancing the user-friendliness of the booking and payment processes. Additionally, future studies can address the limitation by conducting research with a larger sample size and conducting live discussions to generate a more consensus forecast.

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Sustainable Tourism in the Pandemic Era: A Case Study of Japan

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Abstract: The sustainable tourism concept has been evolving continually and respectively with modern society's views on sustainability. The tourism industry constantly faces new challenges showing weak points and providing opportunities for further concept development. With the focus on Japan as a case study, this empirical research discusses the insights of key stakeholders about managing sustainable tourism development during the crisis. This research takes the COVID-19 pandemic as an example of a crisis, which provides an opportunity for the sustainable tourism concept for further evolution. The results indicated that public and private sector stakeholders have different visions of sustainable tourism development. Japan's current public sector approach to it implies resolving the issue of overtourism in main tourism destinations and providing comfortable living for local communities. However, it does not have any implications for making tourism more resilient to external crises. The proposals of stakeholders for response measures for future sustainable tourism development and related policies included the establishment of a crisis management system in the tourism sphere, focus on the development of domestic tourism, creation of proper guidelines for the tourism industry for actions in case of crisis, revision of traditional tourism techniques, the establishment of "new lifestyle"/adaptation to "with Corona" era, focusing on online business/ tourism experience, focus on the development of small groups tours and individual tours, development of flexibility and adaptivity to changes in social conditions, incorporation of public health-related issues, non-contact content expansion, individual approach to different areas, and regional cooperation incorporation.

Keywords: Japan's tourism development, Sustainable tourism, COVID-19 crisis, Tourism industry resilience, Crisis response measures, Stakeholders' insights

1. Introduction

The sustainable tourism concept has developed as a natural consequence of the emergence of sustainable development ideas. It has been evolving continually and respectively with modern society's views on sustainability. Initially appearing as a reaction to the growing negative impact of traditional mass tourism on the environment, the concept included new components step by step. It advanced by incorporating the elements of social and economic equality as a response to the increasing discontent of local communities caused by overtourism phenomena. The tourism industry constantly faces new challenges showing weak points and providing opportunities for further concept development. Frequently occurring global crises are examples of such challenges.

Now sustainable tourism faces an unprecedented challenge of the global COVID-19 pandemic. However, despite the previous pandemics such as SARS, Avian flu, and H1N1 influenza, which apparent negative impact on the tourism industry and development different researchers explored and proved, the concept of sustainable tourism remained unchanged in this aspect (Page et al., 2012; Wang, 2009; Page et al., 2006; Kuo et al., 2008; Richter, 2003). This research explores how key sustainable tourism stakeholders are adapting the sustainable tourism concept and responding to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Previous studies on the impact of natural disasters and other crises on the tourism industry have repeatedly called for the development of measures to prevent the catastrophic consequences of future potential global natural disasters or health-related crises, especially those caused by pandemics and epidemics (Sigala, 2020; Gössling et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic showed that making tourism more resilient to global health-related crises is a high priority for tourism policy and the rethinking of sustainable tourism concept. The current crisis in the tourism industry is an opportunity to develop proactive responses to similar potential situations in the future and incorporate adaptivity, flexibility, and resilience. One of the principles for sustainable tourism development is the inclusiveness of all interested parties (stakeholders) in sustainable tourism development and planning (Garrod, 2003). That is why it is crucial to study the insights of key stakeholders on the effect of the global pandemic on sustainable tourism development, their reactions, and their thoughts on the potential response measures for the future concept progress.

By conducting desk research and survey interviews with multilevel sustainable tourism stakeholders in Japan's Kanto region, this study seeks to uncover how key stakeholders administer the sustainable tourism development in Japan in the context of the macro-level health-related crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This research responds to academics calling for exploration of perspective for sustainable tourism concept to evolve again under the influence of global public health-related crises and include the elements of crisis risk management in the idea of sustainability in sustainable tourism development (Sigala, 2020; Yeh, 2020; Gössling et al., 2020; Sneader & Singhal, 2020; Aliperti et al., 2019). Furthermore, the sustainable tourism concept needs to increase adaptivity, flexibility, and resilience to adapt to new circumstances and respond to challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

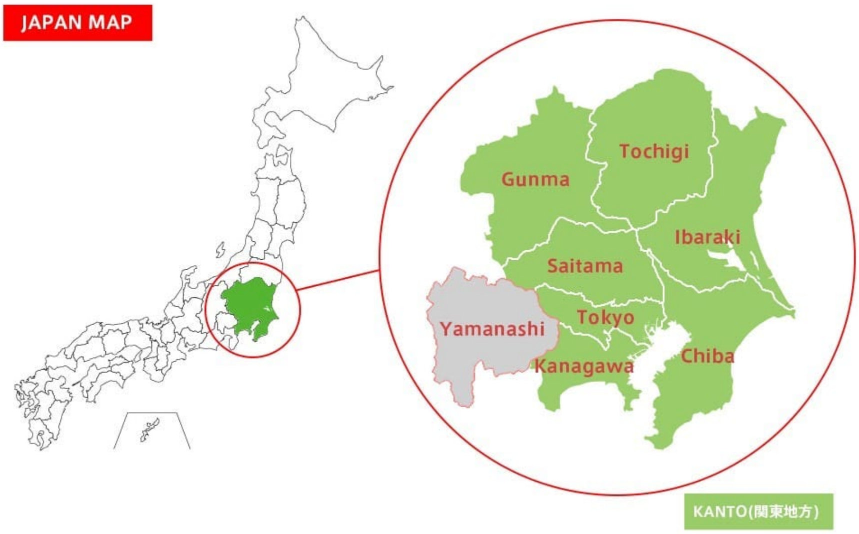
2. Background

Tourism had an exceptional position in Japan's economy before the global COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) statistics, inbound tourism to Japan has been rapidly growing since 2012. The period immediately before 2020 was record-breaking in terms of inbound foreign tourists since statistics started to be recorded in 1964. Since 2016, the number of foreign tourists visiting Japan has exceeded 20 million people. The average annual growth of foreign tourists to Japan since 2012 was around 26%, which significantly exceeds the average change in the world and Asia in particular. According to the UNWTO, the average global increase in foreign tourists, and the average growth rate of tourist flow in the Asia-Pacific region, was 6% in 2018 (UNWTO, 2019). The growth of inbound tourism income in 2018 in the Japanese economy was more than 300% compared to 2012. Foreign tourists' consumption in 2019 reached JPY 4,813.5 billion, which is 6.5% compared with the previous year.

Sustainable development and sustainable tourism concepts are quite new for Japan. Sustainable tourism, as it is currently operationalized in Japan, is meant to solve the problem of congestion, etiquette violation, and other consequences of overtourism. However, little attention has been paid to such goals of sustainable tourism as nature conservation cultural preservation in official publications such as *Toward a Sustainable Tourism Developed Country* (MLIT, June 10, 2019), a governmental guideline and vision for sustainable tourism development. In addition, the document does not address measures for the tourism industry and destinations adaptation to possible risks of crises and/or disasters.

The scientific interest of this research lies in exploring the insights of key stakeholders on the effect of the global pandemic on sustainable tourism development and their opinions on the response measures for dealing with the consequences of the crisis and the utilization of sustainable tourism concept and related public policies in Japan. International tourism is the most affected in the tourism industry worldwide, as international tourist numbers have dropped to their lowest levels due to non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs). The NPIs measures to prevent virus spreading, such as internal travel restrictions, and border closure, have led to a significant decrease in tourism industry indicators worldwide. In addition, Japan has imposed entry restrictions to control the COVID-19 outbreak, which directly affected the number of foreign tourists entering the country. As a result, the number of foreign tourists to Japan decreased by 99.9% in 2020-2021 (MLIT, 2020), the most significant decline since statistics started to be recorded in 1964.

The Kanto region is one of Japan's eight regional divisions (eight regional divisions nationwide) and is located in the eastern part of Honshu. Although there is no clear definition of the scope, the Kanto region refers to the six prefectures of Ibaraki, Tochigi, Gunma, Saitama, Chiba, Kanagawa, and the greater Tokyo metropolitan area (Figure 1). According to the 2020 Population Census, the Kanto region has approximately one-third of the total population of Japan (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2020). Tokyo, Japan's capital, is located in Kanto Region and is the centre of Japan's politics and economy. The Kanto region has the largest GDP among eight regional divisions of Japan (in 2017, it was JPY 218,296.2 billion) (Economic and Social Research Institute, Cabinet Office, 2021, August 10). Furthermore, the Kanto region has held a leading position among the highest numbers of foreign national guests at accommodations in terms of international tourism.



Source: https://matcha-jp.com/en/1362

Figure 1: Kanto region

3. Materials and methods

This current study was inspired by the need for reapproaching the sustainable tourism concept in light of the global COVID-19 pandemic crisis that severely affected the whole tourism industry in the world and challenged current sustainable tourism development. Macro-level health-related crises, such as pandemics and epidemics, have a strong negative impact on the tourism sector's situation and development on a global scale. This impact has been studied and proven in several previous pandemics (namely SARS, avian flu, and H1N1 influenza) and confirmed by preliminary results of the COVID-19 pandemic. Academics and practitioners who have studied similar problems agreed that governments and other key tourism stakeholders need to consider previous pandemics' experience and change their approach to sustainable tourism development and related policies in the field of tourism. This problem is becoming more urgent since tourism in its sustainable form is considered one of the most effective instruments for sustainable development and remains an actual agenda around the world, especially for remote and developing regions.

This research explores how key stakeholders in Japan manage sustainable tourism development during the long-term global crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the author is also interested in investigating key sustainable tourism stakeholders' insights into possible ways of reapproaching sustainable tourism development to make tourism more sustainable and resilient. That prompted the author to ask the following research question: *How do tourism stakeholders in Japan approach sustainable tourism development during the long-term crisis periods?*

This research adopts a triangulation approach and several methodologies selected to provide necessary information to answer the research questions. These methodologies include two types of data collection: secondary data collection using desk research and primary data collection methods using email interviews and interview surveys. The unit of investigation of this study is Japan's tourism sector. Therefore, to thoroughly investigate the approach to sustainable tourism development, the author conducted data collection at several national, regional, and local levels. The first category of stakeholders is government organizations in Japan and Kanto region involved in tourism policy development and implementation. Namely, on the national level, it is the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism (国土交通省, *Kokudo-kōtsū-shō*) with Japan Tourism Agency (観光庁, *Kankō-chō*) as its unit; tourism promotion divisions of prefectural governments and governments of the administrative centres of prefectures in Kanto region; regional development agencies established to support regional or local development. The second category of stakeholders is destination management organizations, namely regional and local DMOs with a sphere of activity concentrated in particular geographical areas within the Kanto region. And the third category of stakeholders is private sector tourism organizations in the Kanto region, namely entrepreneurs in the travel and tourism sector active in the field of accommodation, boarding, wellness, arrangement of travel services, etc.

3.1 Secondary data collection and analysis

To formulate the background foundation for this research, the author used the desk research method to review and analyze various secondary sources of information at the initial stage of the work. The author began by collecting books and academic journal articles and reports, conference materials from public policy, sustainable tourism, sustainable development, stakeholders theory, and disaster risk management. Sources of information were collected in English and Japanese. Then, the author used this research method to clarify and narrow the research field, develop the study's theoretical framework, and determine the appropriate research methods. This stage lasted from September 2019 to June 2021.

After thoughtful desk research, the author focused on investigating how key stakeholders cope with sustainable tourism development in Japan's Kanto region in the context of the macro-level health-related crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The goals of this research were to 1) investigate the operationalisation of sustainable tourism concept in Japan; 2) identify the key sustainable tourism stakeholders in the study area; 3) explore how they are dealing with sustainable tourism development in the context of the macro-level health-related crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the next step of secondary data collection, the author conducted background archival research. That provided an understanding of the origins and the conditions for phenomena of research interest. Tourism development policies are documented in the charter documents and development policy. First, the author chose to explore documents from the field of tourism regulation on a national level. The purpose was to determine the context and direction of the tourism policies and define the public policy approach to sustainable tourism in Japan. The author received all the necessary documents for this study in the public domain on the official website of MLIT, Government of Japan. The author provided the documentation in Japanese and translated it into English for research needs only. The author used one tourism promotion law, three tourism promotion plans, 19 *White Paper on Tourism*, and one sustainable tourism developed project document.

After collecting secondary data with desk research, the author conducted qualitative content analysis to obtain necessary information for answering research questions. To gain a better qualitative understanding of an approach to sustainable tourism and related policies of key stakeholders in Japan, the data collected from desk research was coded according to the main themes of the research questions. The unit of meaning for coding is the treatment of sustainable tourism concept, sustainable tourism development, tourism industry response to pandemics, and epidemics. The themes and scope of analysis were determined by research questions and theoretical framework and are "sustainable tourism," "health-related crises," "tourism crisis risk management."

3.2 Primary data collection and analysis

The current study has been taken during the global COVID-19 pandemic, which has put some limitations on research methods. The coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) and the subsequent forced and voluntary social distancing response have significantly impacted field research methods (Dodds & Hess, 2020). Gummer et al. (2020) note that NPIs in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic have led to severe problems for many research and scientific projects, especially those based on personal interviews. In social research, traditional qualitative methods, such as interviews, were usually conducted in person, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers were forced to adapt their research and bring it online (Dodds & Hess, 2020).

Following the purposive sampling strategy and based on the list of stakeholders, the researcher identified three main groups of informants. Namely, the prefectural governments of the Kanto region and the governments of prefectural administrative centres, DMOs in the Kanto region, and private business tourism associations in the Kanto region. Then the author prepared the initial contact message to be sent to the informants to invite them to participate in the research. After the list of targeted organizations was compiled, the author sent the initial email messages explaining the research and invitation to participate in it. After receiving the first responses, the author sent the interview survey process explanation upon the requests from the organizations. Further, the document explains the research purpose and aims in more detail, the choice of respondents, the content of questions in the questionnaire, and the link to Google forms sent to the respondents.

At the preparation stage, research protocol, research explanation, interview questions, consent form, and survey questions were created in English and then translated into Japanese to provide interviewees and interview survey participants with the best understanding of the research project. The translation into Japanese was proofread by two experts, namely a Japanese native speaker professor and a Japanese linguist with knowledge of English and Japanese languages. All interactions between interviewees and the interviewer were held in Japanese. The data gathered from interviews and surveys were in written form. Further, the interview and survey responses were thoroughly translated into English for the current study. Also, the linguist checked the translation. Translation of the raw data in Japanese was necessary to further analysis by the researcher, creating codes, and further data analysis process.

4. Results and discussion

The analysis was based on the assumption that sustainable tourism has to ensure the sustainability of the tourism industry by supporting the tourism business because an economically stable tourism industry benefits society by creating jobs and tax revenues to the national and regional budgets. Further, sustainable tourism should prioritize conservation and environmental concerns and contribute to biodiversity and cultural heritage conservation. Third, tourism must consider the local community's interests (Saarinen, 2013).

Analysis showed that sustainable tourism is a relatively new phenomenon for the Japanese government and Japan's tourism policy. The first steps to turn traditional mass tourism into a sustainable one were taken only a few years ago. And although the Japanese government has announced its intention to actively develop sustainable tourism, their understanding of the concept of sustainable tourism remains unclear. The main goal of developing measures to promote and develop sustainable tourism in Japan was the need to respond to the phenomenon of overtourism that Japan had faced in the last few years before the COVID-19 crisis.

While *Toward a Sustainable Tourism Developed Country* (MLIT, June 10, 2019) states its intention to develop sustainable tourism and move away from "good to visit" indicators in favor of benefits for local communities, the document still sets out goals to increase the number of foreign tourists. Moreover, measures for sustainable tourism development include only the prevention of possible violations of etiquette by tourists and congestion. The document only partially touches on the goals of achieving sustainable prosperity for destinations and residents.

A closer look into the official documents from the field of sustainable tourism development and the responses to email interviews and surveys provides insights of key tourism stakeholders in Japan into the sustainable concept operationalization. All the respondents are stakeholders directly involved in the development and operationalization of sustainable tourism in the Kanto region of Japan.

The interview survey results demonstrated that the overtourism issue was the least mentioned aspect in the responses. That might be a consequence of the fact that the study area of this research is the Kanto region which faced the overtourism phenomena less than the Kyoto area or did not face it at all. That leads to the conclusion that the Japanese government did not consider different aspects of sustainable tourism development frequently used worldwide and interests of all areas in Japan, but rather focused on only one problem that only one area faced.

Regarding the stakeholders' roles in sustainable tourism development, the most frequently appeared roles in respondents' responses were "tourism promotion," "area revitalization/development," "attracting tourists," and "tourism information distribution." This shows that sustainable tourism stakeholders in Japan see themselves more as providers of tourist information to visitors and developers of measures for tourism development.

Moreover, the interview survey analysis results showed that the interpretation of Japan's sustainable tourism stakeholders of sustainable tourism concept and their roles as stakeholders in sustainable tourism development has some differences with the commonly used interpretation by academics and other practitioners. Comparing the sustainable tourism concept interpretation by Japan's stakeholders and commonly used interpretation revealed some codes that appeared only in the responses of Japan's sustainable tourism stakeholders. These codes reflect the sustainable tourism concept components, which are special for stakeholders in Japan, such as "mutual understanding between tourists and local community promotion" and "educating about cultural and religious differences." These codes indicate the reflection of the overtourism issue in some areas in Japan that occurred before the global COVID-19 pandemic. However, the codes "responsive tourism promotion" and "destination adaptation to changes in global trends" may reflect new components which stakeholders developed under the influence of the global pandemic crisis.

Concerning the differences in the respondents" interpretation of their roles as sustainable tourism stakeholders, the comparison results also indicated the codes that do not match the commonly used theory. Although Japan's respondents more frequently named such roles as "tourism promotion," "area revitalization/development," "attracting tourists," and "tourism information distribution," only one of these most frequently named codes matched the stakeholders' roles in sustainable tourism development used in the common theory. Japan's stakeholders refer to the roles of traditional tourism development stakeholders with paying less attention to turning the tourism in their destinations into a more sustainable form. That might indicate that even though tourism stakeholders in Japan are aware of the sustainable tourism concept, they still do not fully recognize their roles in making traditional tourism sustainable.

Further, the respondents were asked several questions concerning their insights on the effect of the global pandemic on sustainable tourism development and their proposals for response measures for future sustainable tourism development and related policies. Almost 77% of respondents agreed that external factors influence the tourism industry, and 100% agreed that public health-related crises (epidemics and pandemics) impact it. Respondents named following tourism industry challenged due to the current pandemic crisis: the helplessness of the industry against pandemic, tourism transportation industry damage, accommodation industry damage, foodservice industry damage, travel companies damage, reduction of group travels, income reductions, lack of financial support from the government, difficulties in maintaining employment, operational costs increase, loose of traditional events due to cancellation, decrease in domestic and foreign tourists, uncertain future of the industry, psychological effect, and lack of crisis management.

The proposals of stakeholders for response measures for future sustainable tourism development and related policies were as follows: to strengthen cooperation between tourists and accepting communities, to conduct mass vaccination, establishment of crisis management system in tourism sphere, focus on development of domestic tourism, diversification of local industries, moving away from tourism solely, creation of proper guidelines for the tourism industry for actions in case of crisis, development of medical solutions (therapeutic drugs development), revision of traditional tourism techniques, establishment of "new lifestyle"/adaptation to "with Corona" era, focusing on online business/ tourism experience, focus on the development of small groups tours and individual tours, active cooperation between all main stakeholders, review the industry working process and related policies, strategy changes in response to changes in tourist trends, revision of the current travel business law, financial support to the industry from government, development of flexibility and adaptivity to changes in social conditions, incorporation of public health-related issues, non-contact content expansion, individual approach to different areas, and regional cooperation incorporation.

5. Conclusion

To date, Japan's main public sector current approach to sustainable tourism implies resolving the issue of overtourism in main tourism destinations and providing comfortable living for local communities. However, it does not consider other sustainable tourism development aims. Moreover, it does not have any implications for making tourism more resilient to external crises, especially those caused by macro-lever pandemics and epidemics. However, private tourism industry stakeholders proposed several measures for adapting sustainable tourism to crisis and making the industry more resilient in the future. The most frequently mentioned suggestions are cooperation between tourists and accepting communities and active cooperation between all main stakeholders. The next most often-named suggestion is establishing a crisis management system for the tourism sphere and incorporating it into sustainable tourism development. Indeed this might become the next step in the evolution of the sustainable tourism concept and making the tourism in its sustainable form more sustainable and resilient to external factors.

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Critical Success Factors for Developing and Managing Agri-Tourism: A South African Approach

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Abstract: While the agri-tourism sector is constantly growing, academic research on the development and management of this sector is limited in South Africa. The agri-tourism sector includes over thirty different activities and attractions. These can be categorised as outdoor recreation, educational experiences, entertainment, hospitality services or on-farm direct sales. It can be challenging to identify a single method for sustainability and success. Although many farmers develop agri-tourism products/services on their farms to generate additional income, several fail because of a lack of planning and management. Part of this planning is to identify the critical success factors needed to successfully manage an agri-tourism business. Research on the critical success factors of agri-tourism has been conducted in several countries, including India, the USA, Europe and Taiwan; however, a South African approach has not yet been investigated. This study aims to identify critical success factors needed to develop and manage agri-tourism within South Africa, based on various agri-tourism activities and attractions. By following a qualitative research method, these factors were identified through semi-structured in-depth interviews with farmers already managing a successful agri-tourism business. The findings indicated themes such as market research and marketing, customer satisfaction, staff including the need for employees to be happy, financial and business planning, employees' and employer's personalities, location and having a unique concept. These themes include elements such as a constant offering of quality products and services, being enthusiastic about your product/service, and understanding what your client wants. Many of these findings are consistent with the success factors identified in other countries, such as customer satisfaction, providing a quality product, good marketing methods and good customer service. As many respondents indicated a lack of prior planning and business analysis when developing their agri-tourism business, these success factors may be used as guidelines for South African farmers who do not know where to start when considering agri-tourism their farms.

Keywords: agri-tourism, farm tourism, critical success factors, South African farm, Western Cape

1. Introduction

Several researchers describe tourism as the world's largest industry (Pham, Andereck and Vogt, 2019:1; Zhao and Li, 2018:1). Vanhove (2011:10) divides the tourism industry into five sectors: attraction, accommodation, transport, travel organisers and destination organisation. Similarly, Saayman (2013:17) divides the tourism industry into primary and secondary aspects. The primary aspects consist of transport, accommodation and catering, entertainment, attractions and services. The secondary aspects consist of agriculture, marketing and information, geography and more. This provides a literary introduction to "agri-tourism" since the primary aspects can be linked with agriculture (a secondary aspect). Unfortunately, the literature has no universal definition of agri-tourism (Hollas et al, 2021:1). Chase (2019:338) defines agri-tourism as "a commercial enterprise on a working farm or ranch conducted for the enjoyment, education, and/or active involvement of the visitor, generating supplemental income for the farm or ranch".

Agri-tourism offers a wide variety of advantages to the farmers offering it, the local community involved with it, and the tourists who take part and enjoy it (Hollas et al, 2021:1). These advantages include generating an additional income, creating job opportunities, educating tourists, adding value of agriculture products, boosting the local community and uplifting communities (Myer & De Crom, 2013:301; Van Zyl, 2019:46). As a result of these advantages, agri-tourism is a growing sector within the tourism industry (Hollas et al, 2021:1).

According to Luo, Fan and Shang (2021:6), there are several advantages to identifying the critical success factors, for example it can improve the tourist experience, lead to a more satisfied tourist experience, better allocate tourism destination resources, and give the tourism business a competitive advantage. Therefore, this study focuses on the critical success factors that farmers must consider to successfully develop and manage an agri-tourism business on a farm. Firstly, this article focuses on a literature review of what agri-tourism is and discusses previous research on the critical success factors of agri-tourism around the world, including Italy, the USA, Taiwan, Thailand and India. Next, the research method will be discussed, including the study area, the data collection procedures and data handling and analysis. The results will focus on the characteristics of the respondents, on popular agri-tourism products that they are currently being offered and will discuss the critical success factors identified in this study. Finally, the conclusion will include the study's limitations and future research opportunities. The following section will start with the literature review.

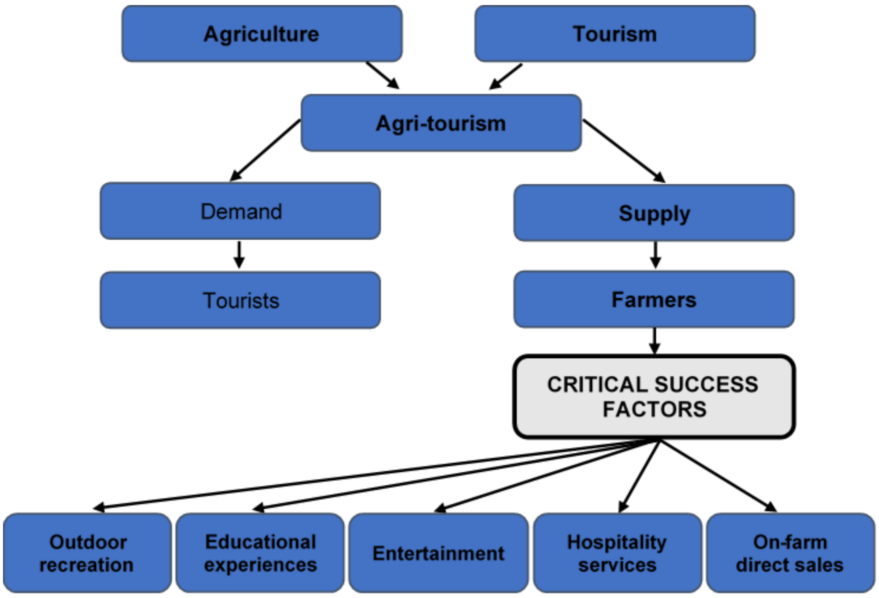
2. Literature review

This section will focus on the tourism industry and how agri-tourism forms a part of this industry. It will discuss different definitions of agri-tourism and then identify previous research focusing on the critical success factors.

2.1 Background to agri-tourism

The tourism industry can be divided using different methods. Vanhove (2011:10) uses five sectors, Saayman (2013:17) uses primary and secondary aspects, and Wearing and Neil (1999) divides the tourism industry into *mass tourism* and *alternative tourism*. According to Christou (2012:2), mass tourism focuses on large groups with fixed programmes that develop everywhere (commercialisation), designed for tourists who are price conscious (in order to maximise the tourism product). On the other hand, alternative tourism focuses on single or small groups with personalised programmes that are only developed in suitable areas, specifically designed for tourists who are value-conscious and want to optimise the tourism product. Based on the characteristics of each type of tourism, agri-tourism can be categorised as *alternative tourism*.

Agri-tourism can be described as the amalgamation of the agriculture and tourism industries (Weaver, 2004:518). This study is based on the farmers' perception, and therefore focuses on the supply side of agri-tourism. Figure 1 illustrates this amalgamation, along with the supply side of agri-tourism. According to Bernardo, Valentin and Leatherman (2004:1), all agri-tourism products can be divided into five categories. This includes outdoor recreation (e.g. hiking trails, fishing, hunting), educational experiences (e.g. wine tasting, farm tours, museums), entertainment (e.g. festivals, barn dance, concerts), hospitality services (e.g. farm stay, weddings, restaurants) and on-farm direct sales (e.g. u-picking, farm stalls). Luo, Fan and Shang (2021:8) state that while the environment, nature and operations of the different tourism sectors differ, the critical success factors associated with each sector may also differ. Thus, the aim of this study is to identify the critical success factors that farmers deem important to successfully manage an agri-tourism business, as illustrated in *Figure 1.*



Source: Adapted from Van Zyl (2019:4) and Bernardo et al (2004:1)

Figure 1: A framework for the supply side of agri-tourism

Various definitions of agri-tourism in the literature include: "The business of making farms travel destinations for educational and recreational purposes" (Schilling et al, 2006:9); "Agri-tourism is a term that can be used to describe nearly any activity in which a visitor to the farm or other agricultural setting contemplates the farm landscape or participated in an agricultural process for recreation or leisure purposes" (Tew and Barbieri, 2012:216); "An evolving form of rural tourism which is targeted at mainly urban consumers" (Rogerson and Rogerson, 2014:93); and "A business conducted by a farm operator for the enjoyment and education of the public, to promote the products for the farm, and thereby generating additional farm income" (Krishna et al, 2020:18).

Emerging themes in these definitions are *visitors to a farm*, *education, recreation and enjoyment.* Therefore, this study uses the definition provided by Van Zyl (2019:19), as it combines various definitions and agri-tourism elements to define agri-tourism as *"any activity or attraction that allows the tourist to visit a working or commercial farm for the purpose of education, enjoyment or to be actively involved in the day-to-day activities of the farm".*

2.2 Previous research

Various researchers worldwide have investigated what farmers view as critical success factors for their agri-tourism business. Using keywords such as *critical success factors* and *agri-tourism*, research conducted in different countries were identified from the last five years (2017 to 2021).

2017 research in Italy:

According to Broccardo, Culasso and Truant (2017:23), the *employees* of an agri-tourism business is critical to the success of an agri-tourism business. This includes both family members and community members employed within the agri-tourism business. Another critical success factor identified is *financial analysis*. The respondent's access to funding and their plans to use those funds are critical to planning.

2017 research in the USA:

Comen (2017:10) identified *location* as the number one critical success factor for agri-tourism. For example, tourists choose their farm stay/accommodation based on its location and proximity to other tourist attractions (Khanal and Mishra, 2014:67). Secondly, *financial/enterprise analysis* was another critical success factor identified by this researcher. This includes financial planning and budgeting and keeping records of all business aspects. Thirdly, Comen (2017:12), identified *focus on the customer* as the most widely discussed in literature. This includes creating a strong connection and offering a quality product/service. Finally, other critical success factors identified by this researcher include *developing a strong brand* (farm identity) and *marketing*.

2018 research in Taiwan:

Based on their research in Taiwan, Liu, Ho and Liu (2018:5) agree that developing a *strong brand* (farm identity) is critical to any agri-tourism business. These researchers elaborate that the *popularity of the farm* and the *good-will* that the farm/agri-tourism business has to offer are important. Secondly, *creating customer loyalty* is another critical success factor. Liu et al (2018:7) adds that customer loyalty is based on the customer experience. An appeal to the five senses (sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing) contributes to the customer experience.

2019 research in Thailand:

With the focus on farm stay, an agri-tourism products, Suchartsuthatham (2019:17) identified six critical success factors. *Management* includes financial planning and human resources. *Design* focuses on trends and the visual impact the farm has on the tourists' experience. The remainder of the critical success factors include *government support*, *competition, differentiation,* and a *viral marketing strategy*.

2020 research in India:

According to Krishna et al (2020:19), the dimensions of success are physical, psychological, socio-personal, operational and institutional. Based on their research conducted in India, Krishna et al (2020:19) identified five critical factors for any agri-tourism businesses' success. First, the *farm's physical location is* influenced by the attractiveness of the place, the availability of basic amenities on the farm and the distance to nearby cities/towns. Second, *customer satisfaction* is influenced by the quality of the service, the commitment of the employees and the safety and security of the tourists. Thirdly, *resource management* (farm resources) is not only a critical success factor but can also be linked to high-profit orientation. Fourthly, *promotion and publicity* are key factors that include advertising and marketing, good positioning in the market, and developing good relationships with tourists. Finally, *government support* was listed as the least crucial factor when considering a successful agri-tourism business. This includes timely and subsidised credit to agri-tourism businesses and research.

2020 research in India:

Another study recently conducted in India by Kumbhar (2020:140) simply lists the following critical success factors: *location*, *financial and business analysis*, *understanding marketing elements* and *identifying customer needs and expectations*.

2021 research in the USA:

Quella et al (2021:10) identified four key success factors of agri-tourism, based on farmers' responses located in five different states inf the USA. Firstly, *excellent customer service* was identified and included elements such as knowledgeable staff, a clean property, high-quality products and memorable experiences. Secondly, *partnerships and collaboration* were important themes. This can be between farm employees and the farm owner, between the farm and other businesses, or between the farm and outside resources. Thirdly, *marketing and technology* were identified. This focuses on being able to identify your target market (marketing) and being able to use social media platforms (technology) to reach that target market. Finally, *work ethics* were listed. This ranges from the skills of the management team to the employees' passion.

2021 literature review around the world:

Baipai, Chikuta, Gandiwa and Mutang (2021:1782) conducted a literature review, focusing on success factors for sustainable agri-tourism. This review included 105 online publications from five different continents (Asia, USA, Europe, Australia and Africa) that were published online between 2007 and 2021. After analysing the different publications based on their main themes, 19 factors were identified. The top 3 success factors include *agri-tourism products, conservation of biodiversity, and skills and competence*. Since less than 8% of the publications focused on Africa and more than 40% focused on Asia, these factors may differ from South African farmers' factors.

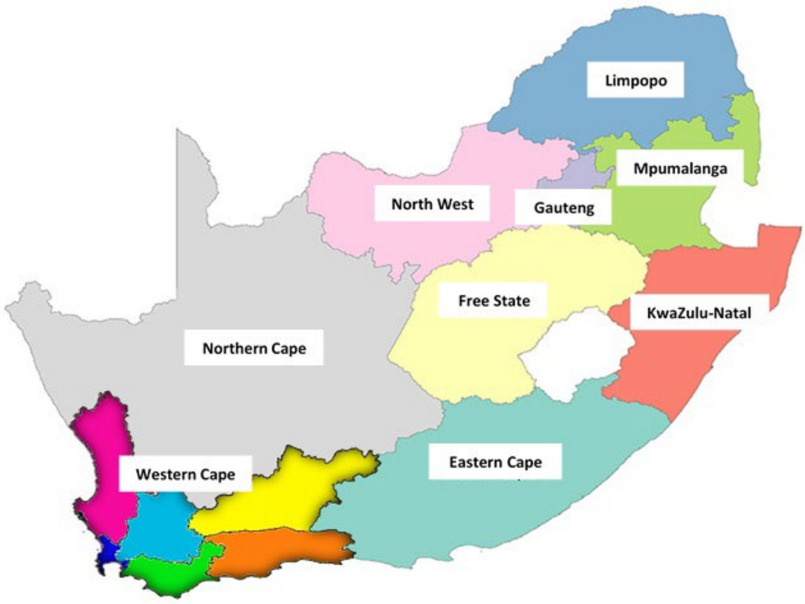
In conclusion, the literature had identified several critical success factors for an agri-tourism business. The most frequently mentioned factors include *customer service* (focus on the customer, customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, customer needs, quality customer service), *financial planning* (financial planning, resource management, business analysis), *marketing* (target market, promotion, technology, promotion, brand identity), and *location* (proximity to amenities, towns/cities, local tourist attractions). The following section will focus on the research method used within this study.

3. Method of research

This study focuses on the Western Cape, a province in South Africa located in the southwest of the country. This province was selected based on its geographical area. It is rich in natural resources and agriculture, is home to many of South Africa's largest tourist attractions, and offers a wide variety of agri-tourism products (Van Zyl and Saayman, 2019). In order to gain an in-depth understanding as to what farmers view as critical success factors, *qualitative research methods* were used (Burns and Bush, 2014:146; George, 2019:148). Previous research on critical success factors have been discussed, but not within a South African context. Therefore, the method of research focuses on an *exploratory research design* (Burns and Bush, 2014:101; George, 2019:149). As each of the respondent's answers was based on their own experience, a *phenomenological approach* was followed (Daniel and Harland, 2018:39; Scribbr, 2020). This section focuses on the study area, on the data collection process (interviews), and discusses how the data was processed and analysed (qualitative data coding).

3.1 Study area

A qualitative research approach was used to gather primary data through semi-structured in-depth interviews. The research population was all farmers located in the Western Cape Province of South Africa that are currently offering agri-tourism on their farms. *Figure 2* illustrates the nine provinces of South Africa. The Western Cape Province can further be divided into six districts: the West Coast, City of Cape Town, Cape Winelands, Overberg, Garden Route, and the Central Karoo.



Source: Adapted from Mappr (2021)

Figure 2: A map of South Africa and the Western Cape

3.2 Data collection procedures

A semi-structured interview schedule was designed for this qualitative research. The interview schedule was divided into two sections, namely *Section A: Demographic profile*, and *Section B: Agri-tourism Development*. However, for this article, only the results from Section A (demographic profile) and the results from questions focusing on critical success factors in Section B will be discussed.

As the exact population size of this study is unknown, a *non-probability sampling method* was used (Burns and Bush, 2014:155; Queirós, Faria and Almeida, 2017:374). According to the literature, a sample size of 5-25 interviews (Creswell, 1998:64) or at least six interviews (Morse, 1994:225) would be sufficient. Based on an internet search of agri-tourism products in each province district (convenient sampling), 110 farmers were invited via email participate in the study and 33 interviews were conducted. All interviews were face-to-face, while the majority took place on the farm where the agri-tourism business is established (32 of the 33).

3.3 Data handling and analysis

All interviews were recorded (with consent) and later transcribed by the researcher using Microsoft® Office Excel 2016, together with the field notes. The data was first organised and prepared before it was analysed (Tracy, 2013:184). Next, the data coding started by identifying keywords or phrases (Daniel and Harland, 2018:101; Tracy, 2013:189). Once the primary coding phase was complete and a codebook created, a second coding phase was completed to examine each of the codes identified critically. This allowed the themes to be discussed in detail (Akinyode and Khan, 2018:169; Creswell, 2009:197).

4. Preliminary results and discussions

This section focuses on the results gathered from the interviews and the interpretation of these. First, the characteristics of the respondents are discussed (the demographic profile), followed by a list of popular agri-tourism products. Finally, the critical success factors are identified and discussed.

4.1 Characteristics of respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are displayed in *Table 1*. Respondents were both male (61%) and female (39%), which is significant as previous research on agri-tourism in South Africa only had an 8% female response rate (Van Zyl, 2019:112). Most respondents were born between 1960 and 1979 (57%), indicating an average age of 51.88 years. Only eight respondents (24%) indicated that they had only completed matric, while all other respondents had some form of tertiary education ranging from a diploma to a master’s degree.

Based on the role/position of each respondent on the farm, not all respondents took part in the final questions, identifying the size of the farm and percentage of the farm that is open to tourists. Most respondents indicated the farm is less than 500 hectares (52%), while the smallest farm is 0.5 hectares, and the largest farm is 16 000 hectares. While Baipai et al (2021:1785) identified size of farm as a (less important) critical success factor in the literature, this article indicates that agri-tourism can be implemented on any size farm.

Table 1: Respondent characteristics

Variable	Category	Number of respondents	Percentage
Gender (n=33)	Male	20	61%
	Female	13	39%
Year born (n=33)	1990 – 1999	3	9%
	1980 - 1989	5	15%
	1970 – 1979	8	24%
	1960 – 1969	11	33%
	1950 – 1959	6	18%
Highest level of education (n=33)	Matric	8	24%
	Diploma	16	48%
	Degree	3	9%
	Honours degree	3	9%
	Master's degree	3	9%
Total farm size (n=29)	< 500 ha	15	52%
	500 – 4 999 ha	8	28%
	5 000 – 10 000 ha	2	7%
	> 10 000 ha	4	14%
Percentage of the farm open to tourists (n=30)	< 5%	6	20%
	5% – 49%	4	13%
	50% – 95%	4	13%
	> 95%	16	53%

4.2 Popular agri-tourism products

Respondents were asked what type of agri-tourism products they offered on their farms. All 33 respondents participated in this question. Most of the respondents were offering *farm stay/accommodation* on their farms (64%) with assorted options, such as a bed & breakfast, guesthouse, cottage, chalet, caravan stand, camping site and dormitory. Similar results were found by Van Zyl and Van der Merwe (2021:544) when considering the whole of South Africa with the exception of hunting that was not found to be a popular agri-tourism activity in this study. Broccardo *et al.* (2017:8) found that almost all the respondents in their study in Italy were currently offering farm *stay/accommodation* (91%) on their farms. This also includes different options such as a guesthouse and camping.

Another popular agri-tourism product found in this study is the *sale of own products (64%).* These results include u-picking operations, roadside stands/farm stalls, wine sales, and farmers' markets. Again, Broccardo et al (2017:8) found similar results as 80% of their respondents indicated the *sales of own agricultural products*.

Outdoor excursions that were well-represented in this study, include *hiking trails (58%)* and *cycling/mountain biking (55%).* Chase (2019:338) also identified hiking and other recreational activities as popular in the USA. *More than half of the respondents mentioned farm tours (52%),* and Comen (2017:8) agrees as 52.7% of respondents also indicated that they are currently offering farm tourism in Virginia, USA.

This concludes that the most popular agri-tourism products currently being offered by more than 50% of the respondents are farm stay/accommodation, sale of own products, hiking trails and farm tours.

4.3 Critical success factors identified

In an open-ended question, respondents were asked what they deemed to be the critical success factors for implementing and managing an agri-tourism business. Thirty-two of the thirty-three respondents participated in this question (97%). While this question is very subjective and each respondent had their own motives for providing a specific answer, seven clear themes were identified. *Table 2* summarises the main themes.

Table 2: Critical success factors

Nr.	Factors	Number of respondents	Frequency
1	Market research and marketing	14	44%
2	Customer satisfaction	14	44%
3	Employees	13	41%
4	Financial and business planning	10	31%
5	Personality	9	28%
6	Location	8	25%
7	Unique concept/selling point	6	19%

Market research and marketing (44%) is one of the critical success factors identified with the highest frequency. This factor includes basic marketing of the agri-tourism business (traditional or social media), creating a positive image and brand recognition, and understanding who the tourists are, what they want and what they need. Respondent 10 stated, "You must offer that guy what he wants through and through" and respondent 33 added, "Offering people something by being in tuned with what they are looking for, but not everyone is your client." This factor was also identified in the literature as a critical success factor by Comen (2017:10), Liu et al (2018:5), Krishna et al (2020:19), Kumbhar (2020:140), Quella et al (2021:10), and Baipai et al (2021:1785). Suchartsuthatham (2019:18) promotes a *viral* marketing strategy to ensure the maximum number of tourists are aware of the agri-tourism business.

Customer satisfaction is the second factor with the highest frequency *(44%)*. Again, this factor was identified in the literature by several researchers as a critical success factor of agri-tourism (Comen, 2017:10; Krishna et al, 2020:19; Kumbhar, 2020:140; Liu et al, 2018:5; Quella et al, 2021:10). This factor includes providing a quality product/service, creating a positive tourist experience, giving individual attention to tourists, and listening to tourist feedback. According to Baipai et al (2021:1785) the range and quality of the agri-tourism product was indicated as the most important critical success factor based on 105 publications around the world. Suchartsuthatham (2019:17) adds that the design (physical layout) of the agri-tourism business can also contribute to customer satisfaction. Alfoqahaa (2018:184) found that the highest contributor to a successful small and medium-sized enterprise, is excellent customer service. Respondent 2 stated that "You must consistently and constantly deliver the same product." Respondent 14 added, "Service, service, service. You must under-promise and over-deliver."

The third most mentioned factor in this study was that of the *employees* (41%). Many respondents feel that they are only as strong as their weakest employee. Therefore, respondents placed an immense value on their employees, and many invested in them through further education and development. Other employee factors include making sure the staff are happy, listening to the staff, and including them in business discussions. Respondent 6 said, "Your workers must be satisfied and happy and from there you can do almost anything" and respondent 7 quoted, "Teamwork makes a dream work." This is significant find, as this factor is not found commonly in the literature. Broccardo et al (2017:23) identified family members and local community members as a critical success factor for an agri-tourism business in Italy, while Baipai et al (2021:1785) list family involvement and community participation as two separate critical success factors.

Financial and business planning (31%) was also a frequently mentioned theme. This includes budgeting, keeping track of sales, day-to-day planning, stock management, having a feasible plan to be sustainable, constantly developing, and having a long-term commitment to the business. Respondent 26 pointed out, "Financial discipline is point number one, to keep a good record of everything." Unfortunately, many respondents indicated that a lack of planning before implementing the agri-tourism products was as a challenge that took time to overcome. While Broccardo et al (2017:23) and Comen (2017:10) only mention financial planning, Kumbhar (2020:140) identified both financial and business planning as a critical success factor of agri-tourism.

Nine of the respondents were adamant that the owner/manager/front-of-house needs to have the *personality (28%)* to work with tourists. This includes having a passion for people, having the energy to assist people, being committed to the job, having patience with difficult tourists, and being willing to walk the extra mile for the tourists. Respondent 12 is of the opinion that, "You must have the right personality to be able to work with people. Hospitality is a talent." A specific type of personality was not identified as a theme on its own in the literature but can be linked to what is needed for ensuring customer satisfaction (Comen, 2017:10; Krishna et al, 2020:19). However, for this study it is a factor on its own as possession of the type of personality described above might obviate the need for less-educated workers to study further; rather, they might be able to learn on the job.

Location (25%) was identified as a less important critical success factor. Some respondents indicated that being far from other tourist attractions was a challenge and extra marketing was needed to make tourists aware of their agri-tourism business. Other respondents were satisfied with their farms' locations. They didn't need any marketing as they were located in a tourist hot spot. Respondent 17 focused on location as, "The proximity of being close to where the tourists are." Comen (2017:10), Krishna et al (2020:19), Kumbhar (2020:140), and Baipai et al (2021:1785) also identified the location as a critical success factor for farms in the USA and India. While considering the accommodation sector, specifically hotels, Fuentes-Medina, Hernández-Estárico and Morini-Marrero (2018:59) identified location as a critical success factor as it can contribute to a tourists' experience.

Finally, respondents identified a *unique concept/selling point* (19%). From a business perspective, respondents were aware that they needed something unique or different to convince a tourist to visit their farm and not a neighbouring farm. Respondents listed their own unique concept as feeding non-traditional farm animals (alpacas and lamas), only selling local products not available in the general supermarket and being situated in the mountains but close to the sea. Respondent 4 added, "You need to have a unique factor. That's why I have the vegetable garden and the recycling and the upcycling." According to Suchartsuthatham (2019:18), farmers should differentiate their agri-tourism products in order to attract more tourists.

In conclusion, this study identified seven critical success factors: market research and marketing, customer satisfaction, employees, financial and business planning, personality, location, and unique concept/selling point.

5. Conclusions and limitations of the study

This study was the first research in South Africa that focused on identifying the critical success factors of an agri-tourism business, therefore also the contribution of this study. Based on the supply side of agri-tourism, farmers identified the critical success factors they deemed as important to develop and manage an agri-tourism business successfully in South Africa, specifically in the Western Cape Province. Therefore, this study contributes to the literature of agri-tourism and provides practical guidelines to farmers who are considering implementing an agri-tourism business in South Africa or who are already managing one. Based on the seven critical success factors identified in this study, the four most crucial factors are market research and marketing, customer satisfaction, the employees, and financial and business planning. When considering the critical success factors *(Table 2)* and most popular agri-tourism products/services (*c.f. 4.2*), it is clear that agri-tourism provides tourists with the opportunity to relax and enjoy the farm, as well as to learn more and be involved in farming activities. While there is research covering a variety of critical success factors within agri-tourism, the themes of employees, personality, and unique concept/selling point are not widely found in the literature.

While data collection was spread across all districts of the Western Cape and represented a large variety of agri-tourism products, the research is still limited to a single province in South Africa and not the whole country. As climate, natural resources and province government regulations differ in all nine provinces, the critical success factors may vary slightly from province to province.

In the Western Cape and South Africa in a larger context, agri-tourism research is still limited, with many opportunities for future research. Based on the three lesser-known themes, future research may focus on the value of employees within agri-tourism, the personality traits needed to manage an agri-tourism business, and on what unique concepts/selling points there are within agri-tourism.

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Tourism and Big Data in a Post-COVID-19 World: The Utopian and Dystopian Rhetoric

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Abstract: The tourism sector has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, making it one of the most affected economic areas worldwide. Simultaneously, the pandemic created contexts for the expansion and consolidation of trends already experienced in the recent past, namely the increasing adaptation of tourism to the digital society. One prominent example is the use of techniques known as “Big Data”, which carry out a massive mining of data from different sources, in order to define “profiles” of tourist consumption. This paper aims to map the social and ethical controversies associated with the use of Big Data by addressing the “technological optimism” that tends to surround the use of these techniques in the tourism sector. Through a review of literature about Big Data in tourism, we conclude that the rhetoric surrounding the use of Big Data techniques is both utopian and dystopian. On the one hand, according to literature in disciplinary areas related to the development of technology, Big Data is considered an indispensable tool for improving competitiveness in the tourism sector and for helping to understand the tourist more effectively. On the other hand, however, social sciences tend to frame Big Data as an astute representation of Big Brother, challenging the protection of personal privacy in tourism consumption and highlighting the lack of awareness and legal regulations, as well as the possibility of decontextualisation and false correlations that may jeopardize the touristic experience. For this reason, it has become urgent to develop a critical reflection on the ethical challenges posed by the uses of Big Data in tourism and consider routes of an anticipatory governance of these technologies.

Keywords: Big Data, tourism, ethical issues, utopian and dystopian rhetoric

1. Introduction

Throughout the last two decades, digital technologies have been incorporated into several daily practices of society and have become increasingly embedded in the economic strategy of several countries, profoundly changing those economies. In this context, a powerful trend towards the digitisation of society has been growing, having a significant impact at the end of the 20th century, due to the development and maturation of the internet and the transfer of immeasurable offline content to the online world which, little by little, has gained an unlimited capacity to store diverse information at any time, on a global scale (Mayer-Schönberger *et al.*, 2013).

Therefore, we are presently witnessing the “Age of Acceleration” with a massive procurement of devices, both in citizen’s professional and personal lives, who by integrating numerous digital platforms and, especially, social media, have generated an exponential growth of online-produced content (Xiang, 2018). This growth has allowed the accumulation of large amounts of data and information, thus giving life to Big Data techniques. These techniques may be distinguished by their ability to extract value from digitised and stored information in real-time and in an effective and targeted way, thus offering greater competitiveness to companies (Cavanillas, Curry and Wahlster, 2016).

In the particular case of tourism, Big Data technology was initially used by the sector as a marketing-oriented tool but has since become a knowledge-generating tool (Fernandes, 2021). As such, the tourism sector has come to recognise that the commitment to technology and the respective procurement of a large volume of data, allows an in-depth analysis of the needs, preferences and expectations of tourists, thus leading to an adequate targeting of its tourism offer (Höpken and Fuchs, 2016).

However, it was during the pandemic that we witnessed a “technological explosion” and the start of a new era. With both a worldwide ban on people’s movements and national lockdowns, citizens have connected to the outside world from home via technology. With the use of “technologies and connections, virtual reality and remote support”, permanent habits and behaviours in society have been changed (Fernandes, 2021, p. 1).

As a result of the pandemic, the immobility of those who would previously have used their leisure time to travel naturally caused a suspension of all tourist activity. From the first quarter of 2020, the tourist industry saw not only limitations on travel (Araújo-Vila, Fraiz-Brea and Pereira, 2021), but also the desertification of popular tourist locations (Kontogianni, Alepis and Patsakis, 2022), as well as the need to re-adapt and sophisticate its practices, in order to ensure the industry's survival. Tourism will not be the same in a post-COVID-19 world (Assaf and Scuderi, 2020). Therefore, the time has come to reposition the industry and thus modify its market strategy (Abbas *et al.*, 2021).

The need for this reconfiguration of tourism, based on the use of Big Data, will entail intricate new social challenges. These challenges intercede in social processes and constitute ethical implications that will affect individuals and hence, society (Mittelstadt *et al*., 2016).

Given the economic and social weight that tourism holds in Portugal, a constant reflection on the application of Big Data in tourism will be essential. At the same time, the techno-optimism imprinted on the use of Big Data obscures the need for the evaluation of results regarding the way it influences the tourist. This paper aims to contribute for further development of reflection about the implications of uses of Big Data. In particular, this paper aims to raise awareness regarding the need to balance the potential of Big Data with the ethical issues related to privacy and proper access to data, and to reflect about ways to encourage different stakeholders to work together for the lasting and sustainable application of Big Data in tourism.

2. COVID-19 effects: Working towards a reconversion of the tourist industry in Portugal

In Portugal, tourism stood out in 2019 as the country's largest export economic activity. In the same year, this activity made up 8,5% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (PORDATA, 2021a) and the tourist industry represented 51,8% of the total export services in Portugal (PORDATA, 2021b), providing more than 1 million jobs and creating new infrastructures (Almeida and Silva, 2020). In 2020, however, due to the crisis that set in and the ban on circulation, Portuguese tourism saw its revenues decrease by 57,6% (TravelBI, 2021), significantly altering its weight in the Portuguese economy.

The pandemic has virtually paralysed the tourist industry and, for that reason, all stakeholders must work together in order to respond to the crisis in a resilient manner, earn the market's trust and respond to the UN's 2030 Agenda. Although a digital transition has been part of the national strategy since the establishment of the "Tourism Strategy 2027" (announced in 2017), which aimed to be articulated with different agents, this is the key moment for its implementation (Fernandes, 2021).

For this reason, it is in a post-pandemic period and in a context of digital transformation that tourism needs to thrive. In a race alongside competitiveness, innovation and sustainability, "Big Data will be the fuel" that helps in the development of tourism and, in a sustainable way, allow us to both understand the tourist and respect the territory (Araújo, 2021).

The involvement of destinations, local communities, governments, tourism professionals, companies directly and indirectly linked to the sector, technological innovation companies and academics can help to rethink the *modus operandi*, and ensure a sustainable reconstruction based on innovation (Assaf and Scuderi, 2020; Sharma, Thomas and Paul, 2021). For this, it will have to establish more selective and inclusive practices, implementing proactive policies and reconverting practices that have discredited the activity. In this way, "tourism intelligence, cooperation and rigorous planning" may be successful long-term solutions (Pardo and Ladeiras, 2020, p. 678). In short, it will be necessary to totally ignore the guidelines of traditional tourism and think about hitherto unimaginable scenarios from before the crisis, all the while having to address the issues of fundamental tourist rights (Baum and Hai, 2020).

Both the pandemic period we are currently traversing, and the expected post-pandemic period, are and will continue to be, a time of challenge for all structures allied to the sector, with disruptive movements in the tourism market that will require constant adjustment (Almeida and Silva, 2020). In line with international expectations, the tourist offer should be less massive, guarantee social and environmental sustainability and accelerate the digitisation of tourist operations (Almeida and Silva, 2020). More than that, it is vital to assertively align emerging technologies with the digitisation of the companies involved, since due to the pandemic context "e-learning/work" and "e-commerce/business" has seen intensive acceleration (Fernandes, 2021 p. 10). Together with current European goals, such as the example of the project launched by the European Commission "A Europe fit for the digital age" (Fernandes, 2021, p. 10), these social imaginaries are moving towards effective digital innovation.

Note that the sociotechnical imaginaries are in short "collectively imagined forms of social life and social order reflected in the design and fulfilment of nation-specific scientific and/or technological projects" (Jasanoff and Kim, 2009, p. 120) and "project an image of the kind of society that sociotechnical innovation can bring into being and the kind of society that is needed for innovation to happen" (Tutton, 2021, p. 418).

3. Imaginaries and expectations of a post-pandemic world: Tourism, Big Data and social transformations

The expectations of the future are essential to drive research and emerging issues (Brown and Michael, 2003). Therefore, it is essential to map and understand visions, dynamics and power relations between different social actors (Konrad, 2006), whose consensuses or divergences will allow for the continued success of certain projects, depending on the legitimacy that is recognised in them (Borup, Brown, K. Konrad, *et al.*, 2006). This is the case of the use of Big Data in Portuguese tourism.

Indeed, expectations will mediate relationships between different types of actors and if expectations are mutual, legitimation will hardly be necessary. It is at an initial moment of uncertainty that shared expectations increase the possibility of success by involving a wider range of stakeholders. Actors will not only be guided by their own expectations, but also by the expectations of others, resulting in the mobilisation of even more actors through "social pressure" (Konrad, 2006).

According to the literature, banking on the future will possibly involve: more comfortable travels, more personalised service, affordable prices, reformulation of infrastructure (*e.g.,* hotels), higher quality of professionals in the sector, simplification of processes and practices, and effective adaptation of digital technologies (Abbas *et al.*, 2021). For that reason, technological convergence has produced a large amount of data that enhance interactions and support decision-making, allowing for a more adequate forecast of the future (Fernandes, 2021).

Using the calculation analysis and respective combination provided by Big Data, the tourism sector will gain value by integrating better experiences for consumers and providing greater productivity and profitability to companies such as airlines, restaurants, hotels and other sectors related to the area of tourism and hospitality (Song and Liu, 2017). It is considered that, with the increasing amount of tourist data made available online, recommendation systems will be a solution.

However, managing accurate recommendations is still a challenge (Kontogianni, Alepis and Patsakis, 2022). In fact, there are several challenges already highlighted in the literature. Challenges regarding the protection of personal privacy in tourism consumption, between software and tourism organisations, pointing out the lack of awareness, supervision, and regulation of laws (Wang, 2019). These are challenges derived from the concerns of professionals who analyse Big Data on a daily basis and who question the real benefits of discourse-based analysis of social media. Just as tourism professionals, or those linked to the sector, question the longevity of their functions, given their replacement by machines for data analysis thus avoiding the human hand (Cheng, 2018).

Much information is diffuse and contradictory and produces undesirable effects when compared to reality (Lloret-Climent *et al.*, 2019. It has therefore become indispensable to develop algorithms in order to avoid traps, decontextualisations and false correlations (Gandomi and Haider, 2015). Often, data analysis itself can inherit prejudices and bias or exacerbate patterns of exclusion and inequality (Barocas and Selbst, 2016). It can also be dangerous to try to imagine and identify the potential usefulness of the data, rather than beginning the data analysis process from an initial question and a real need, which can lead to unlikely futures and unintended consequences (Perng, Kitchin and Evans, 2016). Identifying these risks and biases in advance will facilitate responsible development supported by the best practices.

In summary, in this scenario of technological innovation, we found two imaginaries: a technological imaginary that privileges data correlation as a corrective measure; and a socio-critical imaginary that contests the effectiveness of this technological correlation. But, if we unite these two imaginaries, we will be able to reformulate, not only the intrinsic capacity of data but also reformulate the ethics and future of data (Lehtiniemi and Ruckenstein, 2019). We believe that this venture will create new opportunities around the identified expectations (Borup, Brown, K. K. Konrad, *et al.*, 2006), especially in the Portuguese case, when it is at an embryonic stage of investment in Big Data techniques in tourism.

Thus, an urgent and open discussion with citizens about the advantages and disadvantages of Big Data and privacy is needed in order to build trust, taking into account the different points of view. In particular, this is due to the pressing commitment to a single European market for digital data, which should guarantee both consumer and civil liberties (Becker *et al.*, 2016), taking into account the update of the legal framework for data protection (Mantelero and Vaciago, 2015), which is also in a discussion phase.

The link between technology and tourism allows us to imagine the future, not only through the ability to acquire an endless diversity of data in real-time but also to understand consumer purchasing behaviour (Weaver, 2021). We argue that the ideal moment to foresee and assess all possible scenarios is the still primary phase of uses of Big Data in tourism. Imagining the future, by looking into other social areas in which the Big Data technologies are in a more advanced stage, allows us to anticipate benefits and risks emerging from technological and touristic transformation, insomuch as social beings have become "data generating devices" (Xiang, 2018, p. 148). By combining the extracted data with situated knowledge sensitive to social and cultural local contexts, Big Data will become a more refined tool, both in the tourist experience and in the innovation of new products. Therefore, tourism is at the ideal time to expand this possibility of combining technological advances to ensure social well-being and economic prosperity in a sustainable way (Xiang, 2018).

However, technology will be constantly changing, as it has been until today. The relentless pursuit of innovation will continue to challenge the predictions we are trying to replicate. Hence, inherently new problems will arise, relating, in this specific case, to the "interactions between humans, data, networks and machine intelligence". As a consequence, problems will arise related to "the quality, trustworthiness and ethics of the applications of Big Data, social knowledge and machine intelligence" (Xiang, 2018, p. 149).

4. Sociological reflections: What the future may hold

Society has struggled over time with the social consequences of technology. In the words of Lindgren and Holmström (2020, p. 7) "we need more knowledge about what the pervasive use of these human-software hybrids, and black-boxed and sometimes discriminatory algorithms behind them, mean to future societies".

For these reasons, that different areas of study, such as computer science and social science, must be combined with the area of tourism and its destinations, to cooperate, in order to reconstruct different contexts and solve social problems by examining and criticising (constructively) the digital (Fuchs, 2017).

Faced with a transition from a scarcity of data to an overabundance of data (Weaver, 2021) imbued with techno-optimism around the use of Big Data in tourism and an "enduring belief" that the use of technology supports the economic development of the area, "governance techniques" are combined to "produce feelings of change and hope for justice" (Avle *et al.*, 2020, p. 250). It should be noted that despite an opposite point, allied to an optimistic view there remains a pessimistic view (Vydra and Klievink, 2019) that tourism will not be able to survive without digital technology. It is important to bring to the debate the fact that all companies and infrastructures form various parts of a whole that make up the tourism sector, and that each company will have to follow this trend, according to its business capacity and differentiating value, when wishing to demarcate itself in the market, not having to depend exclusively on technology, or at least having the possibility of choice.

Campolo and Crawford (2020) were inspired by Max Weber's theory of the "disenchantment of the world", to highlight the discourse about artificial intelligence wrapped in an "enchanted determinism". Big Data is a turbo engine for the dynamics of artificial intelligence software, which values technical precision and calculation of data. This, often without assessing the aggregate social and political risks, and without considering that an in-depth contextualisation can differentiate the final result. This "enchanted determinism" excludes the responsibility of its creators and exposes instrumentally empty notions of governance and ethics, in order to respond to adjacent social expectations (Campolo and Crawford, 2020) of sociotechnical imaginaries as is the case with the dynamics of Big Data and tourism.

To guide tourism, taking into account the expectations of investment in innovation and technology which the various social discourses and literature have been reiterating, an assessment of technological usefulness will be essential. For this, we must resort to what Jasanoff defined as “technologies of humility”. This definition “complements the predictive approaches: to make apparent the possibility of unforeseen consequences; to make explicit the normative that lurks within the technical; and to acknowledge from the start the need for plural viewpoints and collective learning” (Jasanoff, 2003, p. 240). When we intend to change something in society, we must also try to identify what the purpose will be, indicate who may be vulnerable and also privileged and determine how we can obtain knowledge about these possibilities. With maximum social involvement, analysis and reflection skills can greatly improve (possibly) harmful effects and improve long term decision-making (Jasanoff, 2003).

Tourism can indeed excel with a responsible and cautious development which analyses and assesses in advance the various inherent risks, the countless daily practices and the intended strategies. In fact, a leadership based on anticipation and precaution, which analyses information and forms reflections in harmony with the various stakeholders, will be able to respond more easily and robustly to circumstances of uncertainty and risk, as well as make more sustained long-term decisions with the foresight, participation and integration that good “anticipatory governance” enables (Guston, 2014).

5. Conclusion

The review of literature about Big Data shows that the rhetoric surrounding its actual and potential uses is both utopian and dystopian. If, on the one hand, it is seen by many as an indispensable tool in solving numerous social problems in various areas, on the other hand, some critical voices consider that Big Data is an astute representation of Big Brother, which invades privacy and chases, controls and ignores citizen freedom (Boyd and Crawford, 2012). Thus, the rhetoric on Big Data applied to tourism can provoke ambivalences between dystopian discourses and the optimistic views that highlight the capabilities of Big Data in promoting the increase in travel, thereby supporting the progressive economic recovery of the touristic sector, while instilling a discourse of environmental and social sustainability (Weaver, 2021).

In verifying that neither scepticism nor concern about the use of Big Data have been topics for discussion in the areas of tourism study (Weaver, 2021, p. 3), especially in Portugal, we found a knowledge gap that needs further study. The uncritical acceptance of the use of Big Data techniques may obscure a complete prediction of what will happen in the long term. As a provisional solution to address this problem, we propose an approach based on the principles of responsible innovation, which Wienroth summarises as the principles of “reliability, utility and legitimacy” (Wienroth, 2020). This approach aims to provide the opportunity to develop an awareness of the benefits and risks and engage all stakeholders in the debate. Responsible innovation also aspires to increase transparency and foster more accessible communication, while promoting the sharing of experiences and views from different groups of interest. This type of solution should be implemented at an early stage in the process and, even during a development cycle, should ensure that the responsibility for the benefits and risks is divided among all the stakeholders (Wienroth, 2020; see also Sismondo, 2004).

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Masters Research Papers

Wellness Tourism From Consumers' Perspective: An Exploratory Analysis

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Abstract: This paper summarizes the perspectives of health and wellness tourism consumers, to better understand the factors that influence this tourism product. A quantitative approach was adopted to collect primary data through the application of an online survey to effective and potential health and wellness tourism consumers between January and April 2021. Results show that growing number of consumers tend to value health and wellness tourism as a holistic experience, in which not only products specifically related to health and wellness treatments are of particular importance, but also activities related to leisure, recreation and culture. This paper provides a basis of research and analysis for global wellness and tourism industry stakeholders. The aim is to help the industry understand consumer behaviour and preferences in the traveller's process of choosing a destination for a wellness vacation. This is achieved by predicting wellness tourism trends and developments, by acknowledging the gaps in the research available for understanding wellness tourism and reflecting the experience economy perspective in the sector.

Keywords: health tourism, wellness tourism, consumers, trends, development

1. Introduction

Over the years, the tourism industry has witnessed a significant growth in wellness tourism (Yeung & Johnston, 2016) and it continues to grow annually regardless of the current negative global economy (Kazakov & Oyner, 2020; Pyke *et al.*, 2016). From 2015 to 2017, wellness tourism grew at a rate of 6.5% annually, over double the growth of tourism overall which is at 3.2%, and it is predicted to grow to US$919 billion by 2022 (Global Wellness Institute, 2018). It is expected to be worth around US$ 1.10 trillion by 2028, according to a new report by Vision Research Reports (*Wellness Tourism Market Size, Share, Trends, Growth, Production, Consumption, Revenue, Company Analysis and Forecast 2021–2028*, 2021). Therefore to utilise and maximise the potential of wellness tourism for stakeholders, it is important to evaluate consumer behaviour and the preferences that travellers have when they are selecting a destination for wellness. The purpose of this paper is do explore these motives by identifying the wellness tourism trends, and what pushes the consumer to choose. Although this contemporary growth of wellness tourism is not a new phenomenon and has been prevalent since ancient times (Smith & Puczkó, 2014; Steward, 2012; Walton, 2012) these preferences are regularly changing and stakeholders must be continuously watching patterns in order not to be left behind. It is noted that the consumer's attraction towards wellness tourism services is oriented to the luxury of the experience, rather than the attraction to the authenticity of a specific historical and geographical characteristic of a place (Chen *et al.*, 2008; Huijbens, 2011). It is important to stress that according to Global Wellness Institute (GWI), wellness travellers are categorized into two groups: primary wellness travellers, who are motivated to travel for wellness services and choose their destination based on its wellness offerings; and secondary wellness travellers, who intend to partake in wellness activities during any kind of travel (such as going to the gym or getting a massage during a business trip). The bulk of wellness tourism is done by secondary wellness travellers, who account for 89% of wellness tourism trips and 86% of expenditures in 2017. Secondary wellness tourism also continues to grow at a faster rate than primary wellness tourism, at 10% compared to 8% annually, from 2015-2017 (GWI, 2018). The fastest-growing segment is expected to be wellness activities over the forecast period of 2021 to 2028 as consumers are increasingly opting to spend more on health and wellness.

The birth of wellness intertwined with tourism has created a new approach to the multidimensional concept of wellness and health (Medina-Munoz & Medina Munoz, 2013) and the conceptual paradigm is evaluated and reformed from a traditional view of health (Kamassi *et al.*, 2020) to a holistic wellness orientation (Kazakov & Oyner, 2020; Dillette *et al.*, 2020). It is agreed by multiple researchers that tourist experiences and transformations must include elements of both hedonistic, such as momentary pleasure and also of eudaimonic aspects, such as self-realization, personal expressiveness, growth and goals (Lee & Jeoung, 2019; Filep & Deery, 2010). Therefore, wellness tourism should strive to meet the every-changing tourists demand for hedonistic and eudemonic experience and transformational products and services (Mackenzie & Raymond, 2020).

Previous studies attempt to categories the wellness travellers to better conceptualise and organise the development of wellness tourism by dividing into the demand and supply sides. The demand side indicated how travellers require holistic wellness itineraries that include multiple types of wellness experiences and services to be included in their trip (Kim *et al.*, 2016; Lim *et al.*, 2015). Studies identify the various categories with focus on destination characteristics (Voigt & Pforr, 2017) and tourism businesses (Thal & Hudson, 2019) or on push and pull factors that drive tourists by observing the relationship between reasons for travel and income and the relationship between gender and education level (Damijanić, 2020). Other studies look at why tourists first choose a destination and their motivations for returning to the same destination and identified as local flora and fauna as well as popular local attractions (Lim *et al*., 2015). Wellness tourism, however, can only be defined by a wide-angle view and considered by its multidimensional nature (Kazakov & Oyner, 2020; Huang *et al.*, 2019; Damijanic, 2019; Gao *et al*., 2017). In our paper we recognize that wellness tourism merges global trends with the travelers need of health, cultural, spiritual, nutritional, athletic and environmental experiences (Angus & Westbrook, 2020).

Wellness activities include Ayurveda treatments, mindfulness training, spa treatments, yoga, meditation, agricultural tourism, etc. Several other popular activities include shopping, dining, and sightseeing (Wellness Tourism Market Size, Share, Trends, Growth, Production, Consumption, Revenue, Company Analysis and Forecast 2021-2028, 2021). Wellness tourism, the new trend in healthcare has new renewed traveller interest in services reflected in spas and such as thermal water and other health practices such as physical activities and healthy food, indicating tourists' tendency to opt for proactive care to enhance and maintain well-being (Bodeker & Cohen, 2010). People who travel for the purpose of wellness tend to be high-yield tourists and spend 53% more than the typical international tourist and domestic wellness tourists spend 178% more than any typical domestic tourist (GWI, 2018).

Research conducted by Luo *et al.* (2017) showed that wellness tourism activities can have very positive impacts on individual's quality of life, "and can result in improvements in dealing with problems at work, promoting family harmony, and engaging in social life." (Luo *et al*., 2017). This assumption emphasizes the importance of wellness tourism in the current society. The industries fluid nature provides businesses, an opportunity to merge wellness with their activities to

benefit from the increasing numbers of both domestic and international tourists. Businesses such as art and culture (Clift, 2020). The number of countries marketing their wellness credentials has soared, rising from 65 in 2013 to more than 100 in 2018 (GWI, 2018). As indicated over the years, tourism in general is steadily orienting more and more towards wellness (Kazakov & Oyner, 2020; Stara & Peterson, 2017)

While we recognize that wellness tourism is growing, it is also apparent that spa visitors' expectations have become more complex and profound (Guo *et al.*, 2015). Travelers seeking well-being are not satisfied merely by rest and use of passive wellness services. Wellness tourism is an active form of tourism (Smith & Puczkó, 2016) in which the wellness seekers are actively exploring different services and creating their own personalized wellness experience (Andersson, 2007; Prebensen *et al.*, 2013). Stakeholders grasp this added value that can benefit their business and client therefore wellness related businesses not only provide wellness services but also provide platforms where people can learn skills on improving their well-being (Koskinen *et al.*, 2017). Spas and recreational facilities have a strategic advantage of recent scientific research that accounts for therapeutic natural factors and can use this to develop their businesses and provide the travellers with well-informed services (Munteanu et al., 2013).

Travellers, and specifically wellness tourists, are increasingly travel conscious and aware of the impact tourism has on communities leading to a shift from "consuming" to "contributing", a tourism trend that has evaluated how operators and stakeholders package their services. The tourist's increasing desire for more emotional experiences and more permanent transformations and lifestyle changes are causing the influx in wellness tourism. A survey by InterContinental Hotel Groups (IHG) indicates that 69% of travellers (aged 18 to 24) and 48% of 55s and over want to be more environmentally and socially travel conscious. They also suggested that they are willing to spend on average 31% more on accommodation which they know operates responsibly, 51% said they are willing to pay 20% extra per night for responsible accommodation. 46% say they are likely to be conscious of tourist activities that have a negative impact on the local environment and communities since the global pandemic (Journey to tomorrow, 2021).

Gender differences are also worthy of analysis when it comes to wellness tourism. Majority of rejuvenation related service are women (Cain *et al.,* 2015) and in general, more spa visitors tend to be women than men (Crowley & Linehan, 2016; Smith & Puczkó, 2008)

2. Methodology

This paper summarizes a more comprehensive work conducted by Hekmat et al. (2022) aiming to explore the dimensionality of wellness attitudes when examining the reason consumers choose a particular place and activities for their wellness travel. In the discussions of the theory section, it is expected to find signs of current wellness mentality and consumption trends in people's wellness attitudes. Based on those discussions, also it is assumed that people not only expect relaxation and rejuvenation when visiting a wellness destination, but that they are also increasingly interested in activities and services that achieve more holistic health benefits and an experiential dimension in consumption as well as activities that may not be directly linked to wellness but that the traveller would like to include while they are on their wellness trip, such as walking tours, climbing/hiking and esoteric dancing among others.

The purpose of this section is to present the methodology implemented for this study, namely research strategy and methods, population identification and sample selection technique. Also, the research design, goals of the survey questionnaire and statistical software used to data treatment are described.

2.1 Data collection and analysis

A quantitative research strategy was adopted for collecting primary data through the questionnaire survey as a reliable method to collect information from multiple respondents in an efficient and timely manner. It is especially important in this project due to the restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has made most interactions online. The data collection process was conducted from January until April 2021. The questionnaire was posted on selected travel Facebook groups in which participants had experience and desire to travel, as well as on WhatsApp and Telegram group, obtaining 161 valid responses.

The target population of the empirical study corresponds to all the visitors who had or have a particular interest in wellness tourism. For the study, two specific criteria were applied to select the sample out of total population: i) they had to be over the age of 18; ii) must have had travelled for wellness or have a particular interest in travelling for wellness after 2020. A convenience sampling approach was applied to select the individuals to participate in the survey questionnaire due to its accessibility and simplicity in reaching the population. The objective of the mentioned approach was to reach out to as diverse a sample as possible, in terms of different nationalities, both people living in their home countries and expats, people from diverse walks of life in terms of financial situations and reasons for wellness travel.

The questionnaire started with the explanation of the meaning of wellness tourism based on Global Wellness Institute definition and individuals were requested to confirm whether they had an interest in travelling for wellness in post-Covid-19 period. A positive answer to the previous question allowed them to continue with the next questions. The first section aimed to capture information related to the sociodemographic characteristic of the sample, following by specific questions such as geographic preferences for wellness vacation, visitor's specific preferences and expectations of wellness tourism, the experiences looking to enhance the wellness vacation, some aspects related to accommodation, safety, and cleanness among essential factors. The mentioned dimensions were included in the survey questionnaire based on the analysis of previous research and studies in the domain. For data analysis, SPSS statistical software (25.0 version) was applied, and the results are discussed following the set-up objectives in the beginning of the study.

Frequency analysis was executed for the variables describing sample profile and trip characteristics. Concerning the bivariate analyses, Chi-Square test of independence was used to test the association between willingness to travel in post-Covid-19 period and main goals for wellness vacation, place preferences, as developed in previous studies (Meikassandra *et al*., 2020).

3. Analysis and discussion of results

3.1 Sample profile

The sample encompasses 36 countries, allowing the understanding of what wellness tourists expect from their wellness trip irrespective of their country of residence. As the objective was to get an understanding of what wellness tourists expect from their wellness trip, irrespective of their country.

The respondents were mostly aged between 35 and 44 (36%) and 25-34 (24%). Regarding gender, the females are represented by 58% of the respondents and the males by 42%. Most of them were employees, shortly followed by self-employed. The monthly income of 44% of respondents were between $1,001-$5,000, significantly higher than the 15% of respondents with the second-highest monthly earnings of $5,000-$10,000.

Regarding the dream destinations of respondents by region, it is possible to observe that travel for wellness is on the incline in developing markets, mainly Asia (61%), followed by Europe (25%). Detailed analysis in this study demonstrates that Indonesia, specifically Bali as respondents mainly noted, as the most desired location for travel for wellness, closely surpassing Maldives. Some studies also point out that Bali become one of the popular destinations in Asia for a wellness tourism destination in 2017-2018 (Meikassandra *et al.,* 2020). Americas, Africa, Australia/Oceania were also selected as a dream destination by some respondents, indicating potential and interest for a wellness vacation in these regions.

3.2 Characteristics of the wellness trip

A descriptive statistics analysis was used to characterize the planning of a wellness vacation by potential visitors. The potential wellness visitors were questions about preference for geographical location when choosing the wellness vacation. A linear scale was used to understand their preferences (1 being the preference to be close to home and 5 was the willingness to travel far and wide from home). Based on the results, the average value is 4, which indicates that the respondents are willing to travel far from their home country for their wellness trip. 75% of the respondents want to plan their itinerary rather than have a professional travel agent plan their daily activities. This is surprising since often travel is associated with rest and non-decision making, going with the flow and switch-off mindset, but people would like to be part of the planning and know what is, how is and where is of their travel itinerary. Another perspective on these results can be related to the fact travel agencies are not offering competitive and commoditized packages regarding wellness vacations.

Regarding the place preferences, 76% of the respondents prefer to be in a secluded place to relax with the least amount of people. Not surprisingly, during a pandemic, many respondents prefer to avoid crowded places and less favourable locations for the spread of the virus. While only 24% of the respondents chose to be in a group setting or where there is more interaction with other people.

Socializing, meeting new people and active interaction with others was one of the motivations in tourism (Wolf-Watz, 2014). Nevertheless, the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic crisis have drastically changed this behavioural pattern, resulting in tourists valuing secluded and less crowded places. Earlier studies mention that escapism has been the highest purpose of travel, the notion to get away and switch-off has often been the main purpose of tourism (Cohen, 1996; Rojek, 1993),

As for preferred company, wellness tourism consumers prefer to travel on a wellness vacation with their partner (36%), followed by family (22%), friends (22%) or alone (20%). Besides the respondents choosing secluded places, they prefer to travel with company, the choice of which may depend on various factors. In this context, So and Lehto (2007) explored the travel group segmentation, namely, traveling with family, travelling alone, and travelling with friends among Japanese travellers. The research findings demonstrate that motivations and travel preferences vary among the groups, as well as their participation in different activities. Those who travel alone and with friends tend to be more engaged in activities and socialising with others, while those who travel with family tend to value physical relaxation and active experiential learning.

Also, we aimed to understand the preferred experiences of the travellers. Questions were made about their main objective when going on a wellness vacation, about which activities they believed would help them to achieve their wellness goal, and which wellness activities were most appealing and enjoyable that they would like to include during their trip, and lastly, which activities they would like to include in their trip even if it were not wellness related. As it can be noted, the most popular reasons for wellness travel are to rejuvenate and unwind (72%), following by the goal of mental health (56%), to escape routine (44%) and to work on fitness (27%). When asked how they can enhance their wellness goal, rest and rejuvenation was significantly more popular than the other options. Healthy eating, nutrition and weight loss was the second most popular choice considered by travellers to help them achieve their wellness goal. Yoga and holistic treatments shortly follow and then below 40% and over 20% of the respondents feel that personal care, beauty, anti-ageing, retreats, shamanic rituals, or fitness boot camps can aid their goal. Only 9% feel that medical treatments can help them reach their goal, and 8% feel transition therapy would help.

When it comes to wellness activities that visitors would like to add to their itinerary, most respondents preferred walking tours (65%), massages (62%) and spa experiences (61%), thermal/mineral springs (50%), climbing/hiking (48%), facial treatments (27%), new wellness technologies (21%), art therapy (19%), esoteric dancing (19%), vitamin IV drip (14%) and one respondent added their option stating life coaching as an activity.

To deepen into the interests of the travellers during their wellness trip, they were asked which additional activities they would like to be included even if it was not wellness related. Most respondents wanted nature to be included in their trip (81%). Cultural activities were next with 64% and adventure came in at third place with 62%. Rest had 57% and sports had 31%. While 21% of visitors also wanted to visit places, they had seen previously on TV, and 19% of them would include a visit to friends and family during their wellness trip. 17% choose to add “Instagrammable” places into their itinerary and only 1% wanted to visit religious sites and less than 1% chose temple tours.

Further, the potential travellers were questioned about accommodation preferences when going on a wellness trip and what factors influence their decisions when choosing accommodation. The findings illustrate that 53% would opt for luxury hotel while 40% would go for boutique hotels, 28% would choose guest houses, 20% would go camping and 19% would choose an economy hotel. Regarding accommodation, it is possible to conclude that cleanliness, safety, and comfort are considered the most important factors for accommodation selection.

4. Conclusions

The paper explored the attitudes of wellness travellers to further add to the existing knowledge of the attitudinal dimensions influencing wellness consumption by tourists seeking proactive care as growing attention to health and well-being issues arise. As travel becomes more accessible and consumer motives and benefits sought from travel become more diverse it is especially important to attempt to understand the factors that influence the behaviour of tourism consumers and, more specifically, wellness tourism consumers. In this way, companies and public and private institutions will have more tools to prepare themselves better to offer the most adequate tourist experience for each consumer profile. While some consumers seek products and services that make them feel younger (Pilzer, 2007), others are more focused on lifestyle (Liu *et al.*, 2018) and believe that “health” not only refers to biomedical matters, but also encompasses leisure, nature, and wellbeing (Young *et al.,* 2018). This belief crucially influences their consumption behaviour reflected in purchasing organic and nutritional food (Lo *et al*., 2017; Regine, 2011;), participating in wellness programs (Ott-Holland *et al*., 2019), and choosing wellness tourism (Hritz *et al*., 2014). This changing consumer behaviour has led to the rise of the wellness economy. As individual needs are altered, so is tourism (McKercher & Chan, 2005; Trauer, 2006). Global and societal changes have resulted in the need for specific activity focused tourism (McKercher & Chan, 2005; Trauer, 2006) and wellness tourism fulfils the aim of stress management, personal development, reflection, connection and satisfying the urge to find the meaning of life (Kelly, 2010). This type of wellness tourism doesn’t just imply changes in the usual tourism concerns like transport and accommodation, but the mental wellbeing of the tourists too (Kelly, 2010). As the findings of this study demonstrate that the willingness to travel for wellness vacation is strongly associated with the intention of visitors to rejuvenate and unwind, and with the objective to escape the usual routine. According to previous studies, escapism has been the highest purpose of travel, the notion to get away and switch-off has often been the main purpose of tourism (Cohen, 1996; Rojek, 1993), as well as rejuvenation and the urge of self-discovery and self-purpose (Mintel, 2007). Thus, well-being can become a type of life of self-discovery in an era of increasing stress. Our findings indicate the type of accommodation and pace travelers most prefer during a wellness trip. Stakeholders can acknowledge that majority of the sample want to add rest and relaxation to their vacation rather than high energy, dynamic activities and that wellness travel is synonymous to calmness. Consequently, well-being is generally considered to be a holistic philosophy, supporting temporary feelings of happiness. This paper contributes to a better understanding of this niche market as it continues to evolve and to better prepare destinations and stakeholders to also be proactive in their business' well-fare by developing to the needs and motivations of wellness tourists. Stakeholders may use this information to predict wellness tourism trends and identify patterns in travellers and use this information to maximise the potential of their business activities.

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Development of a Tourist Information Search Support System That Reflects Interests Based on User's Gaze

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Abstract: In 2014, Tobii Tech and Eye Tribe released the first inexpensive non-contact eye tracking device, and eye tracking technology has been attracting more and more attention. It has long been said that gaze information can be used to infer a person's interests and attention, and the analysis of gaze position by eye tracking technology is also used for Search Engine Optimization (SEO). In addition, with the spread of information and communication technology, the Internet has become the most used media for "obtaining information on hobbies and entertainment," surpassing books, magazines, and television for all age groups except those in their 60s in Japan, The majority of information gathering has shifted to web browsing. As a result, the information gap between those who can use the Internet to collect information and those who cannot use it well, so-called digital divide, has become one of the social problems. Based on these background, we attempted to develop an interaction system that presents search keyword to get related information by using the user's eyes while browsing the web. Based on analysis of user's gaze and accumulation of web pages viewed by each user, this system can provide search keywords that reflect a user's interest, such as Tourism information or history information. We believe that this system can support users' web browsing by assisting them in gathering information on sightseeing and travel, presenting them with unexpected facilities that they did not know about, and making it easy for them to obtain a variety of related information.

Keywords: user's gaze, eye tracking, web browsing, user’s interests, keyword recommendation, related information

1. Introduction

It has long been believed that gaze information can be used to infer a person's interests and attention, and it is now being used in a variety of fields. For example, in the field of automobile driving, Panasonic (2022) presented an in-vehicle HUD (Head-Up Display) with a gaze-tracking function at CES2022, a trade fair for the latest technologies. The HUD can automatically adjust its focus according to the driver's gaze and can detect whether the driver is drowsy or not, thus improving driving safety. In the field of sports, it is said that effective education can be achieved by comparing the gaze information of skilled athletes and amateurs, and understanding the gaze behavior peculiar to skilled athletes. (Manabu, N. et al, 2016 and Takuya, S. et al, 2021) In addition, not only players' eyesight but also referees' eyesight has been analyzed to improve referees' skills (Kenichiro, M. et al, 2021). In 2014, Tobii Tech and Eye Tribe released the first inexpensive non-contact eye tracking device. The International Market According to a market study by the International Market Analysis Research and Consulting Group (IMARC), the global eye tracking market is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of approximately 26% between 2021 and 2026. The demand for the use of eye information is expected to increase further in the future. Thus, the analysis of gaze information is used in all fields and is a market that is expected to grow further in the future. (IMARC Services Private Limited,2021)

In recent years, with the spread of information and communication technology, the proportion of information gathering using the Internet, such as Web browsing and SNS, has been increasing. According to a report by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC), the Internet will be the most used media for "obtaining information on hobbies and entertainment" as of FY2020, surpassing books, magazines, and TV for all age groups, and much of the information gathering is shifting to Web browsing (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2021). As a result, the information gap between those who can use the Internet to collect information and those who cannot use it well, so-called the digital divide, has become one of the social problems. In addition, in recent years, however, the number of people who collect information from recommendations has been increasing, and the demand for information collection support by recommendation systems has been increasing.

Based on this background, we tried to develop an interaction system to present related information by using the user's eyes while browsing the Web. We believe that this system can support users' web browsing by helping them to collect information about sightseeing and travel, presenting unexpected information that users did not know, and allowing them to easily obtain various related information. We also believe that the system will be able to provide search support to some elderly and physically disabled people who have difficulty in gathering information from the Internet, because they can obtain additional information just by browsing.

2. Background

2.1 Support for information gathering based on keyword recommendations

Tourist often use web to gather information before departure and in the field. In addition, there have been attempts to extract keywords from browsing web pages to support information gathering. In Watanabe et al (2011) research, they extracted unique expressions in the text as keyword candidates, and applied keyword scoring using WebIDF (Masayuki, O. et al, 2011), which is a score calculated by how frequently words occur on the Web, to them. We are developing a search support UI that notifies and presents the top scoring keywords to users. Yamada et al (2020) focused on the information that exists in the web pages that users do not browse. They focused on the problem that users cannot obtain new and necessary knowledge efficiently by browsing randomly from the search results and proposed a search support method that presents keywords as extended snippets that can predict the contents of unvisited pages. Ono et al (2015) focus on the possibility that words that the user needs exist in the web pages of links that the user has not browsed in the search results and propose a method to recommend words that are suitable for the search intention in the pages that the user has not browsed as keywords.

2.2 Web browsing and gaze information

Umemoto et al (2013) attempted to estimate search intentions during real-time web browsing based on the assumption that words with higher attentional value are more suitable for users' search intentions. The authors developed an estimation method using tf-idf, which evaluates the importance of words in a document based on the spatial vector representation of words and the degree of word occurrence, and systematized it in the form of. Shobayashi et al (2018) studied a method for extracting users' interest words from their eye movements while reading Web news articles, and showed that it was possible to extract interest words under certain conditions, which could not be extracted using linguistic information alone. Toda et al (2005) investigated the relationship between information search and gazing time on a Web page, and found that the gazing point stops when a Web page visitor decides what information to obtain. In addition, they reported that the gaze pausing time was longer when the user judged whether the information was what he wanted than when he searched for information.

As above, there have been many researches to support users' web browsing by extracting keywords from the web. There are also many studies on methods to estimate users' interests based on gaze information during web browsing. On the other hand, there are only a few studies of practical systems for general consumers that support web browsing by combining keyword extraction from the web and gaze, such as the study by Otomo et al (2021) In this study, we focused on the use of gaze information in a search support system, and tried to develop an interaction system that presents keywords to obtain related information based on the user's gaze while browsing the Web.

3. Gaze input device

In this chapter, we describe the Tobii Pro Nano (Figure 1) (Tobii, 2021), a non-contact gaze input device used in this study. The device uses the Pupil Centre Corneal Reflection (PCCR) as an eye movement detection method. In the PCCR method, a light reflection point is generated on the cornea, and its image is captured by a camera, which identifies the light reflection point on the cornea and the pupil from the captured image of the eye. The direction of the eye is calculated based on the reflection point and other geometric features. The sampling rate is 60 Hz, and the system is capable of extracting the gaze every 16.7 msec.

Figure 1: Gaze input device (Tobii pro nano)

4. Interaction system overview

Figure 2 shows a flowchart of our Interaction system. This system consists of three processes:

1. text acquisition process
2. interest extraction process
3. related information presentation process

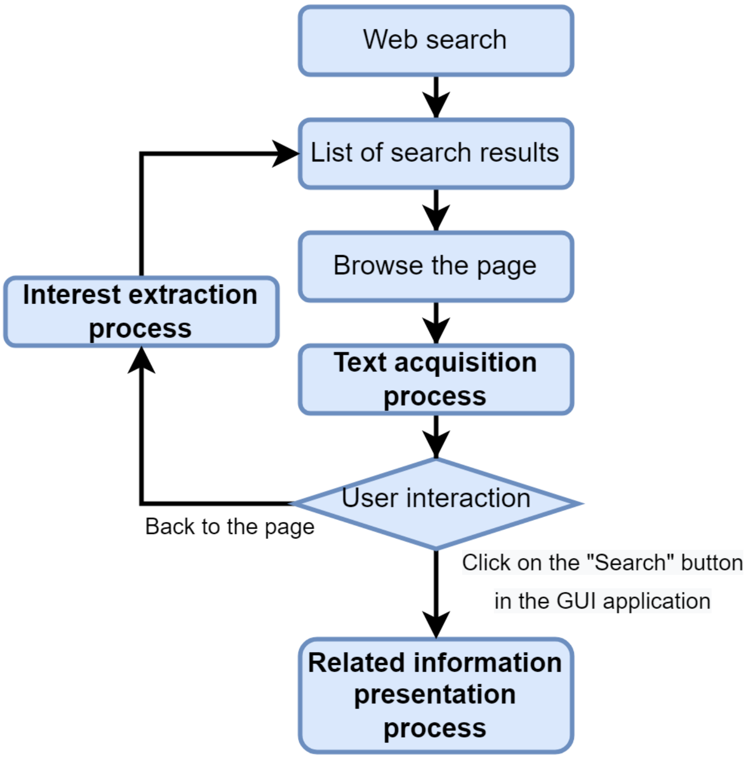

Figure 2: Flowchart of our interaction system

4.1 Text acquisition process

In this process, the system automatically retrieves text elements of the web page being browsed based on the user's gaze. Figure 3 shows the GUI application we have created. From this GUI application, the user browses a web page using Google Chrome, which is opened by Selenium. After that, the system extracts the user's gazing point from the Tobii Pro Nano and runs JavaScript based on the coordinates of the gazing point to retrieve the text in the html elements of the web page that the user is browsing, such as the h tag that contains the heading and the p tag that contains the text in the body of the page. Figure 4 shows the example of text extraction range. The range of the text extraction is chosen to be a sentence unit rather than a single character unit, because the later process also analyses the sentence unit. Furthermore, unread sentences are not extracted in order to extract sentences from eye coordinates. In addition, there is a possibility that sentences that are read in a stream are sentences that the user is not interested in. Therefore, we set a threshold value calculated from the average reading speed of Japanese sentences (Shinya, S., 2004 and Jumpei, K. et al, 2018) and the recommended font size of Web pages (IMJ Corporation, 2013), so that sentences judged to have been skimmed are not extracted.

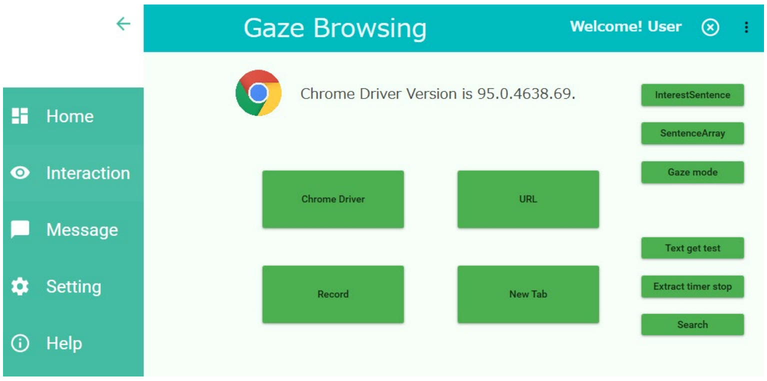

Figure 3: GUI application

Figure 4: Example of text extraction range

4.2 Interest extraction process

This process uses BERTSUM (Yang, L., 2019) to create and save the summary sentences of the browsed web pages as the user profile used to present the recommended keywords that reflect the user's interests in the related information presentation process. This process is performed on the sentences acquired by the text acquisition process when the user leaves the page being browsed, and each page is summarized into three sentences and saved. This process and the text acquisition process continue until the user clicks the "search" button on the GUI application, and the summary text of the browsed page is saved as an index to measure the user's interest.

4.3 Related information presentation process

This process is executed when the user presses the "search" button on the GUI application screen, and it recommends search keywords through three processes:

4. interest understanding process
5. important words extraction process
6. search keywords recommendation process

4.3.1 Interest understanding process

In this process, the system uses Sentence-BERT (Nils, R. et al, 2019) to compare the similarity between the text that was being browsed when the "search" button was clicked (hereinafter referred to as "browsing text") and the summary text that was saved in the preference extraction process (hereinafter referred to as "browsed text"). Sentence-BERT generates sentence vectors by fine-tuning BERT (Jacob, D. et al, 2018) and calculates the similarity between documents by the cosine distance of the sentence vectors. The closer the cosine distance is to zero, the more similar the documents are to each other. This time, we calculate the distance between documents of browsing text and browsed text. Then, the sentences whose distance between documents is less than 0.33 are temporarily saved as the sentences suitable for the user's interests (hereinafter referred to as " interests sentences").

4.3.2 Important words extraction process

In this process, we use important word analysis by tf-idf, which is an evaluation index of important words, to obtain important words in "interests sentences". First, our system performs morphological analysis using MeCab on the "interests sentences" and obtain proper noun words. After that, we analyze the morphological analysis results using tf-idf, which is an evaluation index of important words. tf-idf estimates the importance of a word in a sentence by using the equations (1), (2), and (3) in Figure 5. This time, the system saved the top 10 important words calculated by tf-idf and used these words for the following process.

(1) tf (Term Frequency)

$$= \frac{\text{Frequency of occurrence of word X in sentence A}}{\text{Total of frequencies of all words in sentence A}}$$

(2) idf (Inverse Document Frequency)

$$= \log\left(\frac{Number\ of\ whole\ sentences}{Number\ of\ sentences\ containing\ word\ X}\right)$$

(3) $\text{tf-idf} = \text{tf} \times \text{idf}$

Figure 5: Calculation formula of tf-idf

4.3.3 Search keywords recommendation process

We use spatial vector representations of words to evaluate the relationship between words. In this study, we use word2vec (Tomas, M. et al, 2013) to create a vector space model of words. Based on this model, we finally decide the search keywords to recommend to users. This time, we calculate the similarity of words using word2vec for 10 words stored in the important words extraction process, and identify 5 words whose vectors are close to each other. After that, the system sends a pop-up notice to the user using the five words as search keywords. When the user clicks on this pop-up notice, Google search is automatically performed with the recommended search keywords and the search result is displayed. In this way, it is possible to provide additional information related to the web page that the user browsed.

5. System verification and consideration

We have verified whether our system can provide additional information to users who are browsing the Web, reflecting their search intentions. As one of the results of our analysis, we present the results of browsing the homepage of Goryokaku, a special historical site in Hokkaido, Japan (hereafter referred to as the "verification page"). In the previous study (Taiga, M. et al, 2020) the keywords of different topics, such as tourism information and historical information, were presented together regardless of the search intention. Therefore, in this study, in order to verify whether the recommended keywords change appropriately according to the search intention, we assumed two information search behaviors: one is interested in tourism and the other is interested in history. Therefore, in the interest extraction process, three articles on tourism in Hokkaido, Japan, and three articles on history and war in Hokkaido, Japan, were stored in the system. Table 1 shows the list of search keywords suggested by the system.

Table1: List of search keywords suggested by the system

Keywords	Topic	
	tourism	**historical**
1	Goryokaku Park	Hokkaido Development Commissioner
2	Goryokaku Tower	Hakodate War
3	Hakodate City	Ayasaburo Takeda
4	Tatsuoka Castle	Tatsuoka Castle
5	Goryokaku	Western style

In the case of a search for tourist information, "Goryokaku Park" and "Goryokaku Tower" are suggested keywords. These are tourist spots located near Goryokaku. In addition, we were able to propose new additional information by suggesting as a recommended keyword "Tatsuoka Castle", a Goryokaku that exists in the central part of Japan. However, "Hakodate City" is not suitable as a recommended keyword because it is unlikely to be searched by the name of the municipality in the search task assuming the acquisition of tourism information. As for "Goryokaku", it cannot expect to obtain any new information on it because the verification page is about "Hakodate Goryokaku". In the case of historical information, it was confirmed that the keywords such as "Ayasaburo Takeda" and "Hakodate War" could be retrieved for the designer and related wars. However, "Western style" is not a suitable keyword because it is unlikely to be searched by itself. From the above results, we confirmed that it is possible to recommend search keywords suitable for users' search intentions by using gaze information and user profiles, although some unsuitable keywords were recommended.

Next, we describe the issues we found in this study. First of all, the current system is slow in processing time. It took about 14 seconds from the time when the user clicked the "Search" button to the time when the keyword was recommended. According to Nielsen Norman Group, the response time of an interaction system is reported to be less than one second without stopping the user's flow of thought. However, if we prioritize the processing time, the current recommendation accuracy will not be maintained, so we need to adjust the system continuously. The next problem is that our system can only recommend search keywords from the text being browsed. We need to improve our system in order to support users to get new information. As a suggestion for improvement, we propose to add collocations to the current keywords as new recommended keywords, so that users can obtain new information. Another problem is that the current system searches automatically with all the recommended keywords presented, and the user cannot select the keywords to search. The purpose of this specification is to reduce the time and effort of user's decision-making and operation, such as "deciding the keyword" and "pushing the search button". However, since not all the recommended keywords capture the user's browsing intention, unnecessary information may be presented. Therefore, we think that it is desirable to add a check box type GUI and to leave the decision-making part to the user.

6. Summary

In this study, we have developed an interaction system that extracts sentences based on the user's gaze while browsing the Web, and through various analyses, can recommend search keywords suitable for the search intention. By verification, we confirmed that the recommended keyword changes according to the search intention such as tourism topic and historic topic.

Eye tracking technology has been attracting attention in recent years because eye tracking information can be used to infer the interests of users, and it is being used in various fields. We believe that by using this technology to support web browsing for tourist destinations, we can solve the digital divide and easy to search for people with handicaps. In the future, we plan to improve the issues we found and to evaluate the system quantitatively. In addition, our system does not currently support non-Japanese web pages. Therefore, in the future, the system will be updated to support English web pages and will be improved to support the information gathering of tourist destinations around the world.

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Pivoting Online: The Case of the Agri-Food Sector

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Abstract: The debate concerning e-Commerce adoption is an evolving one that in the context of the current COVID-19 Pandemic has come centre stage. Although the shift towards e-Commerce platforms has been an increasing trend in recent years, Curtin (2020) states the current pandemic has accelerated consumers' shifts toward e-Commerce by five years. As store closures and new enforcements became a reality, it forced many companies to pivot their online strategies overnight (Shadler et al, 2020). Since its inception in the late 90's, e-Commerce adoption and research has championed the rise and the significant benefits of e-Commerce. Industries as diverse as financial, retail, manufacturing, and hospitality (Josanov, 2011; Kremez et al, 2019; Helper and MacDuffie, 2000; Hua, 2016) have embraced e-Commerce. By contrast, research into the use and level of adoption by Agri-food businesses indicates that this sector has not kept pace with this digital revolution. This is surprising given the importance of this sector worldwide. Indeed, it is one of the most important indigenous industries in Ireland in terms of employment, economic output, and export performance. However, there is scarce research found in the case for Irish Agri-food e-Commerce development, with limited industry reports available. Previous research elsewhere called for government support to encourage the move to online territory (Sparkes and Thomas, 2001; Sturiale and Scuderi, 2016), and the onset of COVID-19 furthered this. Numerous support agencies expanded on their current offerings in relation to digital support, although little is known around Agri-food businesses adoption of these. For this reason, this paper intends to add to the limited studies surrounding this important indigenous industry in Ireland within the widely dynamic topic of e-Commerce platforms. The focus of this paper is directed toward the adoption and integration of these online platforms during COVID-19, the benefits and challenges faced, the role of support agencies and further support suggested by SMEs through survey data. This study has both an academic and industry focus and hence aims to improve our understanding of online activity and digital support within this sector.

Keywords: online, e-Commerce, social media, Agri-food, SMEs, support agencies

1. Introduction

The adoption of online platforms and e-Commerce has been without doubt one of the most significant business trends within the last twenty years. According to Statista (2021), e-Commerce sales (which refers to the ordering of products or services using the internet), have increased by almost 400% since 2015. Facebook, for example, which recently announced a new e-Commerce feature (Rodriguez, 2020) has been at the forefront of this growth (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019). In this era of digital revolution, sectors as diverse as financial services, retail, education, and government agencies have all embraced this online and e-Commerce opportunity. For example, since Revolut's fruition in 2015, the Fintech company has become the UK's most valuable Fintech, crediting their success to the ability of managing all users "financial needs through a single platform" (Dawkins, 2021).

Despite this, not all sectors have embraced this digital opportunity. One sector that appears to have lagged in the level of adoption of online platforms and e-Commerce is the Agri-food sector. This sector includes traditional agriculture farming activities, food and beverages manufactures, and encompasses both primary and secondary sector activities. For example, the Corporate Finance Institute (CFI) (2022) defines agricultural businesses to include all activities that relate to farming, such as crop production, livestock, and distribution; traditionally primary activities. The food sector refers to businesses undertaking activities "...related to any stage of production, processing, and distribution of food" (Food Standards Agency (FSA), 2007), whether it is processed, unprocessed, or partially processed. The beverage industry is often included in the food sector and refers to businesses involved in the manufacture of drinks and ready-to-drink products (Irish Business and Employers Confederation (Ibec), 2022).

Several studies indicate that Agri-food businesses have not taken advantage of the digital revolution (Sparkes and Thomas, 2001; Sturiale and Scuderi, 2016; Cristobal-Fransi et al, 2020; Grant Thornton, 2020). This is surprising, given the economic and regional importance of the sector. It is one of Ireland's most important indigenous industries (Bord Bia, 2021). Added to this, the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic (herein referenced as C-19) in March 2020 caused unprecedented disruption, and led to a surge in e-Commerce activity worldwide, as many businesses reassessed their online trading strategies overnight. While industries such as retail and financial services have been at the forefront of this digital revolution, little is known about the extent to which Irish Agri-food firms have actively engaged in e-Commerce and online trading. To address these issues, this paper seeks to examine the level of adoption of e-Commerce and online platforms by Irish Agri-food businesses prior and in the wake of C-19. Specifically, the objectives of the research paper are to:

- Examine the level of adoption of e-Commerce and online platforms among Agri-food SMEs in Ireland pre and during C-19
- Assess their perception of the benefits and challenges in terms of adoption of e-Commerce
- Examine the role of support agencies in facilitating e-Commerce adoption
- Identify what future supports these firms will need to enhance their online presence.

2. Literature review

There is no doubt that the internet has been a hugely powerful but disruptive force, transforming many aspects of the business landscape worldwide (OECD, 2019). Over the course of a decade (2010-2020), global e-Commerce sales have increased by 800% (Rheude, 2019), creating new business practices, models, and industries. Despite e-Commerce being both a pervasive and ubiquitous term, providing a comprehensive definition of e-Commerce is challenging. Early definitions such as Bajaj and Nag (2005) referred to e-Commerce as “the paperless exchange of business using electronic data interchange...” (p. 13). As technology evolved, the definition of e-Commerce expanded to include a wider scope of related activities such as social commerce. More recently, Chakraborty et al (2021) defines e-Commerce as including the entire online process, from “developing, marketing, selling, delivering, servicing, and paying for products and services” through the internet. For the purpose of this study, consistent with Chakraborty et al (2021), the term e-Commerce used in this paper refers to the use of online platforms, including social media platforms, business websites, and other e-Commerce retail sites.

2.1 The case for e-Commerce

The phenomenal growth in e-Commerce and online trading has presented a huge opportunity for businesses, both large and small. The literature documents significant benefits in terms of improving customer service and customer interaction, the fastening of business processes, greater global competitiveness, greater time and cost savings leading to higher profit margins (Piris et al, 2004; Al-Qirim, 2007) In more recent years, better access to international markets, cost effectiveness and larger customer reach have all been identified within the literature as clear advantages (Cristobal-Fransi et al, 2015; Moon et al, 2017; Saridakis et al, 2019). The literature would indicate that while larger firms are more aware of the benefits, the advantages can be particularly significant for SMEs, who have resource and capital limitations (Grandon and Pearson, 2004; D’Angelo et al, 2016). While studies have cautioned around viewing e-Commerce as a panacea, barriers in terms of perceived costs, limited resources, organizational readiness and the lack of awareness of digital literacy among owners and managers, particularly for SMEs, have all been identified as challenges in e-Commerce adoption (Pease and Rowe, 2003; Zheng et al, 2004; Scupola, 2009; Kwadwo et al, 2016).

2.2 E-Commerce and the Agri-Food Industry

While retail and particularly financial sectors have embraced the digital and e-Commence revolution, the Agri-food sector appears to have lagged behind. Research by Sparkes and Thomas (2001), over two decades ago, argued that Welsh Agri-food SMEs had “not fully engaged” with e-Commerce. Subsequent studies reported that the websites of food and drinks businesses were not being used to their full potential (Sturiale and Scuderi, 2016; Cristobal-Fransi et al, 2020). In the case of Ireland, where SMEs account for over 90% of active enterprises (Central Statistics Office (CSO), 2021), there has been limited attention given to the issue of e-Commerce adoption among Agri-food businesses (McNulty, 1985; Stephens, 2014; Renwick et al, 2014). Recent industry reports from Grant Thornton (2020) and the Irish Farm Accounts Co-operative (IFAC) (2020) indicates that digital trends in the sector are less than expected, academic interest in the topic is scant. This is surprising given the importance of the sector, particularly in Ireland. Data from Bord Bia (2021) indicates that the sector employs 7.1% of total employment, contributes approximately 8% of GDP, and almost 90% of Irish food produced is exported to over 180 markets worldwide.

2.3 C-19 pandemic and supports

In many respects, the C-19 Pandemic has certainly accelerated digital trends. In the wake of government restriction and major consumer shifts in their buying behavior (Curtin, 2020), many businesses were forced to pivot overnight making the adoption and integration of e-Commerce critical to businesses survival, particularly SMEs. Indeed, the research suggested that in the 'post-pandemic scenario', SMEs were significantly more vulnerable to failure than larger firms (Ikmal et al, 2020). Moreover, Singh et al (2013) suggest that SMEs may not perceive the benefits of adopting and implementing e-Commerce. Hence a key issue is whether Agri-food businesses in this post-pandemic scenario are able to adapt to the digital world.

In this regard, a number of international reports by the OECD (2020) and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (2021) highlight the role of policy supports and government as fundamental in helping business overcome existing barriers, to ensure a more inclusive e-Commerce landscape. The latter, for example, stresses the need for government to prioritize national digital readiness and for changes in public policy and supports to enable businesses to improve their digital readiness. In terms of the Agri-Food sector in Ireland, , a series of policy initiatives and programs have been developed to help establish key digital skills and support. As outlined in Table 1, the Irish government has launched a series of supports to aid companies in the Agri-food sector in moving online. For example, the Think Digital Initiative launched in 2016 and the Innovation Voucher launched in 2007 are notable examples. Moreover, several agencies currently work in this arena, including Bord Bia, Enterprise Ireland, and Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), and have been at the forefront of enabling companies to pivot online. The support outlined below shows a snapshot of the digital and e-Commerce solutions offered by these agencies, where some were available prior to C-19.

Table 1: Examples of support available by agencies

AGENCY	SUPPORT	DESCRIPTION
Bord Bia	Think Digital Initiative	Provides food, drink and horticulture businesses with the insight, skills, and supports necessary to win online.
Enterprise Ireland	Innovation Voucher COVID-19 Online Retail Scheme	€5,000 for SMEs to explore a business opportunity or problem with a registered knowledge provider. Funding to enhance their digital capability. Supports a maximum 80% of the project costs with a maximum grant of €40,000.
Intertrade Ireland	E-Merge	£2500/€2800 fully funded consultancy support to help businesses develop online sales and e-Commerce solutions.
LEOs	Trading Online Voucher (TOV)	Targeted at SMEs – up to €2,500 for assistance to trade online, reaching new markets and boosting sales.

Despite these efforts, a recent industry report by Grant Thornton (2020) stated that adoption rates among this sector are less than expected, suggesting a gap between policy (i.e., supply side supports) and Agri-food businesses engagement with these policy supports. The core research question that this paper seeks to address is to therefore analyse online activity (pre and during C-19) and the extent to which these businesses are engaging with current support provision.

3. Methodology

For the purpose of this study, primary research was carried out using an online survey. The validity of surveys, and increasingly online surveys, is well established in the literature (Paris et al, 2016). Through a systematic literature review, Zeng et al (2017) identified that almost half of papers analysed used surveys. While the author acknowledges the limitations of online surveys (Andrade, 2020), in the context of the timing of this study, it was felt that this was the most appropriate method. Several steps were taken to mitigate these limitations. The survey was developed over a period of eight weeks and was distributed in April 2021 electronically to Agri-food businesses using various email and social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. The survey was sent to several support agencies throughout Ireland who agreed to send it to their network of Agri-food SMEs in this sector such as LEOs, food hubs, and incubation centers. In addition, the author liaised with a number of national bodies that work with Agri-food businesses (i.e. Bord Bia), which identified food hubs and networks in their association. The survey was circulated to approximately 500 SME's. The survey consisted of 19-27 questions, dependent on their online presence. This was divided into four sections, and was designed to establish the respondent's business profile, clarity on their online presence and sales prior to and post March

2020 (onset of C-19 Pandemic), the benefits and challenges associated, and their knowledge and use of support from various agencies. The survey gathered 108 responses in total.

4. Results

Survey data from 108 Irish Agri-food SMEs were collected and analysed (See Table 2).

Table 2: Sample demographics

Number of respondents	108
Type of business	
Agri-food (Agriculture, Farming and Fishing)	11 (10.2%)
Beverages	17 (15.7%)
Food business	80 (74.1%)
Number of years in business	
Less than 1 year	20 (18.5%)
1 < 5 years	39 (36.1%)
5 – 10 years	24 (22.2%)
10+ years	25 (23.1%)
Size of Business (number of employees)	
1 - 2	51 (47.2%)
3 - 5	22 (20.4%)
5 - 9	10 (9.3%)
10 - 49	22 (20.4%)
50 - 249	3 (2.8%)

The majority of respondents were food businesses (74%). The number of years in business range from less than 1 years (18.5%), between 1 to 5 years (36.1%), and 5+ years (45.3%). Microbusinesses cover 76.9% of the sample, 20.4% were small enterprises, and 2.8% medium sized. Dublin accounted for the main region of respondents (48.1%), with the remaining covering 19 other counties.

4.1 Level of adoption and use of online platforms

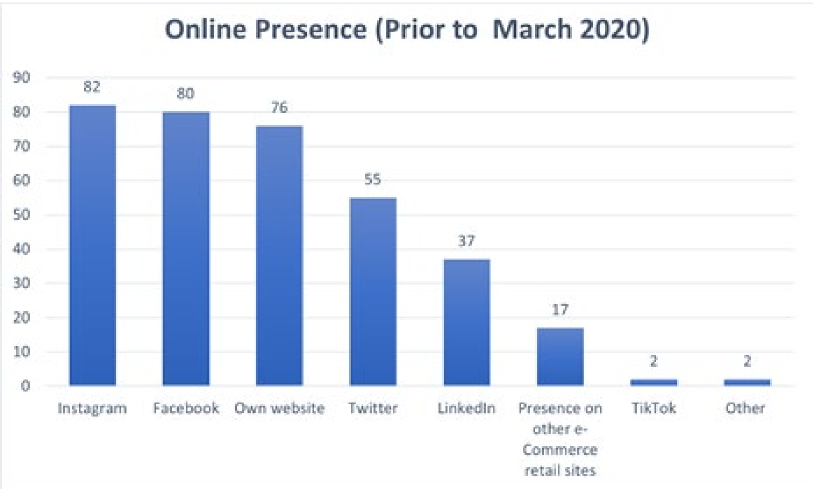

Figure 1: Respondents online presence pre C-19

Previous to March 2020, Instagram, Facebook, and the business website amassed the highest usage pre-Pandemic. Most respondents (73.7%) stated less than ten percent of sales came from online trading. Only 9.5% had gathered greater than fifty percent from online sales.

Following the outbreak of C-19, Forty-four percent (N=42) of respondents surveyed did not join any additional online platforms, rather the majority of those (76.1%) enhanced their existing website and social media pages'. The remaining respondents indicated that they joined various platforms, including other e-Commerce retail sites, the business website, and TikTok.

With regard to online sales increasing, staying static or decreasing during C-19, three quarters of the food businesses surveyed (76.6%) reported that online sales had increased since March 2020 (the onset of the

Pandemic), while the remainder (23.4%) indicated no change (See Table 3). In terms of the Agri and beverage businesses, (N=28), the results are similar. 64.2% of beverage businesses and 75% of Agri businesses also indicated an increase in online sales since March 2020. However, over a third of beverage businesses indicated either no change or a decrease in online sales. A small number of Agribusinesses and beverage businesses indicated a decrease in online sales since March 2020.

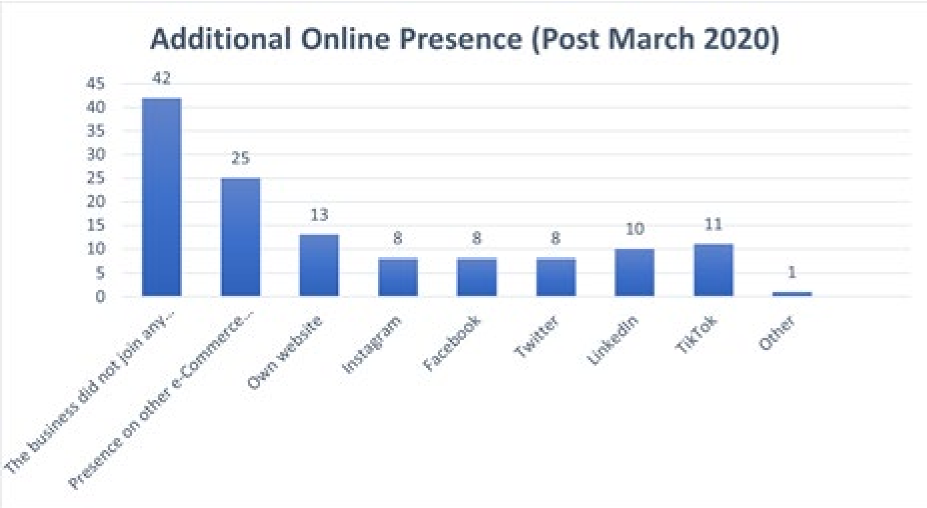

Figure 2: Respondents additional online presence post Pandemic

Table 3: Change in online sales status since March 2020

Change in Online Sales since March 2020	Decrease (%)	No Change (%)	Increase (%)
Agribusinesses (agriculture, farming and fishing)	12.5%	12.5%	75%
Beverages	1.4%	34.3%	64.2%
Food Businesses	0%	23.4%	76.6%
Total(average)	2%	30%	63%

Number of businesses: Agribusinesses N=11, Beverages N=17, Food businesses N=80

4.2 Benefits and challenges

In order to assess what extent to which the respondents were aware of the benefits and challenges offered by online presence and trading, a number of statements drawn from the literature were presented using a Likert scale. The results presented in Table 4 below indicate that the respondents are very aware of the benefits of online presence to their business. Consistent with literature, improved visibility and greater access to customers were important benefits strongly agreed by over 95% of businesses. However, the results indicate that selling domestically within Ireland is an important benefit from having an online presence (63%), whereas selling internationally is somewhat less important, with many in disagreement (31.6%).

Table 4: Statements presented

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements			
	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree %	No opinion / Uncertain %	Agree/ Strongly Agree %
Online presence is important to increase the businesses visibility.	0	3.2	96.9
Online presence is important to gather more customers.	0	3.2	96.8
Online trading has enabled the business to expand to customers internationally	31.6	27.2	41.1
Online trading has enabled the business to expand to customers in different regions in Ireland	11.6	25.3	63.2

4.3 Access to enterprise supports

Out of the 108 respondents, 85% are aware of existing support by enterprise agencies towards helping these companies move online. In terms of which support agencies accessed in the past twelve months (See Table 5), the data reveals a significant degree of engagement among the various agencies. The data suggests that the

LEOs are a key point of contact for these respondents, as 76% of the businesses accessed supports from LEOs, followed by Bord Bia (44%) and Enterprise Ireland (27%).

Table 5: Support agencies utilized

Business Type				
Agency/Business type	Agri-food (Agriculture, Farming and Fishing)	Beverages	Food business	Total (n=108)
Local Enterprise Office (LEO)	6	13	63	82
Bord Bia	3	7	37	47
Enterprise Ireland	1	2	26	29
Training Courses	2	6	20	28
Teagasc	4	1	11	16
Others (Intertrade Ireland, An Post, etc)	1	8	31	40

Finally, 72% of respondents indicated that they availed of online supports during C-19. The most utilised supports include attending a webinar series (N=47) (training sessions), followed by the TOV (N=44) and to a lesser extent, the innovation voucher (N=11). Of some importance is that fact that 28% of the business surveyed did not avail of any online supports from the enterprise agencies at this time.

4.4 Proposed suggestions to improve their online presence

The final section of the survey included an open-ended question which sought to elicit respondents' suggestions on what additional support(s) the respondents feel would be beneficial to help their business transition online or improve on their current online platforms. The majority of respondents put forward a vast range of suggestions. These were thematically analysed and three main themes emerged, which included a lack of suitable qualified online marketing professionals, the need to widen the criteria and conditions often attached in accessing online support, as well as tailored training and mentoring. For example, according to one business owner, there is a need for a "reliable database of individuals to provide this service". According to the owner,

> *"...the hardest part and biggest block in making the jump to paying someone to upgrade your website etc. is finding the person...I would love to utilise the TOV and get someone else to upgrade my website but I have no idea how to choose someone to do it for me/don't know where to start looking." (B2C Food business owner trading since 2019 in Dublin)*

In terms of the criteria and conditions that are often attached to these supports, several businesses felt that the time involved, and the conditions attached can be prohibitive for SMEs. Numerous businesses indicated that they "*did not qualify*" for online supports. For example:

> *"I could not access the trading online voucher because I just started my business, so I was not trading for 6 months. Maybe it will help to have something like this for start-ups..." (B2B/B2C Beverage business trading for less than a year in Kildare)*

Finally, several business owners were acutely aware of their lack of knowledge and highlighted the need of targeted training and mentoring. For example,

> *"I manage the website tho I have some knowledge but am not a web developer. What would really helpful would be to have a website health check and analysis of the website detailed so that I can address issues that I may not be aware of. I would also really benefit from SHORT bite size tutorials of marketing hacks, the latest widgets or apps to enhance website." (B2B Food business trading for over 5 years in Wexford)*

5. Discussion

The Agri-food Industry in Ireland is a vital component in Ireland's economic landscape. This sector has had to entail many disruptions as the changing nature of the implications C-19 presented accelerated the need for digital presence. The findings presented in this paper provide important insights into the use of online platforms by firms in this sector, as well as giving support agencies direct insights from their target demographic of the demand for additional support and training.

As is found from the data collected, online trading and presence has become increasingly important to Agri-food SMEs due to the implications of C-19. Prior to C-19, these firms had presence on various platforms, however, in the wake of C-19, these firms either sought to enhance their online platforms (76%) or join additional platforms. The results also indicate that Instagram, Facebook, and the business website were the most utilized platforms.

Consistent with prior research, the evidence indicates that these business owners are aware of the benefits of having an online presence in terms of providing greater business visibility and gathering more customers as reported by Moon et al (2017). However, the results also indicate that these businesses put less importance on using online platforms to access international markets, rather their focus is on selling nationally.

A review of current digital supports indicate that a range of supports were available both prior and during the Pandemic. Awareness and use of support agencies is relatively high for these sample firms, with 72% of firms engaging with agencies working in this space. The data also suggest that LEOs are a key point of contact for most SMEs, which shows the importance of this agency and its support system. However, just over a quarter (28%) of respondents did not utilize any online support. Challenges appear to indicate that the conditions attached to existing supports and lack of awareness in terms of accessing suitably qualified digital professionals were identified as key challenges facing these businesses, in addition to requiring more targeted training and mentorship. The results suggest that a reliable database of suitable professionals and more training to assist these businesses to invest in digital strategies would play a positive role in encouraging them to adapt to the digital landscape.

6. Conclusion

The information gathered from this study indicates that the relevance of e-Commerce and online platforms for Agri-food SMEs has grown with the implications C-19 brought, as these businesses increased their online presence and trading to adapt to the changing needs of both consumers and government provisions. In line with this, many support agencies either elevated or expanded their current offerings of digital support, as the demand was substantial. For example, Burke-Kennedy (2020) noted that the TOV received “three years’ worth of applications in three months”. Support agencies play a crucial role in enabling SMEs to overcome barriers and ease their integration of the various platforms available. Throughout 2021, a promising 80% of SMEs plan to enhance their online presence, as majority of the SMEs understand the importance of investing in the digital platforms. It is recommended that SMEs focus on building their digital capabilities and continue to for the future as emerging new trends come to fruition. Support agencies also need to accommodate these SMEs and examine their current processes as the businesses identify the criteria and conditions as inhibitors. The limitations of this research include that as the sample size is relatively small and a significant proportion are food businesses, this means the results cannot be generalised for all Agri-food businesses. Moreover, many of the businesses in this sample are micro businesses. Future research could explore in more detail some of the issues identified which include addressing the digital awareness of these owners.

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Work in Progress Papers

Developing Tourism: The Path out of Poverty for Uzbekistan

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Abstract: Ending poverty in all of its forms by 2030 is the top priority goal of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (UNSDG). It is well known that the tourism industry can play a vital role in eradicating poverty. While the decline of global poverty is obvious, progress has slowed and even reversed because of COVID-19 and is expected to grow in the coming years. In recent years, tourism development in Uzbekistan has seen unprecedented growth. Modern Uzbekistan history can be divided into two, both with very different political and economical approaches under the presidency of former president Islam Karimov and current leader Shavkat Mirziyoyev. Since 2016, Uzbekistan has begun an unprecedented political, economic and social transformation. The reforms the new president has started have been remarkable and are being seen as an opportunity to unlock the country's potential. In *'New Uzbekistan'*, poverty is a new term following the President's address to the parliament of Uzbekistan, in which he became the first Uzbek president in history to openly admit the existence of poverty in the country. In Uzbekistan, the population living below the poverty line accounts for about 12 to 15 percent, nearly 4 to 5 million people in the country are living for less than 10 to 13 thousand UZS a month. Considering the challenges the world is facing with climate change, uncertain epidemic situations, countries with conflict (e.g. extremists taking over the government in Afghanistan in 2021), and authoritarian regimes (e.g. Kazakh protests in early 2022), it looks challenging to eradicate poverty by 2030 in Central Asia, particularly in Uzbekistan. This research will initiate an exploration of both the present and potential future impacts of tourism on poverty alleviation in Uzbekistan. The overall aim of the research is to create a model for developing countries to reduce poverty by maximising the benefits of the tourism industry. The academic resources related to the topic of interest are sparse. Most studies seem to focus on tourism only and there is little or almost no evidence on the impacts of tourism on the poor in Uzbekistan. This paper has important implications for academics and proposes practical recommendations which will be beneficial to policymakers and tourism governance.

Keywords: tourism, poverty, sustainable development, Uzbekistan, Central Asia

1. Introduction

Ending poverty in all of its forms by 2030 is the top priority goal of the Sustainable Development Goal (UNSDG). It is estimated that about 9.2 percent of the global population (nearly 700 million people) are currently living below the international poverty line of $1.90 per day as defined by the United Nations (UN), to be more specific, they are the poorest of the poor (World Bank, 2021). However, there is growing support for the claim that the numbers are actually much higher than estimated by the UN. The data gathered in the UNDP (2021) report suggests that when poverty is measured by the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), there are approximately 1.3 billion people trapped in poverty. While the decline of global poverty is obvious, progress has slowed and even reversed because of COVID-19 and is projected to grow in the coming years. According to the World Bank (2021b) additional 150 million people are expected to be on the poverty list because of the pandemic by the end of 2021.

There is a large volume of published studies describing the role of tourism to eradicate absolute poverty in developing countries (Ashley, Roe and Goodwin, 2001; Zhao and Ritchie, 2007; Scheyvens, 2012; Spenceley and Meyer, 2012). In most developing countries, the tourism sector is widely acknowledged as playing a vital role in the economy through its creation of jobs, construction of new and modernization of existing infrastructure, contribution to investment, foreign exchange, and government revenue (Ashley, Roe and Goodwin, 2001; UNTWO, 2002; Barasa, 2010). According to the UNWTO (UNWTO, 2021), the tourism industry is the world's largest export category and for many developing countries, a major source of foreign exchange income, which accounts for up to 90 percent of the total country's export. The tourism industry is a key sector of the economy, as it generated $1.7 trillion in export earnings in 2019. Developing countries, particularly the poorest regions around the world offer unique experiences as they are rich in natural and cultural resources. The tourism sector poses a great opportunity to redistribute wealth from the rich to the poor if adequately planned. As tourists travel to poor regions for different reasons, tourists tend to spend money on food, drinks, shopping, and accommodation. The uniqueness of these tourism destinations is in their opportunity to provide jobs, income for the poor through various employment schemes, allowing locals to provide products and/or services to the tourist (Spenceley and Meyer, 2012).

2. Background to tourism, poverty and development in Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan is the most populated state in Central Asia with rich resources such as gold, natural gas, and other mineral resources (Chapman, 2011; Library of Congress, 2014). Uzbekistan is one of the five 'stans' in Central Asia and with approximately 34 million people is considered the most populous country in the region. Today's territory where Uzbekistan is located has a long history and with its famous UNESCO listed cities such as Bukhara, Khiva, and Samarkand (UNESCO, no date; Kantarci, 2007), the country has everything to become world-leading destination when COVID-19 is over. Despite Uzbekistan being a double land-locked country, it has a great potential to attract tourists for various tourism activities, such as mountain-related activities, hunting, skiing, and Islamic pilgrimage. Rich in historical sites of which there are as many as 8000 and another 10 towns that were part of Ancient Silk Road (Airey and Shackley, 1997), Uzbekistan is unique and exotic with natural beauty and extraordinary hospitality (Kantarci, Uysal and Magnini, 2014).

The tourism industry in Uzbekistan is booming amid the opening up of political, and economic reforms, and a new visa relaxation policy. Despite Uzbekistan's tremendous efforts in recent years, poverty remains the country's biggest problem. As the president mentioned in his address to the parliament, much of 12 to 15 percent of the population is living below the poverty line (President.uz, 2020). However, there is no clear definition of poverty within the Uzbek government and numbers might be much higher than the actual number that the government estimates. Nearly half of the population, around 49 percent, live in the rural area, which makes the agricultural sector a key for economic growth. Uzbekistan has set a goal to halve the poverty rate by 2026 and there is much more opportunity for the tourism industry to lead this ambitious goal.

In early 2016, Mirziyoyev, in his first days in the presidency, announced that the tourism industry would play a key role in the development of the Uzbek economy (President.uz, 2017). Surprisingly, a once closed country to most outside countries took a bold step and announced a transit visa-free for 101 countries, E-visas for 51 countries and foreign citizens under 16 were included in a visa-free list in 2018 (United Nations, 2018). As a result, the outcome of the reforms has led the boom in the tourism industry in Uzbekistan. According to statistics, periods 2016-2019 can be considered a golden era in the history of the tourism industry in Uzbekistan as the country that once hardly could attract over 2 million until 2016, since its independence in 1991, managed to welcome nearly 6.75 million in 2019 (World Bank, no date), but due to COVID-19 the number has dropped to 1.5 and 1.7 million in 2020 and 2021 (Buscardini, 2021).

3. Research methodology

This research will be inductive, exploratory and qualitative. The initial stages of the research will involve a literature review of the impacts of tourism on poverty alleviation from a global perspective. The primary research will use semi-structured interviews to gather data from government officials, the tourism industry and host communities in Uzbekistan. Saunders et al. (2019, p. 476) noted that using a semi-structured interviews in an exploratory research will help to collect important background or contextual information for the study. The researcher estimates to conduct in the region of 10 government and policy interviews, 10 industry interviews and to spend approximately 3-6 months on ethnographic data collection in the region. Interviews with policy makers and government agencies will be conducted until a saturation has been reached. Analysis of data will include transcribing the interviews, developing a data coding system and identify common concepts which may lead to propose a model for good practice tourism poverty alleviation in Uzbekistan (Morse and Richards, 2002).

4. Implications and directions for future research

While there is tremendous potential for Uzbekistan to create a sustainable, accessible, and well-known tourist destination that can help to fight against poverty, there is little evidence of whether policymakers understand the potential for tourism to alleviate poverty in Uzbekistan. Therefore, the future research will focus on close collaboration with the government officials and researchers, currently a field work is being scheduled to study the impacts of tourism on poverty reduction in Uzbekistan's Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva regions.

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An Examination of the Sustainable and Green Practices of Portuguese Hotels

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Abstract: The concept of sustainability in the hospitality and hotel industry has been the topic of much discussion and debate in tourism and leisure management literature over the last decade. Key industry stakeholders including hospitality and hotel operators, policymakers and DMO's have been tasked with the challenge of transitioning operations towards more heightened levels of sustainable practice which has stemmed from EU, national and local level policies and guidelines. In Portugal, several strategies and plans have been developed with the aim of improving sustainable practices in hospitality and hotel industry, which focus on developing a more sustainable, competitive, and resilient sector moving into the future. However, there exists a current gap in knowledge in relation to the adoption and utilization of effective tools and models to measure and monitor sustainability performance in the hospitality and hotel industry in Portugal. It has been acknowledged that GDP from tourism in Portugal experienced a 75% drop, with overnight tourist stays in Portugal decreasing to 60% following a period of disproportionate impacts experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Such shortfalls have accentuated the need to effectively measure and monitor sustainability performance moving into the future as destinations now begin to re-emerge and re-imagine the way they operate. Through the adoption and utilisation of sustainable approaches and practices, the hospitality and hotel industry in Portugal could save costs in the short and longer term, they could benchmark success year on year and ultimately lead to the development of more sustainable and competitive industries moving forward. This research, while in its early stages, will aim to critically examine what, if any, sustainable and green practices are being adopted and implemented at present by Portuguese hotels. It will also permit an insight into whether or not Portuguese hotels are currently measuring and monitoring sustainability performance and looking to achieve greater levels of sustainability within the industry.

Keywords: sustainable practices, green practices, hospitality industry, Portugal, COVID-19

1. Introduction

Over the last decade, several tourism and hospitality management studies have focused on the need to sustainably develop and manage the industry as a result of continued growth and increasing environmental concern arising from such growth (Legrand *et al.*, 2013; Kasim, 2015; Melissen and Sauer, 2018). As tourism numbers continue to grow, so does the demand for hotels and their facilities, what can create intense pressures on destinations and increases concerns in relation to the overuse and shortage of resources (UNWTO, 2011; Lavanya and Jeyakumar, 2019). This is the case in Portugal where in 2022 are expected over 1500 new 4 and 5 star hotel rooms just in Lisbon (Milheiro, 2022). Therefore, for hotels to minimise any negative impacts while still maintain integrity and ensuring positive customer experiences, it is essential that a sustainable management system is adopted and implemented (Kasim, 2015; Alameeri *et al.*, 2018). Through an effective sustainable management system with clear sustainable management practices, hotels can not only minimise the potential for overuse and negative implications but they can also maximise cost saving and greater support for services (Bader, 2005; GSTC, 2016), ultimately creating a competitive advantage in host destinations.

2. Literature review

The hospitality industry, which has been known as one of the largest and fastest expanding business (Kilkenny, 2011; de Grosbois, 2012; UNWTO, 2018), has been noted to create many positive outcomes for destinations in terms of income generation and employment creation (Nunkoo and Gursoy, 2019). Growth in the industry through tourism has also been noted to generate a demand for local food and crafts and new facilities developed for tourism purposes can also benefit local people (Saarinen, 2009). In Portugal, the hospitality industry was said to be worth €901m in 2019 (Horwath HTL, 2019), however, revenues fell to less than a third in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (Statista, 2021). The outlook for the industry is looking up once again with revenue in the hotel sector projected to reach annually growth of 12.72% until 2026, when hotel guests are expected to amount to 3.9m (Statista, 2021). This may, however, present a challenge for the industry in relation to how best to manage such growth in the future.

A number of scholars (Clarke, 1997; de Grosbois, 2012; Gardetti and Torres, 2016; Lim, 2016) have mentioned that although the hospitality industry remains customer-focused and attentive to contemporary trends and political challenges, it does fall behind in the adoption and promotion of sustainable practices. Archer, Cooper and Ruhanen (2005) and later Gardetti and Torres (2016) discussed how continued growth in the hospitality industry is capable of leading to a loss of regional identity and authenticity, greater inflation and increased economic leakages and overcrowding leading to environmental damage, litter generation and pollution. However, sustainable practices have been identified as positive contributions to the tourism and hospitality industry given their ability to enhance positive outcomes for the hotel itself while at the same time reduce, mitigate and manage negative effects (Sakshi *et al.*, 2020). Sakshi *et al.* (2020) recognised that hotels and business should aspire to reach effective standards of sustainability across the economic, socio-cultural and environmental resource base, given that sustainability hinges on the integrated planning and management of these three interdependent systems (World Economic Forum, 2019). Research has shown that hotels have begun to adopt sustainable practices in an effort to manage impacts, however, concerns have been raised about the effectiveness of such practices are in achieving sustainability or improving sustainability performance within the hotel sector (Legrand *et al.*, 2013; Gardetti and Torres, 2016; Raga, 2018). In light of such impacts, it will be necessary to determine if hotels in Portugal are implementing sustainable practices to manage the impacts they so often create.

Portugal is aspiring to become one of the most sustainable, competitive, and safe, destinations in the world, through economic, social, and environmental development across the country (Turismo de Portugal, 2017). In Portugal, tourism is a crucial economic activity, with revenues growing yearly and 2019 was the year with the highest number ever registered (Turismo de Portugal, 2021a). To sustain such growth moving into the future while managing the destinations social, economic, and environmental development will require effective sustainable measures and approaches to be adopted and implemented by policymakers, tourism officers and hospitality and hotel managers. It is these tourism stakeholders that have a fundamental role in preparing for a responsible and sustainable recovery of the industry. Actionable plans, policies and guidelines are needed to encourage the adoption of sustainable practices and standards in the industry and to transition the industry towards greater sustainability levels (Maguire, 2020). Through Agenda 2030 and the goals of sustainable development as well as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the European Green Deal (Turismo de Portugal, 2021b), destinations including Portugal have been attempting to develop strategies and plans to achieve the goals of sustainability and manage potential impacts. However, the uptake and adherence to such plans by the hospitality sector in Portugal is at present, unknown (Jesus and Franco, 2016). As such, it will need to be examined in order to determine the commitment and support for such standards within the industry to strengthen its efforts in making tourism and hospitality effectively more sustainable for future generations.

3. Methodology

As such, this research sets out to examine if hotels in Portugal are adopting and implementing sustainable practices and measuring and monitoring their sustainability performance. For the purpose of taking this research forward, a mixed methods approach to research will be adopted. Creswell and Creswell (2018) noted that using both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study is preferable to examine complex research questions. A quantitative content analysis of the sustainable practices of hotels will form the first stage of data analysis. This will then be supported through the development of strategic open ended questions which will be used to conduct qualitative in-depth interviews with a representative sample of hotel managers in Portugal.

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Co-Creation of Experiences at Dark Tourism Festivals

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Abstract: This work-in-progress paper presents a novel area of thanatourism research, dark tourism festivals. These alternative festivals are located at the lighter end of the thanatourism spectrum, focusing on fun, culture and entertainment. This paper focuses in particular on the co-creation of festival experience at dark tourism festivals. Preliminary findings are presented, predominantly based on data gathered at the Whitby Goth Weekend, which will later be supplemented by research at other dark tourism festivals. Preliminary findings indicate that aspects such as emotional involvement, authenticity, performance and embodiment are important elements during the co-creation process. Embodied performances during which participants engage in creative practices, such as dressing up in elaborate costumes whilst having their photographs taken, enable them to escape from the routines of their day-to-day lives. Initial findings also indicate links between the festival experience and the concept of liminality. Also, participants engage in meaningful social bonds and essentially take ownership of the festival experience. Whilst engaging in these activities, participants become part of the co-creation of a performance. Festival spaces are specifically managed to enable co-creation, whereby festival participants form part of a sharing economy and actively co-create the festival experience together with the organisers, who enable this process by providing a safe and inclusive festival space.

Keywords: dark tourism, festivals, co-creation of experience, liminality, performance, sharing economy

1. An introduction to the study of dark tourism festivals

This research project develops new academic theory in relation to the subject area that is “dark tourism festivals”. The term dark tourism, also known as “thanatourism”, is used to describe touristic activities at sites that are associated with death, disaster and tragedy (Foley and Lennon, 1996; Seaton, 1996). Yet dark tourism activities can also involve visiting sites that have macabre elements or that involve thrill- and fright-seeking activities (Bristow and Keenan, 2018; Mionel, 2020). In academic theory, dark tourism sites and activities can be plotted along a dark tourism continuum, ranging from “darkest” to “lightest” (Stone, 2006). This area of research, dark tourism festivals, is located at the lighter end of this spectrum, as these festivals are usually not very death- or tragedy-oriented. Instead, dark tourism festivals focus on the macabre and fright aspects, aiming to provide fun experiences in the culture and entertainment industry.

This work-in-progress paper examines how the co-creation of experiences is achieved at dark tourism festivals. Co-creation is achieved through participation in memorable experiences, which enables people to “live”, their creative potential (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Tan, Kung and Luh, 2013; Campos *et al.*, 2018). When tourists, or festival participants, are encouraged to participate rather than look, meaningful and personal experiences are created (Gretzel, Fesenmaier and O’Leary., 2006; Campos *et al.*, 2018). As part of this overall research project, two case study festivals are being examined: the Bram Stoker Festival in Dublin and the Whitby Goth Weekend in the UK. Both festivals are relatively new events, with the Whitby Goth Weekend established in the mid-nineties and the Bram Stoker Festival first held in 2012. Figure 1 presents an overview of the main type of visitor for each festival. These visitors can also be viewed as “actors” who are involved in the co-creation of festival experience (Morgan, 2007). Participants at the Whitby Goth Weekend celebrate Gothic culture and dress up in elaborate costumes. Photography is also an important element of the festival experience (see Figure 2). In contrast, the Bram Stoker Festival was set up to elevate links between Dublin-born “Dracula” author Bram Stoker and the city of Dublin. At this festival participants enjoy family-friendly spooky encounters and literature events.

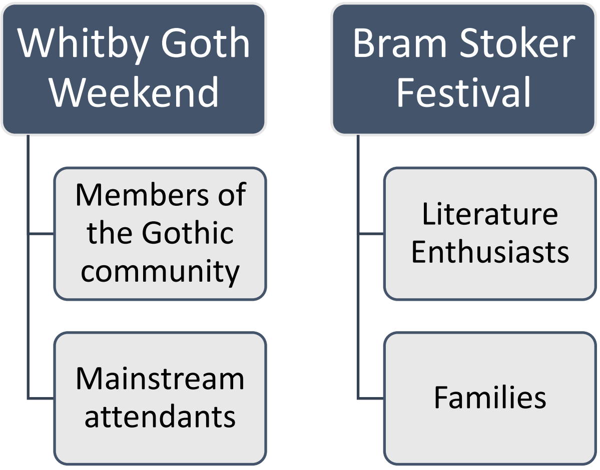

Figure 1: Main types of visitors at the Whitby Goth Weekend compared with Bram Stoker Festival visitors

2. Research methodology

The researcher applies two main methodological tools: firstly participant observation drawing on ethnographic principles, and secondly semi-structured interviews with management (Remenyi, 2013). Thus far the researcher has had the opportunity to engage in participant observation at the Whitby Goth Weekend in October 2021 (see photo in Figure 2), where members of the festival management team, participants as well as locals were interviewed. At the time of writing this paper, further field work at this festival is planned for April 2022.

Figure 2: Participants at the October 2021 Whitby Goth Weekend taking part in performance and co-creation

Future data collection will need to be balanced out and supplemented, therefore research at the Bram Stoker Festival is scheduled for October 2022. Additional visits to dark tourism festivals in Ireland such as the Derry Halloween Festival and the Púca Festival in County Meath are also planned. This data will further be enriched by conducting additional interviews with policy makers and government agencies that are involved in dark tourism festival management, organisation and promotion.

3. Preliminary findings – experience, emotional involvement and liminality

Experiences have the ability to touch human beings in powerful ways and this is particularly relevant in a tourism context: "especially during free time people express their quest for ever more unique experiences reflecting their own personal stories" (Binkhorst and Dekker, 2009, p. 311). This has also been observed at the Whitby Goth Weekend, where participants frequently commented on the importance of "feel" and ambiance at the festival. It was also found that emotional involvement is crucial: the creation of memorable experiences, as well as the meeting of friends are often-cited examples by participants.

As outlined previously, festival participants at the Whitby Goth Weekend dress up in elaborate costumes. They change character and experience a personal transformation for a limited amount of time, entering a zone of liminality. The concept of liminality describes a "transitory and betwixt space (…) where people detach themselves from social norms and their everyday self" (Wu *et al.*, 2020, p. 1). Yet research in relation to liminality at festivals in particular is limited, even though attendance at festivals clearly represents an escapism or "anti-structure" experience for most, as can also be seen in Figure 2 (Jaimangal-Jones, Pritchard and Morgan, 2010; Wu *et al.*, 2020). Preliminary findings at the Whitby Goth Weekend indicate that the holistic experience of a festival visit provides entry into so-called "in-between spaces" (Andrews and Roberts, 2012). Further research at other dark tourism festivals is required to establish whether the concept of liminality can be applied in other dark tourism festival contexts too.

4. Preliminary findings – embodied performances, inclusive spaces and the co-creation of experiences

The festival experience, the emotional involvement of participants and experiencing liminal spaces form the basis of another process: the co-creation of dark tourism experiences. Participants at the Whitby Goth Weekend "own" the experience, with authenticity cited as a crucial factor by festival management. It has been shown that "authenticity is a core feature of the sharing and experience economies" (Paulauskaite *et al.*, 2017, p. 2). Additional factors such as "social interaction, novelty, creativity, enjoyment and the creation of memorable experiences" have also been cited as crucial elements of co-creation processes (Rachão *et al.*, 2020, p. 1050).

Participants take ownership of the festival experience by engaging in creative practices (Tan, Kung and Luh, 2013) such as dressing up in elaborate costumes and posing for photographs in staged environments. This co-creation takes place in different contexts of culture, art and the macabre, where spaces are specifically managed to enable co-creation. Organisers actively manage festival co-creation by providing participants with creative spaces (Morgan, 2007). Whitby Abbey and its surrounding graveyard for example serve as a backdrop that encourages the positioning of gothic "actors". This is a process that encourages photography and performance. To create a truly distinctive festival experience, participants need to be given the opportunity to immerse themselves in these creative processes (Morgan, 2007).Through the use of creativity, costumes and photography the participants experience the festival – yet, at the same time, they also partake in a performance. This process is aptly explained in earlier festival studies, where festival participants "become living signs of themselves" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1984, p. 18). These types of performances are also a form of "embodiment", a concept which is central to experience in tourism (McEvoy, 2014). At Whitby, additional creative performance elements are encouraged in other festival spaces: in the town's most atmospheric locations, at the festival music venues and in retail spaces. Hospitality spaces in particular also enable shared experiences among participants.

Initial research indicates that dark tourism festival participants become part of a sharing economy, actively co-creating the festival experience, together with the organisers. The Whitby Goth Weekend has been cited by organisers, locals and participants as a very inclusive space, welcoming participants from various backgrounds. Festival managers actively encourage participation from a wide range of actors, providing a safe space for participants from different "walks of life". The participants are provided with a secure space in which they can overturn the routines of their day-to-day lives and engage in meaningful social bonds. During this process, they essentially take ownership of the festival experience and initiate a co-creation process that is all the while supported by the organisers, who act as "facilitators" of this sharing economy.

5. Conclusion - co-creation factors at the two case study festivals

At this early stage in the research, initial findings are provided below in Table 1, providing an overview of possible influencing factors that affect the co-creation process at the two case study festivals.

Table 1: Comparison of co-creation influences at the Whitby Goth Weekend and the Bram Stoker Festival

Co-creation influences	Whitby Goth Weekend	Bram Stoker Festival
Festival origins	1994 - "grass-roots" led, set up as a meeting of Goth pen-friends; continues to be a "meeting of friends"	2012, set up by Dublin City Council to establish awareness of Bram Stoker-Dublin connection
Physical locations	Whitby atmospheric town sites, facilitating photographic opportunities	Dublin city sites, facilitating a multitude of festival activities
Local awareness	High-level	Low-level
Organisational structure	Multi-layered; demand-driven	Top-down approach; supply-led

Co-creation influences	Whitby Goth Weekend	Bram Stoker Festival
Performance and embodiment	Participants are performers	Participants mainly observe performers
Virtual environments	Blogs and Facebook groups mainly led by fans and festival participants	Social media appearance led by professional marketing agency

6. Further research opportunities

This work-in-progress paper has gathered initial insights into the area of co-creation of experiences within a dark tourism festival context. Elements such as emotional involvement, embodied performances, providing inclusive spaces and the experience of liminal spaces have been found to affect the co-creation process. Further research is required to examine the more specific elements that enable co-creation at dark tourism festivals. Usual festival activities have been curtailed due to the ongoing effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, and many dark tourism festivals have not taken place for two years. Therefore, future research will focus on conducting field work at other dark tourism festivals, such as the Bram Stoker Festival in Dublin, the Derry Halloween Festival and the Púca Festival in County Meath. Additional interviews with professionals in the festival industry will also be conducted and interviews with policy makers as well as members of tourism management organisations are currently scheduled. During future field work at various dark tourism festivals, the researcher will engage in participant observation and interviews with locals and festival participants will be conducted.

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Implications of the New Balearic Islands Circularity Law for Tourism Practice and Research

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Abstract: In February 2022 the Balearic Islands government approved a new law to introduce Circular Economy (CE) principles into the Tourism Industry (Decree Law 3/2022, of Urgent Measures for the Sustainability and Circularity of Tourism in the Balearic Islands, Mallorca Daily Bulletin, 2022a) including fines for non-compliance. As a result, the Balearic Islands could be considered as the world's first circular tourist destination. This paper thus explores the preparedness of the Tourism Industry in the Balearics to implement the circular principles, with planned interviews of a sample of tourism businesses. The paper includes a review of the new CE principles and discusses the implications of them for the tourism industry and potential impact on tourism from a Triple-Bottom-Line perspective i.e. impact on social, environmental and economic criteria.

Keywords: sustainable tourism, circular economy, new Balearic Tourism Law

1. Background

The Balearic Islands is a popular tourist destination and known for its innovative practices related to tourism (Batle et al., 2018). Indeed, this prior research investigated various Social Innovation (SI) features (partnerships, synergies, circular processes, systemic approach) in order to consider SI policy and practice from a holistic approach. Concern had been raised in the media and government as to the impact of 'massification' on the Balearic Islands including environmental degradation and general decline in the quality of tourism assets (Moon, 2018). Various measures were thus introduced by the Balearic Islands government to improve the stock of tourism accommodations, including a greater range of establishments, higher frequency of environmental audits and certifications, and upskilling of the tourism labour force. More recently, the impact of Covid on the tourism industry resulted in a massive decline in vacations booked (80% decline in tourists cited by Miternique, 2021) but with some improvements to the environment (Rume and Islam, 2020). Looking beyond Covid, locals have apparently been calling for a move away from 'balearización' and for more sustainable approaches (Smith, 2020). This sets the background to the introduction of the new Balearic Islands law on circularity. The first of a number of planned seminars to explain the new law to tourism businesses was convened in Arenal on February 17th 2022 (Mallorca Daily Bulletin, 2022b) see Figure 1. This seminar highlighted the new law as addressing the quality of tourism service and also the quality of work and working conditions.

Figure 1: Meeting at Arenal to explain the new 'circularity' law

2. The new 'circularity' law

The new law governs sustainability and circularity (Goodwin, 2022) and builds on prior measures to reduce plastic waste and food waste, and to reduce energy and water consumption, and applies to all companies, tourist establishments, hotel accommodations, tourist apartments and rural tourism. The new law goes further though and includes measures to temporarily stop new building in Mallorca, Ibiza, Formentera and Menorca until 2026, steps to decarbonise energy systems, and improve health and safety by installing automatic beds to reduce back strain (Muiña and de Santamaría García, 2022). It seems that the legislation has been a wake-up call to the tourism industry which now has to comply with specific practical measures to avoid fines. Table 1. outlines the key principles and actions required.

Table 1: The new Balearic circularity laws in summary (source, the Authors)

Principle	Actions	Implications
Circular planning	Must draw up 'circularity plans' for up to five years. Tourist accommodations with minimum categories of four stars or four keys must prepare the first circularity plan before May 1, 2023. the rest of the tourist accommodations subject to this Decree Law, before January 1, 2024.	Plans must include the necessary activities, investments, actions and protocols to achieve the objectives set out in the circularity plan and its timescale, and resources necessary to achieve the proposed objectives.
	Hotel establishments and tourist apartments must eliminate thermal installations that work with fuel oil or gas oil. They must replace them with alternative energy sources that reduce environmental impact, unless a duly technical impossibility is accredited. The deadline for this implementation is May 1, 2026.	
	Hotel establishments and tourist apartments must have double pushbuttons or pushbuttons with interruption of flushing in toilet cisterns and water-saving devices in the taps of sinks, bathtubs and showers.	
	Hotels - whether city hotels, rural hotels or aparthotels - and other establishments that have voluntarily obtained a star rating are required to ensure that all beds in the establishment (except extra beds) are mechanically or electronically elevatable.	Failure to comply with the deadlines imposed for introducing elevatable beds will be sanctioned with a fine of 500 euros for each elevating bed not installed on time.
Circular evaluation	The plans will be valid for a maximum of five years and must therefore be renewed periodically. It will be considered as illegal to advertise a tourist activity without having presented 'the responsible declaration of initiation of activity'.	Any establishment intending to market or advertise tourist establishments around the concept of circular business (which applies circular economy strategies, or similar), will have to obtain a certification issued by duly accredited entities to grant it.
	The signs of quality, maximum capacity and any other information referring to the exercise of the activity must be installed in the main access (in a place of easy visibility), in	The plans as well as their modifications, revisions and / or renewals, must be reflected in a document in physical or electronic format that must be available for inspection by the tourist

Principle	Actions	Implications
	accordance with the corresponding regulations	administration and the legal representatives of the workers.
	To qualify for a new category of wellness hotel the establishment must be 4 stars and have up to 50% of the surface area dedicated for wellness and beauty services.	

Positive feedback has already come from Trades Unions (Mallorca Daily Bulletin, 2022b) with the general secretary of the CCOO union's service federation, Silvia Montejano, stating "a great achievement". "We have to extend the months of work and to eliminate tourism seasonality. But this has to be done by taking the occupational health of workers into account and by relieving workloads." And, José García representing UGT, referring to the law's requirement for elevatable beds and to the benefit this will have for workers: "This…tourism law…takes into account the reality of workers in the sector." Concern over the new law has already been raised (Mallorca Daily Bulletin, 2022c) with the government opposition party leader, Partido Popular, Antoni Costa stating that whilst the PP support reform of tourism legislation and circularity in the tourism system "…We do not agree with impositions or prohibitions". There have also been some positive and negative blog comments from members of the public (see Table 2). What is now needed is a more thorough analysis of the proposed changes and their likely impact.

Table 2: Blog comments, collated by the authors from Mallorca Daily Bulletin, 2022d) blogs

Positive Blogs	Negative Blogs
I agree…QUALITY OVER QUANTITY.	This legislation is without doubt using a sledgehammer to crack a nut.
It actually makes sense. Mallorca is getting too full.	It appears to me that this legislation is merely an attempt to keep Mallorca in high demand, while maintaining or elevating the quality of offerings.
Well done, Govern! PROTECT THE ISLANDS.	I do not understand how this would make the quality or the sustainability better for the islands. New (renovated) hotels and new (renovated) private holiday lettings has a better quality and sustainability than the old ones.
Notwithstanding the pandemic, tourism is Mallorca has traditionally been approaching maximum sustainable levels. Add to that the handful of down market areas where high season crime, injury, and death rates were soaring, while attracting the cheapest of the cheap, and I think it's clear that changes needed to be made.	Target and question the old licenses instead. That must be the way to make a change in the right direction.

3. This study

We plan to interview a sample of tourism businesses to evaluate the preparedness of the establishments for implementing the new laws. Based on prior research by Batle et al., (2018) an opportunity sample of a variety of tourism businesses will be used as a foundation for grounded research allowing the personal views of business owners or managers to be surfaced using non-directive qualitative methodology. The research will ideally be conducted in the Mallorcan language, and or Spanish, to develop relationships with the interviewees based on mutual trust and understanding. The responses will then be translated into English for analysis and broader dissemination. The proposed research questions (RQs) are provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Research questions proposed for the interviews on circularity preparedness.

Proposed target businesses	Interview questions	Format for sample responses
Major hotel 4*, 3*, minor hotel 2*, 1*; other type of establishment e.g. tourist apartment, rural establishment, other.	Familiarity with the new circularity laws.	Present a written summary of the new laws and ask each interviewee to complete a Rating scale.
	Practical changes already introduced.	Interviewee to state in open-ended format.
	Practical changes planned.	Interviewee to state in open-ended format, prompt if necessary.
	Changes to policy.	Open-ended response.

Proposed target businesses	Interview questions	Format for sample responses
	Changes to personnel/training and development	Open-ended response but prompt, if necessary, from a list.
	Feedback on potential fines.	Open-ended response.
	Steps taken to change culture and or decision -making processes.	Open-ended response but can prompt based on 7 factor model (Moon and Bonny).
	Actual and Anticipated costs of changes.	Forced response with bandings but ask for explanation.
	Actual and anticipated benefits of changes.	Open-ended response.
	Name of certification agency to accredit circular actions.	Identified – add name. Or, not identified.
	Suggested improvements to legislation and its implementation.	Open-ended response. Plus, ask for feedback on the process of introducing the new law, and any other concerns raised.

4. Prospective areas for discussion

Tourism establishments have to continually balance the economic costs of business as usual (BAU) with the need to invest capital in innovation (Moon, 2020). With concern over climate change, businesses were initially asked to voluntarily reduce carbon emissions through various trade bodies such as WTO and various national and regional various national and regional governmental advisory reports. Now, mandatory measures are being introduced to ensure compliance with ever more stringent sustainability goals and targets. It is as though the damaging effects of Covid on the tourism industry have highlighted the vulnerability of the industry to sharp and unpredicted downturns and placed an increasingly urgent desire on governmental agencies to try and protect or future proof the industry from further damage. This may not be possible. However, the desire to recover from losses and the increasing urgency of tackling climate change have provided an opportunity to innovate and this has spurred governmental agencies to strike whilst 'the iron is hot'. Wanting to recover from Covid, tourism establishments are desperate to re-establish reputations with tourists and tourism promotion bodies in order increase bookings and concomitant revenue. Adopting 'circular economy' principles is not a panacea but does provide an innovative opportunity to promote current and planned sustainability practices. The extent to which the practices of tourism businesses are adopted as leading edge or lagging behind though needs to be tested. Tourism establishments will want to secure positive promotions for their plans and avoid negative publicity for any potential or actual infractions. This research will provide initial feedback from a sample of tourism establishments on their preliminary views of the new legislation, their existing and proposed plans for compliance, and whether this compliance is stifling or encouraging innovation. We look forward to receiving feedback from ICTR 2022 on the draft design of the study and RQs.

This research explores whether tourism establishments faced with a new 'circularity law' have responded in different ways to the requirements of the legislation. The results will be limited to the sample provided but will serve as implications for the tourism industry as a whole. The social and environmental benefits of implementing the new legislation will be reviewed from the perspectives of the sample of tourism establishments along with estimated economic costs. Any resulting balance of sustainable innovation with economic cost can be difficult to reconcile. 'Hard approaches' to legislative compliance need to be balanced with 'softer calls' for commitment to the required changes. This is likely to stimulate a need for training and development of industry professionals, governmental agencies and NGO's. There is likely to be an increase in compliance professionals needed to inspect premises but also a need to provide consultancy services to provide recommendations and guidance. This will include engineering services for technical assistance but also HR and allied services for implementing processes e.g. employee engagement. Further research will be needed on a broader sample to identify progress in achieving climate change targets as a priority but also the effects on the tourism industry in the short to medium term so that the new legislation and its implementation can be fine-tuned.

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Towards the Development of an Innovative Sustainable Sports Tourism Management Framework for Portugal

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Abstract: Sport tourism assumes an increasingly important role in the world tourism panorama, being seen by several nations as a strategic catalyst for the individual and collective emancipation of territories and their communities. The growing synergy between sports and the tourism sector and its potential as a strategic tourism product for the sustainable development of destinations has long been acknowledged; so much so that it has given rise to the positioning of a highly competitive and complex sector, transcending far beyond the organization of sporting events. In Portugal, Sports Tourism has experienced profound growth over the last decade, now estimated to be worth between 10% and 25% of total international travel and tourism revenues (PwC, 2021). While sports tourism presents valuable opportunities for further destination development and growth driving many positive outcomes in local economies, it can also be viewed as an important factor for the promotion and international recognition of these same territories. As a result, Destination Management Organizations (DMO) and other key stakeholder have begun to place an increased focus on the use of sports to promote and improve Portugal's positioning as a sports tourism destination. This research, while in its early stages, recognises a current gap in knowledge in relation to the development of existing frameworks or strategies implemented and applied by DMO's or policy makers within destinations to effectively develop and manage a sustainable and competitive sport tourism offering. However, in light of the challenges faced by destinations during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is a necessity that destinations look to develop and plan for sports tourism in a sustainable manner. This research therefore sets forth to contribute to new knowledge in relation to the development of an innovative Sustainable Sports Tourism Management Framework for Portugal with the aim to propose a new comprehensive conceptual framework for the effective sustainable development and management of sports tourism in Portugal.

Keywords: sports tourism, sustainable tourism development, management framework, Destination Management Organization (DMO), Portugal

1. Introduction and problem definition

The growing popularity of physical exercise, whether in the form of leisure or competition sports has contributed to a growing diversification and development of the tourism industry (Hsieh et al., 2021). Sport tourism is today a multifaceted and complex sector (Bouchet & Sobry, 2019), currently positioning itself as one of the segments with the highest growth rate in the tourism industry (Hritz & Ross, 2010). This growing importance in the world tourism scene has led several nations to view this type of tourism product as a low-cost and highly visible resource for the development and promotion of their territories and cultures (Gammon & Robison, 2003; Herebold, 2020). In fact, the widespread recognition of the opportunities that sports tourism can bring to the improvement of the positioning of tourism destinations has led to the emergence of fierce competition between destinations (Haap, 2021). As a result, DMO's and other key stakeholders have begun to place focus on the use of sports and in particular, high performance sports to promote and improve Portugal's positioning as a sports tourism destination (Sports Foundation & Training Partners, 2018). In light of the need to strategically enhance and improve the sports tourism offering at national, regional and local level, some destinations in Portugal have seen an increase in the investments that has been awarded to create high quality professional sport facilities with high-end equipment and services to better support sports tourism activity (Sports Foundation & Training Partners, 2018). However, studies conducted to evaluate its internationalization potential identified gaps at various levels, highlighting the management dimension as one of its main weaknesses (Sports Foundation & Training Partners, 2018). With this background, this research is built upon three interdependent variables related to sports tourism: *tourism*, *sport* and *stakeholders relationship*, focusing in the analysis of the management frameworks applied by the DMO's in Portugal with the aim to identify critical issues and combine findings to the development of an innovative Sustainable Sports Tourism Management Framework for Portugal.

2. Competitiveness in sports tourism destinations

Given the great breadth and complexity associated with the field of sports tourism, it is essential to delineate appropriate strategies for the establishment of sustainable tourism development (Weed, 2006; Hinch & Higham, 2011). Thus, the combination of the principles that define the competitiveness of a sports tourism destination with the concept of sustainable development is now recognized as one of the main challenges for the DMO's worldwide (Herebold, 2020; Haap, 2021). Unlike in other industries, tourism destination competitiveness do not refer to a single well-defined product or service but to an overall experience (Haap, 2021). According to Crouch (2011) this competitiveness is produced by a variety of destination stakeholders, who contribute to the visitor experience, including tourism enterprises, other supporting industries, DMO's, the public sector and residents. On the other hand, the current COVID-19 pandemic and the related social and physical distancing have disrupted many aspects of the dinamic of sports tourism (Herbold, 2020). These new constraints caused by this global pandemic have revealed the sensitivity of various sports tourism destinations in the face of new scenarios of immense transformation, proving to jeopardize key stakeholders in the sector (Herbold, 2020), therefore, urging the need to develop new studies and frameworks adjusted to the new necessities and trends of the sector (Haap, 2021).

3. High performance sports tourism in Portugal

Research into the broader role of high performance sports tourism in destination development strategies is still very limited (Turco et al., 2010; Heuwinkel & Bressan, 2016). High performance sports can be defined as the practices developed by athletes, seeking to achieve the best performance levels, with the aim to obtain good results individually or collectively (Böhlke & Robinson, 2009). This typology of sporting activity becomes understood as a tourism phenomenon when athletes and their entourages seek training destinations and/or to participate in sporting competitions outside their usual place of residence (Heuwinkel & Bressan, 2016). The specific needs of elite athletes differ from the needs of sports spectators and other people who travel to places to experience a sport (Vasconcelos et al., 2017). In high performance sport tourism there is a major concern of sports organizations, managers, support staff, funding agencies and sports officials with the experience of elite athletes in training venues, namely, High Performance Sports Centres (HPSC) (Green & Oakley, 2001), but also with places of leisure, rest and pressure relief, as important elements for the preparation of future competitive performance (Heuwinkel & Bressan, 2016). Portugal has 14 classified HPSC, with various sports disciplines, developed with the main objective of improving its national sports system and consequently enhancing the sporting results of Portuguese athletes in international competitions (Sports Foundation & Training Partners, 2018). However, the lack of economic sustainability associated with the management of these infrastructures led to the delineation of new strategies with the aim to increase the profitability of the HPSC (Sports Foundation & Training Partners, 2018). It is in this context that, in recent years, high performance sports tourism has emerged as a strategic market segment for the development of a number of regions in Portugal and as a possible solution to securing the economic sustainability of destinations (Carvalho et al., 2017). However, there is currently a profound heterogeneity presented regarding the maturation states and disparity between the individual management frameworks in the HPSC network of Portugal, that being currently assumed as one of the main difficulties in achieving long-term sustainability and consequently internationally competitiveness (Sports Foundation & Training Partners, 2018).

In this sense, given the search for sustainable sports tourism development phenomena in Portugal (Baganha, 2012; Sports Foundation, 2018), there are a set of dimensions identified at the level of strategic management of the sector that must be improved in order to sustain and develop the competitive potential of Portugal's offerings in the high-performance sports tourism sector. Thus, there is a need to improve the infrastructures to support high performance sports tourism, to homogenize the socio-economic framework of HPSC's in Portugal and to create and standardize formal structures for technical coordination and management of the high performance sports centres (Bahanha, 2021; Sports Foundation, 2018). The strategic focus on these dimensions is assumed to be fundamental to overcome the low profitability and occupancy rates currently evident in HPSC's in Portugal, as well as to guarantee the collection of alternative revenues, from other sources, that exceed the financial values granted by the Public Administration and by the Local Administration (Baganha, 2012).

The knowledge present in the literature highlights the complexity associated with the development of sports tourism and, in particular, high-performance sports tourism in Portugal and the need to develop management frameworks with focus on the competitiveness and sustainability of destinations. Therefore, this research aims to critically evaluate the management frameworks currently applied by the HPSC in Portugal with the aim to propose a new comprehensive conceptual framework for the effective sustainable development and management of high performance sports tourism in Portugal.

4. Methodology

Given the great complexity associated with the sports tourism sector, this research will use a Mixed Methods methodological approach, with the adoption of an explanatory sequential design, through the implementation of a quantitative content analysis of plans policy documents and guidelines, identification and evaluation of strategic management measures implemented in the HPSC's of Portugal, of the which will then be supported through qualitative in depth interviews with entities connected with the management and offerings of the HPSC's, such as DMO'S, HPSC's management departments, sports federations, sports clubs, sports tourism travel agencies and other related tourism companies. The choice of this methodological approach aims, by the interaction between quantitative and qualitative methods, to obtain deeper insights into the research problems and to provide better understanding to the complex social issues associated to the tourism sector (Truong et al., 2019).

5. Conclusion

In recent decades, Portugal has invested significantly in the development of HPSC's. However, the inability of these organizations to achieve financial sustainability led to the delineation of strategies with the aim to increase their profitability, through the development of offerings aimed for international high-performance sports markets. Thus, given the gaps identified in the implementation and applicability of management frameworks in the national HPSC, this investigation will set forth to contribute to new knowledge in relation to the development of an innovative and comprehensive Sustainable High Performance Sports Tourism Management Framework for Portugal.

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Late Submission

‘Different Strokes for Different Folks’: Segmenting Drag Cabaret Audiences in South Africa

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Abstract: In a competitive post-modern society, traditional theatre genres (e.g. satire, dance, drama, ballet, opera, classical music concerts and West End/Broadway hits) battle to attract audiences. This is especially the case considering the myriad of more popular entertainment- and leisure activities these offerings compete with. One such activity appears to be that of drag cabarets; which only became an accepted part of mainstream arts and culture during the last decade. Considering the nascent nature of drag cabarets, it is probable that its appeal among audiences has been empirically overlooked by researchers. To investigate the appeal of this increasingly popular leisure activity, a web-based electronic survey was completed by 670 drag cabaret audience members in three South African cities, namely Cape Town, Johannesburg and Pretoria. This study aimed to plug the gap in existing literature through sharing insights on the dynamics of human and social behaviour in a post-modern society through determining the motives of attending drag cabarets. Moreover, drag cabaret audience members were segmented through ‘benefit segmentation’ by applying a hierarchical cluster-analysis using Ward’s procedure with Euclidean distances. The findings revealed four distinct audience clusters, namely *the avid drag fan, the comedy enthusiast, the brotherhood tribe* and *the sisterhood tribe*. The identified audience clusters differed partially on some demographical- and consumption behavioural variables, but mostly on motivational factors. Moreover, this study found that drag cabaret audience members should not be regarded as homogeneous. To sustain interest in this developing leisure activity, recommendations were made on how to attract the right audience members, with the right message to ensure that products and services are specifically designed for and/or promoted to these audience members while meeting their particular needs.

Keywords: audience; cabaret; drag; entertainment; leisure behaviour; market segmentation

1. Introduction

Theatre, in dramatic arts, relates to art in the form of live performances where actions are deliberately planned to stage a show or performance (Chaillet, 2002). The word ‘theatre’ derives from the Greek word ‘theaomai’, meaning ‘to see’ and typically refers to a configuration in which performers tell stories through putting on a show for an audience (Ali, 2016). In turn, Hill, O’Sullivan and O’Sullivan (2012) state “the audience is an integral part of an artistic experience. Only when the public experiences what the artist wishes to communicate is the creative process complete”. In a competitive post-modern society, however, traditional theatre genres *inter alia* satire, plays, orchestras, contemporary ballet and dance, opera, and musicals, seemingly battle to attract audiences as a result of a myriad of more popular entertainment- and leisure activities on offer (Passebois & Aurier, 2004). One such activity appears to be that of cabarets in the form of drag performances – i.e. drag cabaret (Brennan & Gudelunas, 2017).

Drag cabarets have however only become an accepted part of mainstream arts and culture during the last decade, arguably due to the influence of RuPaul Andre Charles, the most respected and well-known drag artist in the world (Roschke, 2019). RuPaul is widely recognised for revolutionising the portrayal of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning and Others (LGBTQ+) community, largely due to the award-winning *RuPaul’s Drag Race* television show which has close to 1.3 million viewers for each episode (Morris, 2021). The United States reality television program, in which performers compete for the title *America’s Next Drag Superstar*, is described as a show-business phenomenon that educates many people otherwise unfamiliar with aspects of the LGBTQ+ culture (Rimalower, 2015).

Despite the popular cultural manifestations of drag in the media, along with drag cabarets’ growth in popularity, the appeal of these performances among audiences has been empirically neglected. The latter may be attributable to the perceived “demographic homogeneity of arts audiences”, since performing arts venues generally “tend to see only a single audience for the arts” (Johnson & Garbarino, 2001). From an ontological stance, a skewed perception of homogeneous arts audiences is likely to leave a gap in performing arts, hospitality, and leisure literature and could result in marketers neglecting to incorporate their audiences' needs into their marketing strategies (Scollen, 2008). As such, there appears to be a need for developing a more customised, in-tuned, customer profile to assist entertainment venues to both improve their offerings by catering for the specific needs and preferences of its audiences, as well as "increasing satisfaction with the theatre experience considering the increasingly crowded and competitive marketplace in which theatres operate" (Hattingh, 2018).

Taking into account the limited knowledge of drag cabaret audiences, this study aims to build on the call of Kruger and Saayman (2015a) for further leisure behaviour research on the needs and preferences of niche audiences attending different types of live performances; the purpose of this research is, therefore, to determine the motives for attending drag productions. Further, based on these motives, this research identifies and profiles different market segments through cluster analysis by focusing on live performance audiences at Beefcakes Cabaret Theatres (hereafter referred to as BCTs) in three South African cities, Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Pretoria. Each venue can accommodate over 100 people and tickets cost R300.00 (roughly US$20) per person which includes a meal and a live performance while the audience is described as predominantly young, white, heterosexual, and female (Hattingh, 2021). Many in attendance celebrate birthdays, bachelorette parties, divorce parties, or a 'girl's night out' (Beefcakes, 2021). The waiters working at BCT are hired specifically for their sexual appeal, hence the name Beefcakes. For leisure and entertainment, the venues offer a variety of live performances by South Africa's top drag artists, themed nights, and special events (Beefcakes, 2021).

2. Motivational factors influencing live performance audiences' behaviour

Motivation is considered an important subject in leisure studies and is described distinctly by different authors. Iso-Ahola (1982) argues that the term 'motivation' is regarded as psychological wants, forces, or needs that direct, arouse, and initiate human behaviours and activity. In turn, Moutinho (1987) defines motivation as "a state of need, a condition that exerts a push on the individual towards certain types of action that are seen as likely to bring satisfaction". In layperson's terms, motivation can, therefore, be seen as "the internal, psychological influences affecting individuals' choices" (Middleton, 1994) that act as "triggers that lead somebody to act on a salient, unmet need" (Slater, 2006).

Consumers of the arts may have, for instance, several unmet needs, which they could meet through engaging in leisure activities such as attending a live performance (Kruger & Saayman, 2012). According to Dikmen and Bozdağlar (2013), motivation is not the only psychological force influencing human behaviours, however, it is the main aspect affecting their decision-making processes. The first stage of the decision-making process involves recognising the needs of consumers and is therefore useful in determining an individual's motivated behaviour (Boekstein, 2012). Consequently, entertainment venues ought to recognise and understand the main needs that audiences seek to satisfy through attendance, and to identify the motivational factors that influence their decision-making process (Slater, 2006).

Table 1 shows the limited research that has been conducted on drag cabarets in South Africa. It identifies some common motives and specific market segments identified from a selection of leisure studies that focused mainly on performing arts audiences, particularly live performance audiences. Although certain motives such as entertainment, escape, social interaction, edutainment, personal enrichment (learning), and status seem to overlap in Table 1, the order and importance seem to vary for each study. Indeed, some studies suggest that motives are subject to the type of production or arts performance (Dikmen & Bozdağlar, 2013), attendees' socio-demographic and geographical backgrounds (Kruger & Saayman, 2012), and group composition (De Rooij, 2013), implying that "the motives of audiences at a particular theatre genre (e.g. musical) cannot be applied to audiences at other theatre genres (e.g. comedy)" (Hattingh, 2018).

Table 1: Previous research on motives for attending different types of live performances

Researchers	Type of leisure activity/performance	Motivational factors	Market segments
Caldwell (2001)	Performing arts in general	Enrichment, reduction, communion, distinction (status or ego-enhancement)	N/A
Johnson and Garbarino (2001)	Theatre in general	Leisure (relaxation, entertainment, social goals) and enrichment (including emotional and educational experience)	N/A
Swanson, Davis and Zhao (2008)	Live performances in general	Social interaction, recreation, education, aesthetics, escape, and enhancement of self-esteem	N/A
Kruger and Saayman (2012)	Live music performance	Artist affiliation and unique experience, socialisation and event novelty, fun and group affiliation, enjoyment and entertainment, and nostalgia	Avid fans and recreational attendees
De Rooij (2013)	Performing arts in general	Cultural aesthetics, cultural reduction, cultural stimulation, social duty, social attraction, social distinction, and social bonding	N/A
Saayman and Saayman (2014)	Live orchestral performance	Escape, socialisation, and event attractiveness	The vintage males, the vintage females, and modern enthusiasts
Kruger and Saayman (2015a)	Live music performance	Group affiliation, artist affiliation and entertainment, social interaction, and unique experience	Music lovers and beatle maniacs
Kruger and Saayman (2015b)	Circus performance	Entertainment and fun, social status and socialisation, aesthetics and enchantment, act affiliation and uniqueness	Enthusiasts, novices, and observers
Kruger and Saayman (2017)	Opera performance	Group affiliation and fun, unique experience, entertainment, appraisal, and socialisation	Phantom lite and phantom deluxe
Hattingh and Niekerk (2020)	Live stand-up comedy production	To be entertained by a favourite comedian(s), to enjoy the unique atmosphere, to socialise with friends, family, or colleagues, to relax and have fun, to enjoy comedy (i.e. crying from laughter)	The highbrow socialite, the hero worshipper, the bored and curious, and the culture vulture

3. Methodology

This study was empirical in nature and constituted exploratory research. Moreover, a quantitative research methodology was employed to explain the heterogeneity of drag cabaret audiences. It is suggested that the use of quantitative techniques and multivariate analytic methods could significantly assist with the segmentation process (Eftichiadou, 2001) by categorising data sets into similar behavioural groupings derived mainly through these quantitative techniques (Dolnicar, 2002). As a result, a survey was deemed to be the most appropriate method of primary data collection for this study. The method of survey administration used was a self-administered web-based electronic survey, designed in a program called SurveyPlanet. The survey was administered in English and comprised two sections, namely Section A and Section B. Section A obtained socio-demographic details (age, gender, relationship status, level of education, occupation, sexual identity, and racial classification). Section B obtained audiences' motives to attend drag cabarets by measuring 19 motivational factors on a five-point Likert scale (1 = not at all important, 2 = unimportant, 3 = neither important nor unimportant, 4 = important, 5 = very important). The survey's reliability and validity were enhanced, as the variables were borrowed, and adapted where necessary, from previously validated leisure studies, specifically Swanson et al. (2008), Saayman and Saayman (2014), Kruger and Saayman (2015a, 2015b, 2017), and Hattingh and Niekerk (2020).

This study employed a mixture of non-probability sampling methods, specifically convenience, and snowball sampling. Drag cabaret audiences were invited to participate in the study by distributing the survey hyperlink to customers on the BCT email database who had previously visited the venue, which is considered to be a form of convenience sampling (Malhotra & Birks, 2007) in which respondents themselves select whether they want to take part in the research. Before submitting the electronic survey, the final question asked participants to recommend and forward the hyperlink to other potential participants; thus, the study also implemented snowball sampling. Data were collected over a period of two months (June 2019 to July 2019), when a sample size of 670 drag cabaret audience members was reached and included responses from audiences at all three BCTs (Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Pretoria).

4. Findings and discussion

4.1 Identification of the segmented clusters

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 was used to code, capture and analyse the data from the 670 completed and usable surveys. A 'post hoc' method of segmentation was performed to explain the heterogeneity of drag cabaret audiences and to develop distinct market segments by applying a hierarchical cluster analysis on the scores of the motives for attending drag performances using Ward's procedure with Euclidean distances. With hierarchical clustering, the number of clusters is not defined a priori; instead, clusters are suggested by the data (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). In other words, members were clustered according to their natural similarities. The audiences' motives were used as the main segmentation base for market segmentation without pre-processing the raw data as recommended by Dolnicar (2002) and Hattingh and Spencer (2020). The number of clusters was identified in a heuristic manner by visually analysing the dendrogram (Dolnicar, 2002). Solutions with two, three, four, and five clusters were explored, and a four-cluster solution appeared to provide the most distinctive and acceptable solution, specifically common motives within clusters, yet different motives across clusters (Table 2).

Table 2: The four clusters (n = 670)

Number	Name	Size	% of sample
Cluster 1	*The avid drag fan*	196	29
Cluster 2	*The comedy enthusiast*	200	30
Cluster 3	*The brotherhood tribe*	145	22
Cluster 4	*The sisterhood tribe*	129	19

4.2 Interpretation and profiling of the segmented clusters

To ensure the stability and the quality of the cluster analysis results, several statistical analyses were performed. To determine the most important motives of each cluster, the four clusters were cross-tabulated with the 19 motives, and chi-squared tests revealed statistically significant differences between the importance scores of all motives (p<0.05) (Table 3), thus confirming that the segments were statistically different from one another and that internal validity was present.

Table 3: Cross-tabulation and chi-squared test results of clusters compared with motives

Category	Motive (importance scores)	The avid drag fan % (N = 196)	The comedy enthusiast % (N = 200)	The brotherhood tribe % (N = 145)	The sisterhood tribe % (N = 129)	Chi-square probability
Cultural reduction	To relax and have fun	100	97	90	97	0.000*
	To be entertained by drag artist(s)	95	70	66	78	0.000*
	To escape from my daily routine and responsibilities	61	78	28	64	0.000*
	Curiosity got the better of me	38	21	8	51	0.000*
Cultural stimulation	To explore/learn new things (e.g. broadening my mind)	88	51	12	61	0.000*
	To learn about South African drag culture	92	27	5	40	0.000*
Cultural aesthetics	To enjoy the unique atmosphere	98	90	72	96	0.000*
	Because I enjoy comedy (i.e. crying from laughter)	71	98	49	63	0.000*
	To enjoy the costumes, make-up, sound, and sights associated with drag performances	95	66	45	92	0.000*
	To meet and interact with my favourite drag artist(s)	86	35	5	52	0.000*
Social	For a chance to be with people who enjoy drag					

Category	Motive (importance scores)	The avid drag fan % (N = 196)	The comedy enthusiast % (N = 200)	The brotherhood tribe % (N = 145)	The sisterhood tribe % (N = 129)	Chi-square probability
attraction	shows	94	40	19	68	0.000*
	To meet new people with similar interests	65	21	14	34	0.000*
Social distinction	To tell others that I've seen a live performance by a well-known drag artist(s)	69	13	5	57	0.000*
Social bonding	To socialise with friends, family or colleagues	95	87	79	96	0.000*
	To share the experience with someone special	69	51	39	81	0.000*
	To experience LGBTQ+ community pride	96	48	23	52	0.000*
Social duty	To support drag artists and performances	97	73	42	91	0.000*
	To support my friend, family member or colleague performing on stage (an ally of the LGBTQ+ community)	51	14	8	21	0.000*
	It's a ritual/hobby of interest	45	12	5	17	0.000*

*Significance at the 5% level

To identify the four clusters meaningfully for marketing purposes, and to ensure external validity, or external criterion analysis, the clusters were cross-tabulated with sociodemographic and leisure behaviour characteristics (Table 4). Chi-squared tests revealed no statistically significant differences across the four clusters in terms of occupation ($p = 0.309$); number of times attending drag performances at BCTs (return vs first-time visitor) ($p = 0.109$); travel cohort ($p = 0.194$); and group size ($p = 0.123$). The clusters were, however, significantly different at the 5% level in terms of regularity of performing arts attendance ($p = 0.000$); age ($p = 0.049$); race ($p = 0.017$); sexual identity ($p = 0.002$); gender ($p = 0.036$); and educational level ($p = 0.000$). The relationship status ($p = 0.087$) was significant at the 10% level. These descriptive statistics were used to interpret and profile the clusters by applying *a label to each cluster to reflect the most important motive, sociodemographic, or leisure behavioural characteristics that differentiated each cluster*. This is important for marketing strategy formulation as it provides practical, usable, and readily translatable information for each cluster (Sarigollu & Huang, 2005).

Table 4: Cross-tabulation and chi-squared test results of clusters compared with socio-demographic and leisure behaviour characteristics

Descriptive	**The avid drag fan % (N = 196)**	**The comedy enthusiast % (N = 200)**	**The brotherhood tribe % (N = 145)**	**The sisterhood tribe % (N = 129)**	**Chi-square probability**
Regular performing arts attendance					**0.000***
Yes	61	23	20	19	
No	39	77	80	81	
Age					**0.049***
18–20	4	4	2	7	
21–30	53	46	32	40	
31–40	30	24	41	33	
41–50	19	21	20	15	
50+	3	5	5	5	
Race					**0.017***
Black/mixed	25	12	12	20	
White	71	85	84	76	

Descriptive	The avid drag fan % (N = 196)	The comedy enthusiast % (N = 200)	The brotherhood tribe % (N = 145)	The sisterhood tribe % (N = 129)	Chi-square probability
Indian/Asian	4	3	4	4	
Sexual identity					**0.002***
Straight	55	55	33	68	
Gay	34	36	61	28	
Lesbian	3	2	5	2	
Bisexual	8	7	1	2	
Gender					**0.036***
Male	37	37	58	32	
Female	63	63	42	68	
Education level					**0.000***
No formal education up to secondary completed	18	12	12	21	
Certificate/diploma	56	44	26	51	
Bachelor's degree	18	24	29	17	
Honours degree	5	15	19	7	
Masters or doctorate degree	3	5	14	4	
Relationship status					**0.087****
Single	39	30	38	31	
In a relationship	35	37	30	37	
Married/Civil Union	23	26	31	28	
Divorced/widowed	3	7	<1	4	

*Significance at the 5% level
**Significance at the 10% level

4.2.1 Cluster 1: The avid drag fan

The *avid drag fan*, the second-largest cluster with 196 respondents, was unique in the sense that respondents seemed to regard all but one motive as important; it is the only cluster in which the motives' importance scores were higher than 50% for 18 of the 19 cases (except for visiting BCTs due to it being a ritual or hobby of interest) (Table 3). This cluster, however, when compared with the other clusters seemed to attach much higher importance to certain motives. One such category is 'cultural stimulation', i.e. to learn about South African drag culture (92%) and to explore/learn new things (88%), which suggest that they are open-minded and seeking to broaden their mindsets. These findings are supported by Kruger and Saayman (2015a) and Hattingh (2018) who found that learning/exploring new things are among the most salient motives for attending live performances. Furthermore, it has been argued that leisure experiences can "expand people's cultural horizons and expose them to new and challenging people, ideas and customs" (Bowdin, Allen & O'Toole, 2006). For example, attendees in this cluster may wish to familiarise themselves with new or different types of live performances such as the increasingly popular drag/cabaret performance culture.

Although it is clear that this audience group have several needs they want to be met through attendance (evident in the importance scores), this group was further unique when compared with the other clusters as respondents seemed to be highly motivated to attend drag productions to support drag artists and performances (97%), and to support a friend, family member or colleague performing on stage (51%). This type of support, which De Rooij (2013) refers to as 'social duty', appears to be an important factor motivating this audience group to attend drag performances. According to Table 3, other significant motives for this audience group include attending to experience LGBTQ+ community pride (96%), for a chance to be with people who enjoy drag shows (94%), and to meet and interact with their favourite drag artist(s) (86%). These findings also support Hattingh and Niekerk's (2020) 'hero worship' audience segment as this cluster has a particular need to meet and interact with their favourite drag artist(s). This particular audience group appears to attend a drag performance to support or 'worship' their hero's and can therefore be considered to be LGBTQ+ allies.

In terms of socio-demographics and leisure behaviour characteristics (Table 4), respondents in this cluster were mostly single (39%), white (71%), although a significant percentage, different from other clusters, included black and mixed-race attendees (25%), straight (55%) or gay (34%), female (55%) or male (45%), mostly between the ages of 21 and 30 (53%) who hold a certificate or diploma (56%) and regularly attend arts performances (61%). The above findings allude to a young and open-minded mixed audience group (white, black, mixed-race, straight as well as gay) seeking to learn about drag culture, LGBTQ+ community pride, and wanting to meet/interact with their favourite drag artists. They are loyal supporters of drag performances/productions, in short, they are allies to the LGBTQ+ community - hence this cluster was labelled the *avid drag fan.*

4.2.2 Cluster 2: The comedy enthusiast

This cluster contained the largest sample of respondents (200), and is highly motivated by comedy, i.e. crying from laughter (98%) (Table 3), which suggests that one of the most important motives to attend drag cabarets for this cluster is for 'transcendence'. According to De Rooij (2013), transcendence relates to "a spiritual experience allowing the consumer to break loose and to rise in this world, experiencing extraordinary states of being, and being uplifted". For example, those who get tears from laughing may be motivated by transcendence (De Rooij, 2013). This cluster seems to be similar to Caldwell's (2001) 'enrichment' category. For example, there are similarities in terms of laughter, enjoyment, and being uplifted. Hattingh (2018) found a large majority of live stand-up comedy audiences are motivated to attend to enjoy comedy and laugh. Therefore, the current finding suggests that this particular drag cabaret audience group is similar to Hattingh's (2018) comedy-specific audience group. This audience group is further motivated to escape from their daily routine and responsibilities (78%) (Table 3) which supports the findings of Caldwell (2001), Johnson and Garbarino (2001), Swanson et al. (2008) and Hattingh (2018) regarding the importance of 'reduction', i.e. recuperation, relaxing, diversion and escapism in attending performing arts.

In terms of socio-demographics and leisure behaviour characteristics (Table 4), attendees in this cluster were mostly female (63%), in a relationship (37%), white (85%), straight (55%), and gay (36%) between the ages of 21 and 30 (46%) who hold a certificate/diploma (44%) and regularly attend arts performances (67%), possibly due to their intense need for laughter and escaping their usual environment. The above findings allude to a young audience group consisting of straight as well as gay attendees who appear to use drag performances to meet their need for laughter through attending comedy productions and escaping from their everyday humdrum and, therefore, they are labelled the *comedy enthusiast.*

4.2.3 Cluster 3: The brotherhood tribe

This cluster contained the third largest sample of respondents (145) and had relatively low importance scores across most motives. However, in comparison with the other audience clusters, this cluster was unique in the sense that only four motive importance scores loaded higher than 50% (Table 3). This group seems to be attracted to drag performances mainly to relax and have fun (90%). This finding lends support to Hattingh's (2018) argument in that one of the most important motives for attending live stand-up comedy include 'to relax and have fun'. Due to the similarities and possible overlap between the drag/cabaret and comedy genres, this finding is not surprising. This audience group was also highly motivated to socialise with friends, family, and colleagues (79%). Socialisation appears to be one of the most important reasons for attending live performances as this factor was found to be significant in all the literature studies reviewed (Table 1). The next important motive to attend drag performances for this cluster is to enjoy the unique atmosphere (72%). This finding supports that of Hattingh (2018) who found the unique atmosphere offered by a live-stand-up comedy production or, in this case, a drag cabaret, as one of the main motives for attending. The final important motive for this group is to be entertained by a drag artist (66%). The study conducted by Johnson and Garbarino (2001) corroborates the importance of entertainment as entertainment was found to be one of the main motives for audience members attending live performances. This finding, therefore, solidifies that one of the most important reasons for this audience group to attend drag performances is to be entertained.

In terms of socio-demographics and leisure behaviour characteristics (Table 4), respondents in this cluster were mostly single (38%), white (84%), gay (61%), men (58%) between the ages of 31 and 40 (40%) who hold a bachelor's degree (29%) and do not regularly attend theatre performances (80%). The above findings allude to a predominantly young, white, gay male audience group seeking relaxation, fun, and entertainment in a unique atmosphere in which to satisfy their social needs by meeting with friends, family, and colleagues, and therefore they are labelled the *brotherhood tribe.*

4.2.4 Cluster 4: The sisterhood tribe

The *sisterhood tribe* audience group was the smallest and contained 129 respondents. Although the importance of some of the motives in this cluster overlapped with the other clusters, there are group characteristics that strengthen membership in this particular cluster. The *sisterhood tribe* cluster placed even higher importance on socialising with friends, family, or colleagues (96%), sharing the experience with someone special (81%), and curiosity (51%) than the *avid drag fan,* the *comedy enthusiast,* and the *brotherhood tribe* (Table 3). This group, similar to the *brotherhood tribe*, seems to have a particular need for socialisation and to share the leisure experience with someone special. For example, attending to support a bride-to-be (bachelorette party), a divorcee, a birthday celebration, or a 'girl's night out'. Earl (2001) argues that a major benefit of attending live performances includes fulfilment of curiosity. Drag performances and LGBTQ+ culture were likely unknown to this cluster which could explain why the *sisterhood tribe* is more curious than the other audience groups.

In terms of socio-demographics and leisure behaviour characteristics (Table 4), respondents in this cluster were mostly in a relationship (37%), white (76%), straight (68%), female (58%), between the ages of 21 and 30 (40%) who hold a certificate/diploma (51%) and do not regularly attend arts performances (81%), perhaps due to the infrequent nature of bachelorette, divorce or birthday parties. The above findings allude to a predominantly young, white, straight female audience group seeking to share special experiences and was, therefore, labeled the *sisterhood tribe.* This finding supports Cracker's (2017) argument in that, although gay men have long been perceived as drag theatre's most loyal audience, there is a new wave of young women challenging that conventional wisdom, joining gays as some of the biggest consumers of drag culture.

5. Conclusions, implications, and recommendations

The findings of this study make several contributions to the broader body of knowledge on performing arts, hospitality, and leisure literature by investigating the appeal of drag productions and challenging the myth regarding the perceived homogeneity of arts audiences.

First, through a quantitative audience investigation, this paper marks the first time that drag performance audiences are segmented based on motivation, behavioural and demographic grounds. Although no segment is completely homogeneous, as some motives, socio-demographic, and leisure behaviours overlapped and were important to all clusters, there are group characteristics that strengthen membership. Empirical evidence, albeit not universally representative of all drag cabaret audiences (given that only one entertainment venue participated in the study and all respondents were internet users), suggests that these audiences do not attend for the same reasons, and are therefore not homogeneous. It is therefore pertinent that marketers base future marketing on the premise of "different strokes for different folks" (Vitale, n.d.); there are divergent groups of drag cabaret audiences with different leisure behaviours and needs.

Second, although this paper marks the first time of employing this method of analysis for a drag cabaret audience study, it demonstrates that the clustering procedure can significantly assist in segmenting leisure audiences. The clusters of drag cabaret audiences proposed by this study, each with its own set of motives, socio-demographic and leisure behaviours, could help BCTs refine their target marketing strategies and may assist in understanding the different opportunities each segment presents. Furthermore, it could assist other drag/cabaret theatres, in attracting the right people with the right message as well as ensuring that products and services, designed for and promoted to these audiences meet their particular needs. The findings suggest that drag cabaret audiences cannot be targeted with a single marketing campaign as different audience segments have different needs they seek to satisfy through attendance. It is therefore advisable that the identified motivational factors, which influence the decision-making processes of each identified cluster, be highlighted in different marketing campaigns to motivate these different audience groups to attend in the future.

6. Limitations and future research recommendations

While this study may be regarded as one of the first in attempting to segment South African drag cabaret audiences, a caveat should be attached to the findings. Self-selection bias is of particular concern as only internet users were included in this study. This research should be considered exploratory and does not intend to provide conclusive evidence or generalisable findings to all drag/cabaret theatres as this research only considers live performance audiences of BCTs in three South African cities. Longitudinal research should thus be conducted at other drag/cabaret theatres, locally and internationally. A comparison of the profiles and motives for attending drag performances would then be possible in future studies by considering employing additional qualitative techniques such as focus groups and participant observation to investigate the deeper reasons as to why certain motives are more important in drag cabaret audiences' decision-making processes and leisure behaviour.

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